

**Public Space and Life in an Indian City:  
The Politics of Space in Bangalore**

by

**Salila P.Vanka**

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
(Urban and Regional Planning)  
in the University of Michigan  
2014**

**Doctoral Committee:**

**Associate Professor Gavin M. Shatkin, Co-Chair  
Associate Professor Scott D. Campbell, Co-Chair  
Associate Professor William Glover  
Associate Professor David E. Thacher**

**For**  
**Siddharth & Arnav**

## Acknowledgements

Thanks to Gavin for his invaluable guidance, unwavering support and compassion through the dissertation process. Scott, whose own work inspired me to explore the world of planning theory. Will and David, whose motivated teaching illuminated the path of my work. Susan, for setting me on the path of planning research, first in UT-Austin and later in doctoral studies. Barjor, for my first job as an urban researcher in CEPT. Shrawan, for his enthusiasm and encouragement.

To my mother and father, for making all this possible. Siddharth and Arnav, who taught me to celebrate life at all times. Sai, for his help through my studies. Lalitha attayya, for rooting for me all along. Sushama, Ragini, Sapna and Alpa – my strong companions for life. Becky, Sabrina and Sahana, who reflect the best in their mothers. Pranav, for keeping me focused in the crucial last lap to the finish line. Sweta, who inspires me by example. Parul and Chathurani, my friends and cheerleaders. Nandini, Neha, Nina, Prabhakar, Hamsini, Prasad, Bill, Dhananjay and Cathy for their kind help.

To Deirdra and Doug, for the most enjoyable exam preparation (and food) sessions. The faculty, staff and my colleagues at TCAUP. Vinay, Leo, Bhargavi, Solly, and Kathyayani for their help and guidance. And finally, to all my respondents in Bangalore whose hospitality and generosity in sharing time and knowledge made this research possible.

## Table of Contents

Dedication	ii
Acknowledgment	iii
List of Graphs	vii
List of Figures	viii
List of Pictures	ix
List of Appendices	xii
Abstract	xiii
<b>Chapter One</b>	
<b>An Inquiry into the Politics of Public Space in Bangalore</b>	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Problem Statement	4
1.3 The politics of public space, master planning and civic engagement in Indian cities	8
1.4 Research Design	15
1.5 Organization of Chapters	18
1.6 Contribution to Planning Theory and Practice	21
<b>Chapter Two</b>	
<b>The “Public” in Space, Society and Governance: A theoretical framework</b>	
2.1 Introduction	25
2.2 Spatial politics and democracy in Indian cities	29
2.2.1. Public Space	30
2.2.2. Master planning in India	43
2.2.3. The Right to the City	50
2.2.4. Summary	55
2.3 Conclusion	57
<b>Chapter Three</b>	
<b>Planning and Politics of Public Space in Bangalore: History and Present</b>	
3.1 Introduction	60
3.2 Bangalore: Peté to InfoTech City	63
3.3 A history of public space in Bangalore	70
3.3.1. The pre-colonial peté	71
3.3.2. The peté and Cantonment	75
3.3.3. Planning public space in postcolonial Bangalore	82
3.4 The politics of public space in Bangalore	86
3.4.1. Tanks / Lakes	87
3.4.2. Parks	91
3.4.3. Streets	94
3.4.4. Markets	97
3.5 Case Studies	100
3.5.1. KR Road bamboo weavers and Metro project: private claims to a public sidewalk	101

3.5.2. The Tree as a Metaphor for the City – The activism of Hasiru Usiru	102
3.5.3. Park politics in 3 <sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala	103
3.6 Conclusion	104

## **Chapter Four**

### **Private claims to public space: Urban renewal and subaltern politics on KR Road**

4.1 Introduction	105
4.2 The bamboo weavers and Krishna Rajendra Road	110
4.2.1. KR Road as social and economic space	112
4.2.2. The weavers and government – illegalities and invisibility	118
4.2.3. The weavers and the <i>dalit</i> leader – politics of protection and exploitation	121
4.3 The Metro project – contradictions in public interest and accountability	127
4.3.1. Metro project on KR Road	132
4.3.2. Official and subaltern claims to public space	136
4.3.3. Subaltern voices and claims to the city	140
4.4 Spatial politics of slums and vending	142
4.4.1. Policies and politics of street economies	143
4.4.2. Strategizing the language of slums	145
4.4.3. The politics of public space and public housing	151
4.5 Conclusion	156

## **Chapter Five**

### **Hasiru Usiru: The Tree as a Metaphor for the City**

5.1 Introduction	165
5.2 Hasiru Usiru - origins and politics	169
5.3 The road widening PIL and court ruling	181
5.4 Hasiru Usiru and middle-class activism for public space	193
5.5 Conclusion	203

## **Chapter Six**

### **Park Politics and Elite Activism: A Case Study of Anti Encroachment**

#### **Mobilizations**

6.1 Introduction	207
6.2 The politics of civic amenity sites in Bangalore	211
6.2.1. Definitions and meanings of public space in the Bangalore masterplan	212
6.2.2. Civic amenity sites as contested spaces	222
6.3 The PO Ground politics	227
6.3.1. Life on PO Ground, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala	227
6.3.2. BDA allocations and the court case	231
6.3.3. The cricket camp and the MLA	247
6.3.4. The MLA and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Block residents	255
6.4 Conclusion	264

## **Chapter Seven**

### **A Discussion of Research Findings and Contributions to Planning Theory and Practice**

7.1	Introduction	269
7.2	Summary and contributions of case studies	271
	7.2.1 The KR Road sidewalk case	273
	7.2.2. The Hasiru Usiru case	274
	7.2.3. The PO Ground case	276
	7.2.4. Summary	276
7.3	Contribution to planning theory	279
7.4	Contribution to planning practice	283
7.5	Implications for planning pedagogy	288
7.6	Directions for future research	289
	<b>Appendices</b>	293
	<b>References</b>	299

## **List of Graphs**

Graph 3.1.	Population Growth in Bangalore City, 1871-2011	66
Graph 3.2.	Bangalore City Corporation Limits 1949-2011	66
Graph 3.3.	Decadal Decline (percent) in Agricultural Sector in Bangalore	67

## List of Figures

Figure 3.1.	Maps of India and Karnataka	64
Figure 3.2.	Map of Bangalore City	65
Figure 3.3.	Map of Bangalore <i>Peté</i>	72
Figure 3.4.	Maps of Bangalore Fort, <i>Peté</i> and Cantonment, 1850 & 1895	76
Figure 3.5.	1924 Map showing the fort, <i>peté</i> , Cantonment, Cubbon Park and military grounds	80
Figure 3.6	Map of Basavannagudi, 1996	82
Figure 4.1	KR Road in 1961	111
Figure 4.2	Land use on KR Road sidewalk	115
Figure 6.1.	Land use on PO Road	229
Figure 6.2.	PO Ground before and after park	230



## List of Pictures

Picture 3.1.	Bangalore Fort with policemen in the foreground	73
Picture 3.2.	Preparations for <i>Karaga Jatre</i> in KR Market	74
Picture 3.3.	Dodda peté, now known as Avenue Road	74
Picture 3.4.	Byelane on Avenue Road with a temporary shrine installation	74
Picture 3.5.	Blenders and kitchen implements for sale in Chikpeté	74
Picture 3.6.	Large cooking utensils for sale in Chikpeté	74
Picture 3.7.	The village shrine next to Bellandur Lake in Bellandur village	75
Picture 3.8.	<i>Somberi katte</i> or idler's platform on the main street of Bellandur	75
Picture 3.9.	Army Barracks on Cubbon Road	79
Picture 3.10.	Furniture shops on Infantry Road	79
Picture 3.11.	Commercial Street	79
Picture 3.12.	A bye lane in the General Bazaar	79
Picture 3.13.	Fruit-sellers on street in Basavannagudi	79
Picture 3.14.	Conservancy lane in Basavannagudi	79
Picture 3.15.	Shop in Gandhi Bazaar with vegetables spilling over	81
Picture 3.16.	Sidewalk in Gandhi Bazaar Market, Basavannagudi	81
Picture 3.17.	Shopkeepers step out to worship deity	81
Picture 3.18.	Flower vendor with shop set up on Gandhi Bazaar street	81
Picture 3.19.	Bellandur Village Lake	88
Picture 3.20.	Lal Bagh Lake	88
Picture 3.21.	Ulsoor Lake	89
Picture 3.22.	Sankey Tank	89
Picture 3.23.	Lal Bagh, the city's historic botanic garden.	92
Picture 3.24.	Cubbon Park	92
Picture 3.25.	Park in Jayanagar locality	93
Picture 3.26.	Krishnarao Park	93
Picture 3.27.	Richmond Park	93
Picture 3.28.	Gated park in Arikere locality	93
Picture 3.29.	RWA Signboard outside Children's Park in Defence Colony	93
Picture 3.30.	RWA Signboard outside Senior Citizen's Park in Defence Colony	93
Picture 3.31.	Infantry Road	96
Picture 3.32.	Airport Road	96
Picture 3.33.	All India Radio Road	96
Picture 3.34.	Ulsoor Road	96
Picture 3.35.	Road work to accommodate Metro project on Chinmaya Mission Hospital Road, Indiranagar	96
Picture 3.36.	Metro work passing by a slum on 100 Feet Road, Indiranagar	96
Picture 3.37.	KR Market, the <i>peté's</i> oldest market	99
Picture 3.38.	Annual peanut festival on street outside the historic Bull Temple in Basavannagudi	99
Picture 3.39.	Gandhi Bazaar Market	100
Picture 3.40.	Madivala Santhe	100

Picture 4.1.	Doddapeté	110
Picture 4.2.	Chikpeté	110
Picture 4.3.	KR market, Bangalore <i>Peté</i>	111
Picture 4.4.	Police on KR Road	119
Picture 4.5.	Bamboo baskets waiting to be transported to KR Market	120
Picture 4.6.	Equipment for weaving bamboo blinds under a makeshift canopy	120
Picture 4.7.	The sidewalk as domestic space	120
Picture 4.8.	Selling bamboo wares to passers-by	120
Picture 4.9.	Painting of Babasaheb Ambedkar, the dalit icon	126
Picture 4.10.	SSD's and Venkataswamy's names on cobbler's booth	126
Picture 4.11.	The KR Road sidewalk after demolition	126
Picture 4.12.	SSD sign at the bamboo merchant's depot	126
Picture 4.13.	Road dividers with Metro construction on the other side of the road	128
Picture 4.14.	Demolished buildings to make space for Metro, CMH Road Indiranagar	128
Picture 4.15.	Metro pillars along CMH Road, Indiranagar	128
Picture 4.16.	The Metro alignment sits uneasily close to commercial buildings on CMH Road, Indiranagar	128
Picture 4.17.	The entrance to BMRCL's resettlement housing colony in Peenya	130
Picture 4.18.	A street in the BMRCL resettlement housing colony, Peenya	130
Picture 4.19.	Kitchen garden and firewood stalked in the backyard of one of the housing units at Peenya	130
Picture 4.20.	Clothes spread to dry on the street are evocative of older lifestyles	130
Picture 4.21.	KR Road before widening	133
Picture 4.22.	KR Road after Metro work began	133
Picture 4.23.	The registered Chikkanna Gardens slum behind KR Road where some of the weavers reside	142
Picture 4.24.	Chikkanna Garden	142
Picture 4.25.	The weavers reclaim the smaller rebuilt sidewalk	155
Picture 4.26.	Domestic objects interspersed with the bamboo ware	155
Picture 4.27.	Work goes on as usual on the sidewalk	155
Picture 4.28.	The weavers rebuilt their temporary shacks on the sidewalk	155
Picture 4.29.	KR Road in April 2014	156
Picture 4.30.	The weavers rebuilt their shacks near the temple.	156
Picture 4.31.	The weavers continue to work and live on the sidewalk	156
Picture 4.32.	The weavers continue to work and live on the sidewalk	156
Picture 5.1.	A tree-lined street in the Matikere locality	171
Picture 5.2.	Trees on a divider between a service road and main road in Shantinagar locality, Cantonment	171
Picture 5.3.	Tree-lined street in Jayanagar locality, one of the first planned layouts	171
Picture 5.4.	Trees on street in Chamarajpet locality	171

Picture 5.5.	Street trees remain in their original positions though the road has been widened and sidewalk narrowed in Basavannagudi locality	173
Picture 5.6.	A fruit vendor parks his cart beneath a shady street tree in Bangalore	173
Picture 5.7.	Tree stump on Nanda Theatre Road, Jayanagar	179
Picture 5.8.	Tree felling in preparation for road widening, Sheshadripuram	179
Picture 5.9.	Tree felling at Tagore Circle to make space for constructing an underpass	179
Picture 5.10.	A freshly laid stretch of road for which the adjacent sidewalk was narrowed, Malleswaram	179
Picture 5.11.	Preparation for a public protest in front of Queen Victoria's statue in Cubbon Park	195
Picture 5.12.	Hasiru Usiru protestors outside Cubbon Park	199
Picture 5.13.	Hasiru Usiru protestors outside Cubbon Park	199
Picture 5.14.	Hasiru Usiru protestors outside Cubbon Park	199
Picture 5.15.	Hasiru Usiru protestors outside Cubbon Park	199
Picture 6.1.	Krishna Rao Park, Basavannagudi	220
Picture 6.2.	Signboard in Defence Colony Park	220
Picture 6.3.	Vending on PO Ground	231
Picture 6.4.	Multiple teams playing cricket	231
Picture 6.5.	BBMP Signboard on the border of PO Ground	232
Picture 6.6.	Civic Amenity Site Signboard on PO Ground	232
Picture 6.7.	Sign in PO Ground park	232
Picture 6.8.	BBMP sign in Kannada in PO Ground	232
Picture 6.9.	Land allocated to M/S Ananda Trust for the vernacular language school, which is still under litigation	236
Picture 6.10.	M/S Ananda Trust	236
Picture 6.11.	Bleachers in the playground	248
Picture 6.12.	Bleachers in the playground	248
Picture 6.13.	BBMP signboard in PO Ground park detailing rules for park users	254
Picture 6.14.	The local corporator inaugurates PO Ground Park as 3rd Block residents look on, April 2010	254
Picture 6.15.	PO Ground on either side of the fence, December 2011	254
Picture 6.16.	PO Ground on either side of the fence, December 2011	254
Picture 6.17.	3 <sup>rd</sup> Block RWA's board on the park gate	255
Picture 6.18.	Park furniture	255
Picture 6.19.	The small clubhouse within the park	255
Picture 6.20.	Library in the clubhouse	255
Picture 6.21.	Interactions across the fence between the park and playground	256
Picture 6.22.	Interactions across the fence between the park and playground	256

## **List of Appendices**

Appendix One	List of Interviews in Bangalore (December 2008-July 2010)	293
Appendix Two	BDA's list of lakes that were converted to other uses	297

## Abstract

This dissertation examines the tension between state-driven urban development policies and societal responses to spatial transformations in Indian cities. At the same time that state actors have undertaken large-scale renewal projects to modernize cities, conflicting demands for land have triggered a rise in authorized and unauthorized encroachments on everyday public spaces in Bangalore. In the context of the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 and other reforms that have strengthened the role of local governing bodies and citizens in urban planning and governance, this research examines contestations between state and non-state actors over Bangalore's public streets, sidewalks, parks and playgrounds. Specifically this research asks, "What do the conceptualizations and claims of different actors of state and society to public space reveal about planning and governance in Indian cities?"

This research examines three cases of contestations for public space in Bangalore. The first is a case of a subaltern bamboo-weaver community's fight to retain access to a public sidewalk in the face of threats of eviction to accommodate a public rail project. The second case examines a middle-class environmental network's activism against felling of street trees for a municipal road-widening project. The third case examines an elite neighborhood group's fights against master planned changes to a local playground.

This research reveals new forms of state-society engagement that prevalent literature on Indian urban spatial politics does not explain. In the first case, subaltern groups take recourse in *dalit* politics when state actors do not acknowledge their economic rights, instead relegating their claims to welfare schemes. The second case demonstrates that there are multiple bourgeois visions of urban public space and that middle-class actors are capable of engaging in uncivil conduct with unresponsive state actors. The third case shows that elite groups develop mutually beneficial connections with municipal officials and elected representatives to gain access to neighborhood public spaces. In sum, this dissertation shows that different social groups in Indian cities find resolution for their claims to public space in electoral and caste politics, and not necessarily in official forums of participatory governance.

## **Chapter One**

### **An Inquiry into the Politics of Public Space in Bangalore**

#### **1.1. Introduction**

This research examines the politics of public space in Bangalore in a milieu of rapid urbanization and official development policies that are transforming everyday sites of public use in the city. This dissertation addresses the question, “How do different actors of state and society conceptualize public space and what do their claims to public space reveal about planning and governance in Indian cities?” Examining three cases of contestations for public space in Bangalore, this research finds that local struggles represent claims of use value and fights against displacement from everyday places of negotiated use. Here, different actors have different motivations, mobilizations and access to power and resources in government. But their struggles for public space find common ground in claims of use value and citizenship rights. This research also demonstrates that official planning processes that circumvent local resistance are challenged by counterclaims rooted in local spatial histories and practices (Benjamin, 2008). In the ensuing fights, local groups engage in electoral politics or collective activism to gain access to public spaces, when they do not get resolution in fixed trajectories of state power or official policies. This research emphasizes that local fights for public space play a role in shaping material and discursive spaces in Indian cities. Finally this research argues that ongoing spatial politics in Bangalore underline the

significance of public spaces as sites of struggles for citizenship rights that state actors withhold in the name of public interest.

As Indian cities grow rapidly, narratives of reforms and renewal have become inseparable from narratives of displacement from space, society and culture. As the city transforms, so do the city's public spaces. Public spaces "have been seen as symbols of collective well-being and possibility, expressions of achievement and aspiration by urban leaders and visionaries, sites of public encounter and formation of civic culture, and significant spaces of political deliberation and agonistic struggle" (Amin, 2008, p.6). Arguably the significance of urban public space goes far beyond symbolism. If the Greek agora is an enduring symbol of democratic life in the polis, recent political protests in public squares of the Middle East and Turkey reiterate the significance of public space as sites of contemporary democratic struggles. This research builds on the premise that the politics of public space represents the politics of space and life in the city.

In Bangalore, urbanization processes intensified since the early 1990s in the wake of economic liberalization policies and the city's emergence as India's leading information and technology hub. Demand for land, infrastructure and services grew to accommodate the city's growing population with a corresponding rise in conflicts for everyday public spaces such as parks, playgrounds, marketplaces, streets and sidewalks. Public space, in governmental parlance, is a term used to describe municipal property allocated for public purposes (Glover, 2008; Gidwani & Baviskar, 2011). As municipal property, the ability of city residents to occupy or use public spaces, signifies an official acceptance or acquiescence to the presence of the individual, group or activity in the space. However on the ground, public spaces are "the product of social relations which are most likely

conflicting and unequal” (Massey, 2005, p.12). An emerging literature describes local contestations for public space as struggles for a *right to the city* and citizenship (Mitchell, 2003; Harvey, 2008; Roy, 2005).

Ongoing spatial transformations in Bangalore affect public space as both public and private actors lay claim to the city’s parks, sidewalks, lakes, markets and playgrounds. The state government’s Metro rail project, the city corporation’s road-widening project, bourgeois park politics, environmental activism, and marginal groups’ struggles against evictions from streets and slums exemplify ongoing actions and counteractions vis-à-vis public space. Despite being government property meant to serve the public interest, ongoing struggles indicate that neither public space nor public interest apply uniformly to different social actors. The push and pull for public space in Indian cities raises questions about how local residents articulate their individual claims to the city.

This chapter sets the context for the dissertation by discussing its contributions to literature on spatial politics in Indian cities and by introducing the research design. The next section briefly discusses various aspects of spatial politics in the public realm in Bangalore. The following section summarizes existing literature on the politics of public space, identifying gaps in scholarship about local struggles for public space in Indian cities. The next section discusses the research design, followed by a description of the chapters in this report. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the contributions of this research to planning theory and practice in contemporary Indian cities.



## **1.2. Problem Statement**

This research is set in the backdrop of accelerated urbanization processes following economic liberalization and urban reform policies in Indian cities in the early 1990s. In the past two decades, central and state governments initiated large public works projects to modernize and develop major Indian cities like Bangalore into global centers of industry and commerce (Nair, 2005). Concomitantly the new economic milieu spurred land-intensive forms of urbanism such as gated housing communities, office campuses, malls and leisure spaces promoting a general culture of consumerism and privatization.

Bangalore has earned sobriquets such as City of Lakes and Garden City owing to its numerous manmade water tanks and rich horticultural heritage that date back to the city's 16<sup>th</sup> century origins. The parks, gardens and tree-lined boulevards that developed during colonial rule and post-Independence, reflect continued governmental attention, to the city's horticultural legacy. Since the early 1990s, accelerating urbanization processes fueled a growing demand for land, infrastructure and services in Bangalore. With a rising demand for prime urban property, there has been growing (authorized and unauthorized) encroachment of public spaces in the city. Some transformations to the urban commons also occur through master planning and public-private partnerships with private actors. There are other cases of official mismanagement or grassroots appropriations that have affected local spatial practices in the city's public realm.

Being legal custodians of public goods and services, government agencies at state and local level have been instrumental in drastically transforming Bangalore's public spaces (Srinivas, 2004; Nair, 2005; Ravindran, 2007). Referring to the city's manmade lakes (locally known as "tanks"), Srinivas (2008) notes a significant change in the city's

physiognomy since the 1940s, with the number of functional tanks dropping from 390 to 81 by the year 1985.<sup>i</sup> Planning authorities converted several tanks into bus depots, residential layouts and sports stadiums, thus irreversibly changing the ecological, social and cultural functions of the pre-colonial water bodies (Srinivas, 2004).<sup>1</sup> A report on open spaces in Bangalore revealed a decline in the growth rate of the city's parks, playgrounds and recreational spaces between 1960 and 2003 (Ravindran, 2007).<sup>ii</sup> A recent study shows that of 3791 acres allotted for civic amenities and open spaces in 999 planned residential layouts in Bangalore, only 780 acres remain under the planning authority's jurisdiction, with the rest of the area lost to encroachments (Balasubramaniam, 2011).<sup>iii</sup>

If these examples reveal a decline in planned public spaces, there are other intangible yet significant changes to the commons as the city grows and transforms. The state government's Metro rail project, the municipal agency's road-widening project and demolition of old marketplaces, continue to displace uses and users of public space across Bangalore. Real estate developers build private housing layouts and shopping malls on public lands, with or without official approval. Officially authorized private companies develop plans to commercialize lakes by charging entry fees and using them for private purposes such as hotels, school playgrounds or recreational facilities. The premises of

---

<sup>1</sup> Writing about the impact of the changing nature of public space on local traditions such as the Karaga *jatre* in Bangalore, Srinivas (2004:34) notes, "In the context of the Karaga *jatre*, two kinds of spaces that are sites of public debate and conflict today are bodies of water and garden land. To illustrate, the bed of a large body of water where the Karaga is "revealed" every year is now the site of a huge sports stadium. This process of converting extensive bodies of water in the city into sports complexes, housing colonies, or bus terminals has aroused a great deal of discussion about the direction of planning in the city and definitions of public space. The Karaga *jatre* is thus located in a discursive arena that is occupied by other groups, multinational capital, and the state, all of which struggle with conceptualizations of the city, whether as "city of the past" or "city of the future."

gated public parks and lakes are dotted with numerous signboards with rules and warnings regarding permitted activities and conduct.

If encroachments, upheavals and displacement from public spaces are integral to Bangalore's developmental story, so are local struggles for the commons. Instances of judicial activism to reclaim neighborhood parks and playgrounds, vendors' struggles against eviction from streets, and environmental activism illustrate grassroots struggles for everyday public spaces in Bangalore.

There has been sustained academic interest in the politics of public space as a means of understanding state-society relations in contemporary Indian cities (Rajagopal, 2001; Baviskar, 2003; Chatterjee, 2004; Fernandes, 2004; Srinivas, 2004; Nair, 2005; Anjaria, 2006; Anjaria, 2009; Ghertner, 2010; Arabindoo, 2010; Sundaresan, 2011; Maringanti, 2011). This literature discusses in-depth the impact of centralized development policies in shaping urban space and spatial politics. There is less scholarship on how grassroots mobilizations inform spatial politics and official policies in Indian cities in the backdrop of official mandates for participatory governance.

My research foregrounds constitutional laws strengthening the role of local governing bodies and citizens in urban planning and governance. In 1992 the Indian Government passed the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) that empowered urban local bodies to undertake planning functions and to involve local communities in planning and governance processes. The 74<sup>th</sup> CAA also mandated representation of minority communities and women in elected bodies and the creation of Ward Committees to increase local participation in governance.<sup>iv</sup> The Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) is a reforms-based program to fast-track planned

development that reflected the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA's mandates. Launched in 2005 in selected Indian cities, the seven-year Mission focused on bringing "efficiency in urban infrastructure and service delivery mechanism, community participation, and accountability of ULBs/Parastatal agencies towards citizens" (JNNURM n.d.). JNNURM lists public participation as a prerequisite for local bodies to access funds for master planning and other infrastructure projects.

Prior to the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, central and state governments wielded planning and regulatory powers whereas local governments had limited powers and funds in managing Indian cities. The 74<sup>th</sup> CAA and JNNURM represent significant official steps to democratize urban development and state-society engagement by empowering local governments and communities through policies of decentralization and inclusive governance. Prevailing literature on state-society engagement in Indian cities broadly depicts middle-class actors engaging with state officials as legal citizens and indigent groups seeking a foothold in the city through patronage politics with local politicians (Chatterjee, 2004). The empirical chapters in my research show middle-class actors engaging with local politicians and municipal officers outside official forums and indigent groups taking recourse in *dalit* politics<sup>2</sup> as an expeditious route to get state concessions. If these cases diverge from prevalent characterizations of state-society relations in Indian cities, they also invite an inquiry about the role of reform policies in democratizing governance in Indian cities.

Evolving in the tension between changing official policies of governance and societal responses to local spatial transformations, this research examines local struggles for

---

<sup>2</sup> *Dalits* represent traditionally marginalized communities in India that the Indian Constitution protects through laws and policies of reservation. *Dalit* political groups in the country use their identity to define their politics.

public space to enquire into the inclusiveness of urban form and governance in contemporary Indian cities. As this dissertation also demonstrates, the politics of urban public space are revelatory of (1) different imaginaries of the city (inclusive or exclusionary), (2) democratic life in the city (in the form of tolerance to diversity in spatial practices and participatory governance) and (3) local politics of planning and governance where public space is produced by the social, cultural, economic and political practices of local inhabitants.

The next section introduces key concepts in prevailing literature on public space and planning in Indian cities. The conceptual framework for this research draws on literature on public space in Indian cities as spaces of negotiated use and collective political action; master planning in Indian cities as the governmental vision of the city; and the *right to the city* concept as a grassroots approach to local claim-making to public space based on use value. The review also identifies gaps in current literature that this research empirically addresses in later chapters.

### **1.3. The politics of public space, master planning and civic engagement in Indian cities**

Public space occupies a unique position in the city as a site and symbol of public or democratic life. In normative terms, public spaces are sites of universal access and freedom of expression. This research follows Massey's (2005: 152) definition that, notwithstanding normative descriptions, on the ground public spaces "are a product of, and internally dislocated by, heterogeneous and sometimes conflicting social identities/relations."

Public space is also the staging ground of collective public life be it in the form of celebrations, demonstrations, riots or subversive practices. If public space is the stage for grassroots political action, then the politics of urban public space reflects the politics of urban space and society. Changes or loss of public space affect how city residents experience and participate in urban life and thus struggles for public space are “also struggles over the *practice* of democracy...” (Mitchell, 2003, p.152).<sup>3</sup> This link between public spaces and grassroots political action forms the basis for this research. Democratic struggles for urban space gain visibility and prominence when they “assert a material presence” (Harvey, 2006, p.).<sup>4</sup> Thus this research embraces the idea of public space where it is a “place as an arena where negotiation is forced upon us” (Massey, 2005, p.154).

Governmental and middle-class imaginations of public space in contemporary Indian cities echo colonial formulations of public space (Kaviraj, 1997; Chakrabarty, 1991; Arabindoo, 2012). Colonial rule in urban India introduced new rules of conduct, standardization and formality that were different from indigenous formations of space, society and state (Kaviraj, 1997; Chakrabarty, 1991; Freitag, 1991; Hosagrahar, 2006; Glover, 2008). In post-colonial Indian cities, planners designed public spaces for

---

<sup>3</sup> Author's emphasis

<sup>4</sup> Harvey (2006:147) emphasizes the significance of absolute space in reinforcing democratic struggles, “We can, to take another example, debate interminably all manner of ideas and designs expressive of the relationality of Ground Zero, but at some point something has to be materialized in absolute space and time. Once built, the site acquires a “permanence” (Whitehead’s term) of physical form. And while it is always open to reconceptualize the meaning of that material form so that people can learn to live it differently, the sheer materiality of construction in absolute space and time carries its own weight and authority. By the same token, political movements that aspire to exercise some power in the world remain ineffectual until they assert a material presence. It is all fine and good, for example to evoke relational conceptions such as the proletariat in motion or the multitude rising up. But no one knows what any of that means until real bodies go into the absolute spaces of the streets of Seattle, Quebec City and Genoa at a particular moment in absolute time.”

functionality, recreation or aesthetics, more suited for bourgeois lifestyles than indigenous spatial practices that had more fluid boundaries between public and private activities. For instance, in pre-colonial Indian cities, private activities such as vending or squatting took place in the public realm (a practice prevalent in contemporary cities) even though the latter represented space outside the private realm (Kaviraj, 1997). Notably, while public spaces are spaces of negotiated use between different actors, their negotiability diminishes when they come under state surveillance (Gidwani & Baviskar, 2011).

Notably, as bourgeois residents have embraced modern conceptualizations of public space, they are no longer the uncared-for “outside” spaces of the pre-colonial Indian cities (Kaviraj, 1997). Instead, in planned post-colonial cities, middle-class residents link their concerns for clean and safe public spaces to private property ownership, quality of life and citizenship issues (Baviskar, 2003; Chatterjee, 2004; Fernandes, 2004; Nair, 2005; Anjaria, 2009). In Indian cities, elite and middle-class residents consider access to public parks, playgrounds, streets and open spaces as entitlements of law-abiding citizens. Marginal groups tend to occupy public spaces in the city for shelter and subsistence, many times through a system of bribes and patronage politics with state actors. Thus the politics of public space also becomes enmeshed with the subsistence politics of marginal groups in Indian cities.

Growing demands for land in major Indian cities have intensified struggles for public space among different actors of state and society (Baviskar, 2002; Fernandes, 2004; Anjaria, 2006; Anjaria, 2008; Bhan, 2009). Middle-class associations have targeted the “hawker menace’ as a threat to a wide array of bourgeois interests, including

inconvenience, sanitation, fears of social disorder and the threat of declining real estate prices for residential areas marked for relocating hawkers” (Fernandes, 2004, p. 2422). Recent studies assert that state actors support middle-class imaginaries of public space that align with governmental visions of global cities (Baviskar, 2003; Fernandes, 2004; Nair, 2005). To illustrate, Fernandes (2004: 2421) finds in Mumbai that, “The beautification drive in Mumbai has not been limited to private civic organizations of the middle classes, but has also represented official policy of the local state government’s Cultural Affairs ministry.” For their part, urban indigent groups continue to resist the efforts of actors of state and middle-class society to evict them from public spaces (Anjaria, 2009). Marginalized groups engage in organized protests against evictions from public space, claiming rights to livelihood and shelter (Baviskar, 2003).

As various actors of state and society struggle to legitimize their claims to public space in Indian cities, they draw attention to the role of official planning processes in shaping the city. In democratic society, the “right to control public property is vested in government officials who determine who has access to it and under what conditions” (Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1992, p.6). How government actors shape public space, says much about official interpretations of public interest and citizenship. Scholarship shows that rational master planning models have limited ability to regulate spatial development and urbanization processes in Indian cities (Baviskar, 2003; ALF, 2003).

In planning processes that recognize that planning is political, well-written plans have the power to be “single-text negotiating documents” (Neuman, 1998, p.209). A recurring academic critique of the master plan has been that it “fails to include as constituent elements the conflict, ambiguity and indeterminacy characteristic of actual



social life” (Holston, 1991, p.166). Urban studies in India show that official planning processes have not been able to reconcile the contradictions of existing and new land uses (Baviskar, 2003; ALF, 2003; Nair, 2005). Studies find that more than regulating urban space, planning processes and the master plan encourage illegalities as they exclude marginal groups and legalize informal spatial practices (Baviskar, 2003; ALF, 2003).

The proliferation of slums, informal street economies and illegal constructions also indicate government agencies’ inability to manage or provide affordable housing and services in Indian cities. Denied legal access to space in the city, marginal groups use vote bank politics to gain a foothold in the city (Benjamin & Raman, 2001; Chatterjee, 2004). Middle-class groups seek to influence governmental decisions about public space using the master plan and judicial activism (Baviskar, 2003; Chatterjee, 2004; Fernandes, 2004; Nair, 2005; Kamath & Vijayabaskar, 2009; Ghertner, 2012).<sup>5</sup>

On the ground, there are forces other than the master plan engaged in shaping Indian cities. For instance, Benjamin (2008: 720) suggests a framework of “occupancy urbanism” that “views cities as consisting of multiple, contested territories inscribed by complex local histories.” In this view of city space, local spatial histories, spatial practices and vote bank politics shape urban space in addition to official planning processes. Ghertner (2012) demonstrates that resident welfare associations, and not centralized government policy, have spurred courts to order slum eradication in middle-class neighborhoods in Delhi. These examples indicate that grassroots mobilizations have an impact on shaping spatial practices and politics in the city, where local residents are agents of action (Benjamin, 2008; Ghertner, 2012). There is less academic enquiry

---

<sup>5</sup> The master plan has acquired “importance as a vehicle for elite RWA struggles because, in the main, it is for propertied citizens who inhabit ordered, authorised spaces” (Kamath & Vijayabaskar, 2009, p 373).

whether their actions produce a “politics that will result in either greater urban democracy or new forms of political domination” (Purcell, 2002, p.106).

Recent scholarship compares grassroots struggles for public space with Lefebvre’s (1968) *right to the city* concept (Mitchell, 2003; Roy, 2005; Harvey, 2008; Anjaria, 2009; Harvey, 2012; Crossa, 2009; Maringanti, 2011; Sundaresan, 2011). The *right to the city* concept is a collective right that city residents assert as users and producers of urban space and is not based on claims of socioeconomic status or property ownership (Lefebvre, 1996). It is also a demand for planners to acknowledge societal imaginaries of urban life as complementary to scientific knowledge of the city (Lefebvre, 1996). The *right to the city* concept is a right of all city dwellers, old or new, rich or poor (Purcell, 2002; Harvey, 2012; Marcuse, 2012). Though the concept holds the promise of inclusion for different actors, it offers little clarity regarding “(1) what the *right to the city* entails or (2) how it might address current problems of disenfranchisement” (Purcell, 2002, p.100).<sup>6</sup>

I embarked on this research with Lefebvre’s *right to the city* as a conceptual starting point to understand local spatial politics in Indian cities. However, as the literature review shows, the concept covers little practical ground in countering the socioeconomic inequities and power politics that characterize urban society and life in India.

Furthermore the *right to the city* represents claims of use value, rather than the rights, of different social groups to urban space. Arguably claims and counterclaims based on cultural and historic rights, inhabit a different arena of struggles than constitutional rights that are fought in courts of law. Acknowledging the symbolic import of the *right to the city*, this research moves forward to examine struggles for public space within the

---

<sup>6</sup> The definition of the right is itself an object of struggle, and that struggle has to proceed concomitantly with the struggle to materialize it” (Harvey, 2012, p.xv).

institutional and societal structures of power and politics in Indian cities. Seeing the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA and JNNURM as official recognition of the rights of city residents and minority groups to democratic urban life, this research proceeds to examine struggles for public space within contemporary institutional and societal structures of power and politics in Indian cities.

Existing literature provides a broad conceptual “lattice-work” in discussing grassroots mobilizations vis-à-vis official planning processes in Indian cities.<sup>7</sup> The overview of existing scholarship on the politics of public space in Indian cities shows that public spaces are “formed through a myriad of practices of quotidian negotiation and contestation” (Massey, 2005, p.154). The master plan performs the important task of creating public spaces that are “potentially creative crucibles for the democratic sphere” (Massey, 2005, p.154). However official planning processes are not the only force or agency shaping public spaces. Current scholarship speaks less about how the micro politics of public space inform planning and governance in Indian cities. This research proceeds to examine the role of grassroots contestations for urban public space in shaping material and discursive spaces of democracy in Indian cities.

---

<sup>7</sup> I borrow this term from a TEDX talk by Rory Sutherland titled “Perspective is everything” (Filmed Dec 2011 • Posted May 2012) where he uses the term as follows, “I think impressions have an insane effect on what we think and what we do. But what we don't have is a really good model of human psychology. At least pre-Kahneman perhaps, we didn't have a really good model of human psychology to put alongside models of engineering, of neoclassical economics. So people who believed in psychological solutions didn't have a model. We didn't have a framework. This is what Warren Buffett's business partner Charlie Munger calls “a lattice-work on which to hang your ideas.”

#### 1.4. Research Design

The central research question is concerned with the voices, experiences and actions of different actors in shaping the politics and outcomes of public space in Bangalore. This dissertation employs qualitative research wherein “researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them”(Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p.10). Among the vast range of methods within the scope of qualitative research, this research uses grounded theory and multiple case studies to build theory about spatial politics in Bangalore.<sup>8</sup>

A grounded theory “is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.23). The grounded theory method of research is well-suited to this study since it aims to build theory based on context-specific contestations linked to specific locations and specific actors of state and society.<sup>9</sup> Rather than entering the field of study with verifiable hypothesis, this research examines raw data collected during fieldwork to draw inferences about state-society relations and inclusive planning processes in Bangalore.

The dissertation also employs multiple case studies to understand different conceptualizations of public space. The case study is defined as “an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon (e.g. a “case”), set within its real-world context – especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly

---

<sup>8</sup> Denzin and Lincoln (1998:10) further describe the research methods adopted by qualitative researchers thus, “Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives. Accordingly, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected methods, hoping to get a better fix on the subject matter on hand.”

<sup>9</sup> Campbell (2003:3) argues, “Urbanists have a hard time isolating phenomena from context because it is this context itself -- the complex cluster that is a city -- that is the subject of study.”

evident” (Yin, 2012, p.4). This research uses the multiple case study approach to examine contestations of three different socioeconomic groups for three different types of public space. I selected multiple cases studies to cross-compare (1) motivations in contesting for public space; (2) mobilizations of different groups; (3) access that different groups have to power and resources in government and (4) state actors’ response to different socioeconomic groups.

Regarding case study selection, Eisenhardt (1989:10) writes, “The cases may be chosen to replicate previous cases or extend emergent theory or they may be chosen to fill theoretical categories and provide examples of polar types.” In this research, the cases extend emergent theory on urban spatial politics in India. They also provide examples of polar types as they examine the politics of three groups with distinctly different socioeconomic and political profiles.

The case studies in this dissertation represent grassroots struggles against displacement from public spaces in Indian cities due to official planning processes. The first case examines the struggles of a low-income community of bamboo weavers for a public sidewalk from which they were evicted to make way for a public rail project. The second case examines the activism of a middle-class environmental network campaigning against felling of street trees for a municipal road-widening project. The third case study examines an elite neighborhood group’s fights to protect a neighborhood public space against authorized and unauthorized encroachments.

Though they represent discrete income groups, the cases have common factors that make them amenable to comparison. In all three cases state actors cited public interest and exigencies of development to transform a public space and replace one public

purpose with another. The changes directly or indirectly affected the use value of the space for the groups that protested displacement. In all three cases, the protesting groups framed their claims for public space in the language of official laws and policies. The emergent politics and engagement between the protesting groups and state actors reinforce the “ambivalences built into concepts like the public” (Glover, 2008, p.217). In the three cases, though the contested spaces were government property, state actors’ responses to the protestors were conciliatory. If official responses were aimed at expeditiously overcome local hurdles to development projects, their inability to circumvent local resistance highlight the enmeshment of spatial planning with caste, class and electoral politics.

I collected data for this research during eleven months of fieldwork in Bangalore from December 2008 to July 2010. Case studies rely on multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2012). This research relies on documents, interviews, and photo documentation as data sources. There were three broad categories of data that I sought for this research. These are (1) historic data on public spaces in Bangalore; (2) anecdotal data on how different actors of state and society conceptualize and use public space in Bangalore; (3) visual data on how city residents use public spaces and how planning agencies design public space.

The interviews were in the form of open-ended recorded conversations with 155 respondents (See Appendix One) that (1) were directly connected with the cases; (2) had information about the cases or (3) could talk about spatial politics in Bangalore.<sup>10</sup> I used the snowball sampling method where the initial set of interviewees guided me to other

---

<sup>10</sup> In some cases, I conducted multiple interviews with the same individual.

interviewees. The respondents included current and retired officials from local and parastatal planning bodies; nongovernmental organizations, academics, researchers, lawyers, journalists, social activists; environmental activists; media groups and local politicians.

Respondents provided firsthand accounts of conceptualizations and perceptions of publicness and spatial politics in Bangalore. I also relied on secondary data including scholarly papers and books on public space and urban governance; historic and contemporary maps of Bangalore; print and online media coverage; Bangalore-based online blogs; government reports, citizen journalism; court case judgments; email exchanges between Hasiru Usiru members; non-participant observation of meetings and protests; non-participant observation of activities on case study sites; casual conversations with bystanders at case study sites and photo-documentation.

## **1.5. Organization of Chapters**

This report consists of seven chapters including this introductory chapter. Chapter Two presents the theoretical framework for this research. This framework builds on literature on public space in Indian cities; master planning in Indian cities; and Lefebvre's *right to the city* concept. The literature review shows that grassroots contestations for public space in Indian cities are struggles for inclusion in the city through the occupation of material space. Current literature largely focuses the role of centralized planning in shaping urban form, spatial politics and citizenship claims in Indian cities. Arguing that less theoretical ground has been covered on how grassroots mobilizations for public

spaces shape spatial uses and politics in Indian cities, this chapter calls for an inquiry into the micro-politics of urban public space in India.

Chapter Three traces the history of public space in Bangalore and ongoing struggles for the city's public spaces as a precursor to the case studies in the next three chapters. This chapter finds a transition of public space as the commons in the pre-colonial city to public property in the post-colonial city. In the process of formalizing specific forms and uses of public space, governmental formulations also shape citizenship claims to material space in the city. This chapter argues that in disengaging with the notion of public space as contextual places, formal planning processes in Bangalore disengage from local spatial claims linked to different periods of the city's history. Hence ongoing struggles for inclusion in the city's public spaces are struggles for inclusion in the planned city.

Chapter Four examines the struggles of a community of bamboo basket weavers to legitimize claims to a public sidewalk from which they were evicted to accommodate a public Metro rail project. The weavers made claims of use value to the sidewalk to articulate their economic rights and legitimacy in the master-planned city. In response, state actors used a dual policy of appeasement and control of marginal groups via welfare schemes where "land is promised but never secured" (Roy, 2004, p.150). The KR Road case highlights the limited traction that marginal communities have in official formulations of the city and citizenship. Consequently the weavers seek a foothold in the city by engaging in caste politics in order to get concessions from state actors.

Chapter Five examines the mobilizations of Hasiru Usiru, a middle-class environmental network of individuals and organizations campaigning to protect the urban greens and seeking inclusion in local governance processes. The case provides a new



perspective on bourgeois activism where claims to public space are also struggles to preserve the city's green heritage and culture. The case reiterates that there is no single bourgeois imaginary of the city (Arabindoo, 2011). It also demonstrates that middle-class activism that diverges ideologically from official formulations of urban space finds resistance from official and other bourgeois imaginaries of the city.

Chapter Six examines elite-class mobilizations against authorized and unauthorized encroachments of a public playground in an affluent neighborhood. The PO Ground case shows that official planning processes conceptually privilege but are unable to protect elite-class visions of green and orderly urban spaces. In a planning milieu where displacement has become a precondition for development, elite mobilizations for public space represent protests against the master plan's unfulfilled promises. The PO Ground case also demonstrates when faced with exclusionary planning practices, urban elites seek resolution not in the offices of politicians and bureaucrats, but in local arenas of spatial and electoral politics.

Chapter Seven summarizes the findings of this dissertation. The research demonstrates that contestations for public space in Bangalore are protests against official planning policies that do not protect or accommodate diverse spatial practices in the city.<sup>11</sup> In their contestations for public space, different groups use different strategies to engage and dialogue with governing bodies. In this context, local struggles for public space emerge as critical arenas of engagement as various actors of state and society articulate their

---

<sup>11</sup> Here, I emphasize that struggles for public space may or may not be struggles for communal or congregational spaces. Instead, public spaces are spaces to which different social groups make collective yet homogenized rights that resonate most directly with their own imaginations. I think this is especially important to note as a counterargument to scholarship that dichotomizes public space as open space (municipal property) versus urban commons, as a more communal form of public space.

notions of public space and public interest. In sum, this dissertation argues that in framing their claims in historical, social and cultural aspects of city life, city residents' struggles for public space set the stage for new forms of inclusion in the city.

### **1.6. Contribution to Planning Theory and Practice**

This research is set against a backdrop of rapid urbanization in Indian cities where large-scale official planning programs are drastically transforming space and spatial practices of local residents. Examining state-society engagement in spatial politics, this research makes the following theoretical and practical contributions to knowledge of spatial planning in contemporary Indian cities.

First, this study reveals that public space in the contemporary city is a political construct that different actors invoke to assert their right to occupy or use urban space. Unveiling the limitations of official planning policies in encapsulating the multi-textured and multi-layered form of Indian cities, this research finds that local mobilizations for public space highlight the role of various local actors of state and society in shaping urban space. The research finds that official mandates for inclusive governance do create more interactions between actors of state and society, but the interactions do not necessarily translate in more inclusive outcomes for social groups. This research reiterates the fragmented nature of the Indian state as bureaucrats and politicians at different levels of government pursue development agendas based on political expediency. In cases where state actors cite exigencies of development to circumvent local resistance to displacement, city residents are moved to address their use value-based

claims to public spaces, not through official governance processes, but electoral politics or collective activism.

Second, this dissertation provides key insights regarding participatory governance in Indian cities. In examining fine-grained accounts of local spatial politics, this research highlights the varying ability of different social groups to access power and resources in government. The research shows urban elites engaging in vote bank politics, middle class residents protesting on the city streets and marginal groups ensconcing their claims in caste politics. As urban elites and middle-class residents shift their activism from higher levels of politics and bureaucracy to local arenas of vote bank politics and political activism, they now have a greater engagement with elected representatives and public officials. This poses the question of how the gentrification of vote bank politics and ties between public functionaries and middle-class residents would affect marginal groups' access to public resources.<sup>12</sup>

Third, this research unveils a possible reason for limited success of participatory planning exercises as government officials initiate interactions with project-affected groups after the project planning and design stage. In doing so, planning processes undermine the ability of community actors to make timely and meaningful contributions in the project-planning process. Furthermore, centralized planning processes sometimes work at counter purposes with participatory governance because they are implemented by state agencies that are not accountable to local communities. Furthermore, dialogue and

---

<sup>12</sup> I adopt this term from Ghertner (2011:526) who writes about the linkages of the Bhagidari movement in Delhi with local politicians as follows, "If gentrification is broadly defined as the displacement of a lower class from a space into which a wealthier class is entering, then Bhagidari brings about nothing less than the gentrification of political participation, or the gentrification of spaces of political association once open to the public."

interactions between state actors and local groups have limited outreach as they take place in town halls and neighborhood community centers that are not welcoming to marginal groups. These observations suggest that the participatory component of planning projects is not designed to optimize public inputs but as conciliatory gestures to minimize local resistance to change.

Fourth, this research provides insights into the implication of Lefebvre's concept of the *right to the city* in the Indian context. This concept has a compelling hold on the imaginaries of planning theorists, practitioners and policy-makers as a radical approach to inclusive city-building. However, there is little clarity on how city residents operationalize the concept to claim inclusion in urban space and how struggles for a right to the city affect physical space in Indian cities. This research shows that grassroots struggles for public space are claims (rather than constitutionally-granted rights) of use value to spaces of multiple contestations. Characterizing struggles for public space as *right to the city* struggles in Indian cities conceptually widens the arena of claims to public space. But the concept does not substantively address the question of whether such struggles promote spatial justice on the ground.

Finally, this dissertation reiterates the significance of public spaces as contextual places of collective life reflecting the social and spatial politics embedded in their locations.<sup>13</sup> In developing different public spaces, the master plan provides potential

---

<sup>13</sup> Massey (2005: 152-3) writes, "All spaces are socially regulated in some way, if not by explicit rules (no ball games, no loitering) then by the potentially more competitive (more market-like?) regulation which exists in the absence of explicit (collective? public? democratic? autocratic?) controls. 'Open space' in that particular sense, is a dubious concept. As well as objecting to the new privatisations and exclusions, we might address the question of the social relations which could construct any new, and better, notion of public space. And that might include, sometimes, facing up to the necessities of negotiated exclusion."

arenas for democratic struggles for inclusion in the city (Massey, 2005). Thus this research argues that like the urban commons, planned public spaces are negotiated spaces that reflect the politics of urban space, society and governance in Indian cities.

## Chapter Two

### The “Public” in Space, Society and Governance: A theoretical framework

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter draws on literature on urban public space, master planning in Indian cities and Lefebvre’s (1968) *right to the city* concept to build a conceptual framework for analyzing the politics of public space in Indian cities. There is significant scholarship about convergent governmental and bourgeois urban imaginaries conflicting with the subsistence claims of marginal groups in public spaces in Indian cities. As the literature review will reveal, the lines of engagement between urban groups and state actors are drawn on socioeconomic status, legality of spatial claims and access to state actors. There is less scholarly work on the politics and outcomes of local grassroots mobilizations in shaping space and governance in Indian cities.

As I will argue in this chapter and in the empirical chapters to follow, ongoing struggles for urban public space in India invite a reconceptualization of state-society engagement vis-à-vis spatial planning and governance. Recent reforms in legislation and urban policy have created new opportunities for local public institutions and communities to enter official arenas of participatory planning and governance. Notwithstanding the official embracement of inclusive governance processes, this research does not find a perceptible shift in power structures and politics from the pre-reforms era when central and state governments controlled urban planning. Based on the empirical evidence in the

following chapters, I find that prevalent models of participatory planning do not necessarily translate into favorable outcomes for local residents. However the literature review and my own empirical work indicates that the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA has energized and motivated both official agencies and urban residents to interact in public forums.

Contrary to prevailing research that finds state actors and middle-class groups collaborating to actualize convergent visions for global cities in exclusionary planning processes, my dissertation calls for more nuanced readings of the Indian state and middle class society. My empirical findings portray an ambivalent Indian state where bureaucrats, technocrats and politicians operating at different tiers of government and with different agendas, engage with middle-class actors and marginal groups based on the exigencies of development and political pressure. Rather than following fixed trajectories of power and rationality, state-society engagement in struggles for public space in Indian cities evolve in a complex and unpredictable terrain of electoral and developmental politics.

This research examines urban public spaces as sites of conflicts, contestations and negotiations that reflect the social and power politics of the city (Harvey, 1991; Mitchell, 1995; Baviskar, 2003; Massey, 2005; Low & Smith, 2006; Anjaria, 2009; Harvey, 2012). Public spaces, like the city itself, “are a product of, and internally dislocated by, heterogeneous and sometimes conflicting social identities/relations” (Massey, 2005, p.152). In Indian cities, scholars note a confluence in official planning policies and bourgeois visions for clean and green cities that exclude marginal groups from public spaces (Baviskar, 2003; Fernandes, 2004; Nair, 2005; Bhan, 2009; Anjaria, 2009; Roy, 2009; Arabindoo, 2011; Ghertner, 2012). State actors engage with middle-class and elite

groups in participatory forums of governance (Zérah, 2007; Nainan & Baud, 2008; Harriss, 2010; Coelho et al, 2011) while keeping marginal groups on the periphery of the planned city (Benjamin & Raman, 2001). This scholarship also notes that state actors privilege the claims of middle-class groups to public spaces as sites of “aesthetics, leisure, safety, and health” (Baviskar, 2003, p.90).

Elite and middle-class groups evoke zone regulations to petition state agencies and courts to evict street vendors and hawkers from their neighborhoods (Rajagopal, 2001; Anjaria, 2009; Ghertner, 2012).<sup>14</sup> The master plan has assumed a central role in elite and middle-class campaigns to maintain neighborhood public spaces (Baviskar, 2003; Kamath & Vijayabaskar, 2009). Judicial courts have responded to environmental activism with rulings to demolish slums and evict street economies (Bhan, 2009; Ghertner, 2012). For their part, indigent groups seek concessions from the welfare state using vote bank politics (Baviskar, 2003; Chatterjee, 2004; Roy, 2009).<sup>15</sup> These formulations of state-society engagement in Indian cities follow Chatterjee’s (2004) characterization of middle-class groups as civil society and indigent populations as political society.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> “While transnationally circulating notions of how cities should look and function (for instance, what a post-industrial, “global” city should look like) have shaped the debates over hawkers in the city, older, more modernist ideals regarding the city and city spaces are dominant among the most active NGOs, as well as among residents’ groups. In their literature, meetings, interviews and media statements, activists in these groups rely on orthodox modernist principles regarding the functioning of city, most notably, the privileging of movement and flow over other concerns” (Anjaria, 2006, p.2142).

<sup>15</sup> Vote bank politics involves “poor groups laying claim to public investments in basic infrastructure and services via a ground-up process focused on land and economy in return for guaranteed access to voter lists in municipal elections” (Benjamin, 2008, p.719).

<sup>16</sup> Civil society “will appear as the closed association of modern elite groups, sequestered from the wider popular life of the communities, walled up within enclaves of civic freedom and rational law” (Chatterjee, 2004, p.4)... Whereas political society represents organized groups of marginal and underprivileged communities that “transgress the strict lines of legality in struggling to live and work” (Chatterjee, 2004, p.40).



Recent scholarship provides evidence that state-society engagement in Indian cities does not always occur within clear boundaries of legality, citizenship and rationality. Be it municipal officials' refusal to heed middle-class activists' demands to evict hawkers in Mumbai (Anjaria, 2009); or state actors' solicitation of slum dwellers' participation in decisions regarding relocation housing in Dharavi (Weinstein, 2009) – these instances complicate Chatterjee's (2004) binary, revealing instead a complex arena with local state actors caught between subaltern groups, middle-class actors and official planning agendas. In the case of public spaces that, like cities, are “multiple, contested territories inscribed by complex local histories”, (Benjamin, 2008, p.720), this raises the question of how multiple users stake claims to land that is officially municipal property.

Scholars describe city residents' struggles for urban space as *right to the city* claims based on use value and cultural rights to urban space (Mitchell, 2003; Harvey, 2008; Anjaria, 2009; Crossa, 2009; Harvey, 2012; Mitchell, 2012; Marcuse, 2012). Drawn to its normative appeal as a collective right of all city inhabitants, I examine the *right to the city* concept as a starting point in discussing grassroots struggles for urban public space. As the literature review will demonstrate, the concept does not take the discussion very far in explaining how grassroots struggles unfold or widen spaces of democracy on the ground (Purcell, 2002; Merrifield, 2011; Harvey, 2012). Observing that the *right to the city* concept provides a conceptual anchor with little substantive contribution about local spatial struggles in Indian cities, this research turns to a grounded approach to theorize the empirical data in this dissertation.

In building a theoretical framework for this dissertation, this chapter proceeds as follows. The next section consists of a literature review of three utopian

conceptualizations of material urban space represented by public space, master planning and Lefebvre's (1968) *right to the city* concept. The last section identifies key gaps in the literature review that this dissertation addresses in the empirical chapters that follow.

## **2.2 Spatial Politics and Democracy in Indian cities**

This section examines literature on public space, master planning in Indian cities and the *right to the city* concept as utopian formulations of urban space that are subverted when they intersect with everyday spatial politics in urban India. As this discussion unfolds, public spaces emerge as contextual "*milieus* embedded in people's social and cultural lives" (Miao, 2000, p.2).<sup>17</sup> Growing pressure for urban land has put a corresponding pressure on public spaces in Indian cities in the form of authorized and unauthorized encroachments on streets, parks, playgrounds and natural features. Belying their symbolic promises of universal access and political freedom, public spaces emerge as contested sites between different actors of state and society.

Studies on state-society engagement in Indian cities find that middle-class residents claim rights to urban space as lawful citizens whereas indigent groups rely on the welfare state and vote bank politics for concessions (Chatterjee, 2004).<sup>18</sup> Where urban elites and middle-class residents use the master plan to protect neighborhood public spaces, indigent groups rely on public goods and services for private needs of shelter and subsistence (Benjamin & Raman, 2001; Chatterjee, 2004; Nair, 2005; Ghosh, 2005).

---

<sup>17</sup> Author's emphasis on the term "milieus".

<sup>18</sup> Describing the former as civil society and the latter as political society, Chatterjee (2004: 40) proposes that members of political society "accept that their activities are often illegal and contrary to good civil behavior, but they make a claim to a habitation and a livelihood as a matter of right". Government bodies engage with political society "not as bodies of citizens but as convenient instruments for the administration of welfare to marginal and underprivileged population groups" (Chatterjee, 2004, p.40).

Thus the politics of public space get enmeshed with issues of housing and subsistence rights of marginal groups (Nair, 2005).

Central to this research is the question of how different social groups contest transformations and displacement from every day public spaces in the city. Recent studies describe grassroots resistance to displacement and disenfranchisement from urban public spaces as struggles for a *right to the city* (Lefebvre, 1968; Mitchell, 2003; Crossa, 2009; Anjaria, 2009; Harvey, 2012; Mitchell, 2012). The *right to the city* represents a fundamental right of urban inhabitants to occupy the city as participants in everyday urban life (Lefebvre, 1968; Purcell, 2002; Harvey, 2008). But the concept does not provide a substantive framework to practice on the ground.<sup>19</sup> Acknowledging the normative appeal of the *right to the city*, this literature review calls for a different conceptualization of local spatial struggles that recognize the socioeconomic factors and power politics that drive planning decisions in Indian cities.

### **2.2.1. Public Space**

This section explores urban public space as a site of spatial politics, with a focus on the politics of public space in Indian cities. Public space is shared space and different people experience it in different ways. A neighborhood public park, for example, may be a safe space for a morning walk by the elderly; a place to play for a five-year old; or a place of economic activity by a peanut vendor. It may also be perceived as an exclusionary space by pet owners, or by older children wishing to play noisy games. This quotidian example reveals that publicness of space is an uneven quality subject to varying interpretations.

---

<sup>19</sup> Harvey (2012: xviii) concludes that the *right to the city* concept “can never be an end in itself, even if it increasingly looks to be one of the most propitious paths to take.”

In its most simple definition public space is non-private space. Public space “is traditionally differentiated from private space in terms of the rules of access, the source and nature of control over entry to a space, individual and collective behavior sanctioned in specific spaces, and rules of use” (Low & Smith, 2006, p.3).<sup>20</sup> Urban public space is a material site that provides the urban resident a public forum to engage with the outside world (Arendt, 1957).<sup>21</sup> Scholarship in the West abounds in idealized imageries of public space as communal space accommodating diversity and tolerance of uses and users (Jacobs, 1961; Gehl, 1980; Zukin, 1992; Carr, 1992; Mitchell, 1995). Other scholars have described public space as testing grounds for inclusiveness and tolerance of urban society (Mitchell, 1995; Low, 2000). Yet other accounts view engagement in public life with its novelty, uncertainties and dangers as an enriching experience for the city dweller (Sennet, 1974).<sup>22</sup> Urban designers have discussed the critical role of public spaces in contributing to good and democratic city form (Carr et al, 1968; Alexander, 1977). It is also a forum for collective life where people can watch and be among other people, participate in daily

---

<sup>20</sup> Low and Smith (2006: 3-4) describe public space thus, “Public space is traditionally differentiated from private space in terms of the rules of access, the source and nature of control over entry to a space, individual and collective behavior sanctioned in specific spaces, and rules of use. Whereas private space is demarcated and protected by state-regulated rules of private property use, public space, while free of regulation, is generally conceived as open to greater or lesser public participation. Public space” has very different meanings in different societies, places, and times, and as all of this suggests, its meaning today is very much bound up with the contrast between public and private space.”

<sup>21</sup> In her book “The Human Condition” Arendt (1958:50-2) describes the term “public” as follows, “The term “public” signifies two closely interrelated but not altogether identical phenomena: It means, first, that everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity... Second, the term “public” signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it... To live together in the world means essentially that world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, related and separates men at the same time.”

<sup>22</sup> Sennet (1974: 295) writes, “... people grow only by processes of encountering the unknown. Things and persons which are strange may upset familiar ideas and received truths; unfamiliar terrain serves positive function in the life of a human being. The function it serves is to accustom the human being to take risks.”

activities and “experience other people functioning in various situations” (Gehl, 1980, p.17).

In official terms public space is government property meant to serve the public interest. In a democratic society, the “right to control public property is vested in government officials who determine who has access to it and under what conditions” (Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1992, p.6). Here, “when land is owned by the “public”, government officials are thought to represent the interests of all citizens” (Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1992, p.6). How government actors shape public space says much about official interpretations of public interest and citizenship.

The vast literature in the West and East suggests that official descriptions envision and plan public spaces as “planned, orderly, and safe spaces” (Mitchell, 1995, p.115). Notwithstanding official language, there exist different interpretations of public space within officialdom in contemporary Indian cities. Where bureaucrats and politicians aim to clean and develop public parks, lakes and beachfronts as aesthetic symbols of global cities, lower officials and elected representatives may encourage appropriations of urban space for monetary or electoral gains.

This research focuses on the role of urban public space as a site of everyday spatial politics in the city (Mumford, 1937; Arendt, 1958). In a democratic society, “Change, multiplicity, and contestation - rather than constituting the failure of public space - may in fact define its very nature” (Crawford, 1995, pp.8-9). For, “... the tendency to romanticize public space as an emptiness which enables free and equal speech does not take on board the need to theorize space and place as the product of social relations which are most likely conflicting and unequal” (Massey, 2005, p.152). Urban society is not

equal. Likewise, urban public space is uneven in access and use as it reflects conflicts and contradictions inherent in urban society. Hence, the idea of public space as an inclusive space in a democratic society is at best “a continually receding horizon of the open-minded space-to-come, which will not ever be reached but must continually be worked towards” (Massey, 2005, p.153).

Public spaces “include very recognizable geographies of daily movement, which may be local, regional, or global, but they also include electronic and institutional “spaces” that are every bit as palpable, if experienced quite differently, in daily life” (Low & Smith, 2006, p.3). This research focuses on the idea of public space as material, location-specific and context-specific “*milieus* embedded in people’s social and cultural lives” (Miao, 2000, p.2).<sup>23</sup> Democratic struggles for urban space gain prominence when they “assert a material presence” (Harvey, 2006, p.147).<sup>24</sup> Thus this research moves ahead with the idea of material public space as “an arena where negotiation is forced upon us” (Massey, 2005, p.154).

Central to this research is the tension between “ongoing opposition of visions that have been held, on the one hand, by those who seek order and control and, on the other, by those who seek places for oppositional political activity and unmediated interaction”

---

<sup>23</sup> Author’s emphasis

<sup>24</sup> Harvey (2006:147) emphasizes the significance of absolute space in reinforcing democratic struggles, “We can, to take another example, debate interminably all manner of ideas and designs expressive of the relationality of Ground Zero, but at some point something has to be materialized in absolute space and time. Once built, the site acquires a “permanence” (Whitehead’s term) of physical form. And while it is always open to reconceptualize the meaning of that material form so that people can learn to live it differently, the sheer materiality of construction in absolute space and time carries its own weight and authority. By the same token, political movements that aspire to exercise some power in the world remain ineffectual until they assert a material presence. It is all fine and good, for example to evoke relational conceptions such as the proletariat in motion or the multitude rising up. But no one knows what any of that means until real bodies go into the absolute spaces of the streets of Seattle, Quebec City and Genoa at a particular moment in absolute time.”

(Mitchell, 1995, p.115). This presents a paradox where, as municipal property, public space is subject to official regulations though for the space to be public, it must be free of control and surveillance.

The urban commons as an alternate formulation of public space, are closer to indigenous spatial practices in Indian cities.<sup>25</sup> Unlike municipal public spaces that are managed by state actors, non-state actors shape the commons through their collective spatial practices (Baviskar & Gidwani, 2011; Harvey, 2012). The commons do not necessarily differ from public space in form, but unlike official formulations, they are shaped by everyday spatial patterns, movements and politics.<sup>26</sup> The idea of the commons provides a suitable segue into the discussion on public space in Indian cities.

Pre-colonial public spaces were bound by sociocultural practices rather than formal administrative boundaries (Kaviraj, 1997). These spaces were integral to the social, cultural, economic and political life in the city. Public spaces in pre-colonial India served a range of functions linked with social, economic, ceremonial or political activities. Everyday spaces like the *bazaar* (market) and street were as much spaces of economic and social interactions as they were spaces of unexpected encounters (Chakrabarty,

---

<sup>25</sup> “Commons” are physical spaces to which a group shares a set of rights. The group may consist of all citizens or some limited set of members. The rights shared could be all those enjoyed by citizens, or some specific right (such as grazing one’s cattle after the harvest). The rights may be completely distributed (and traditionally have been; see Neeson 1993), yet they are shared in some roughly equitable fashion and to a significant degree are subject to the will of the group. In some cases, the space is only a commons during the time that it is used as such. Thus, we may think of a parking lot as a commons while a political rally is being held there, but not when it is being used for valet parking. The term may be stretched to cover non-place resources such as intellectual property (public domain)” (Childs, 2004, p.21-22).

<sup>26</sup> Consider Gidwani and Baviskar’s (2011:43) definition of commons in Indian cities, “Urban commons include so-called “public goods”: the air we breathe, public parks and spaces, public transportation, public sanitation systems, public schools, public waterways, and so forth. But they also include the less obvious: municipal garbage that provides livelihoods to waste-pickers; wetlands, waterbodies, and riverbeds that sustain fishing communities, washerwomen, and urban cultivators; streets as arteries of movement but also as places where people work, live, love, dream, and voice dissent; and local bazaars that are sites of commerce and cultural invention.”

1991). The Indian bazaar remains the “unenclosed, exposed and interstitial ‘outside’ which acts as the meeting point of several communities” (Chakrabarty, 1991, pp.22-3).

In pre-colonial Indian cities, boundaries between public space and private space were blurred and defined by local arrangements and negotiations (Appadurai, 1987; Hosagrahar, 2006). Despite being negotiated spaces and thus akin to the commons, public spaces in pre-colonial India were conceptually “outside” spaces that did not belong to anyone (Kaviraj, 1997). Taking the example of the public street, Kaviraj (1997: 98) illustrates the distinction between private space and public space as inside and outside spaces in pre-colonial Indian cities:

The street was the outside, the space for which one did not have responsibility, or which was not one’s own, and it therefore lacked any association with obligation, because it did not symbolise any significant principle, did not express any values. It was merely a conceptually insignificant negative of the inside, which was prized and invested with affectionate decoration. Thus, the outside – the streets, squares, bathing ghats, and other facilities used by large numbers – were crowded, but they did not constitute a different kind of valued space, a civic space with norms and rules of use of its own, different from the domestic values of bourgeois privacy.

The inside/outside binary of private and public spaces also meant private property-owners were less concerned with what occurred outside their homes. The disengagement of propertied citizens and state actors from public space also meant that such spaces were less regulated and open to encroachments (Kaviraj, 1997). Not bound in official rules and norms of conduct, the city’s *bazaars*, streets and squares functioned as the commons whose location and use had specific meanings for different users.

Public spaces in pre-colonial Indian cities were also important cultural and ceremonial spaces that temporarily connected different communities and private spaces within the



city. Consider Freitag's (1991: 67-8) account of the annual *ramleela* festival that brought together different communities and state actors in space and time:

At their heart, such open-air enactments, rest significantly, on the participation of the crowd. South Asian collective activities in open spaces constituted a fundamental form of expression of the polity – a form that we may take as a kind of 'public opinion' admittedly quite different from that characteristic of western civil society but nonetheless crucial in shaping and defining legitimate political organization of the state.... Popular legitimation of the state itself, as well as the honours accorded its most prominent members, was achieved in part, at least, through the roles the populace played as participants and consumers of open-air events.

Communal festivals celebrated in public spaces were more than ceremonial events. They were also political events that brought together different communities and their leaders in a visible show of solidarity. Freitag (1991: 74) notes that the open spaces for the *ramleela* celebrations, "... while not building on a legal understanding of 'public' in the way western European spaces did, nevertheless were widely recognized as available for collective exercises, and as accessible to a wide range of urban dwellers." Spatially, the *ramleela* procession's movement "through key urban spaces (including important neighbourhoods, marketplaces and disputed territories) conveyed the centrality of the exercise to the cultural life of the city" (Freitag, 1991, p.75).<sup>27</sup> It is noteworthy that the procession followed specific routes, touching specific landmarks and areas along the

---

<sup>27</sup> The integration of public spaces in the city as Freitag (1991: 74-5) depicts the *ramleela* procession, "These enactments took place within specific physical contexts, and the shape of the enactments held significance for the open urban spaces in which they occurred. Such open spaces, while not building on a legal understanding of 'public' in the way western European spaces did, nevertheless were widely recognized as available for collective exercises, and as accessible to a wide range of urban dwellers.<sup>26</sup> Open-air enactments juxtaposed participants in a single location and for a single purpose (however disparate the constituent groups might actually be). The movement of a procession through key urban spaces (including important neighbourhoods, marketplaces and disputed territories) conveyed the centrality of the exercise to the cultural life of the city. The performance constituted, as well, an assertion that the urban space itself comprised a single cultural entity – an assertion that was tempered with a recognition of the distinctive local communities within it."

way. In doing so the events also signified public spaces as fixed places whose locations and contexts hold specific meanings and significance for participants.

The *ramleela* festival continues to be celebrated in similar fashion in contemporary Indian cities. Srinivas (2004) provides a similar account of the historic *karaga jatre*, a local festival annually celebrated in Bangalore. The *karaga jatre* starts at a temple and moves in a large procession through the streets of the original settlement of Bangalore (known as *peté*), temporarily converting the *peté* into a fluid, unitary public space. As in pre-colonial days, the procession brings local communities and their leaders together in a high-profile media-covered event (Srinivas, 2004). These accounts of the *ramleela* and *karaga* festivals highlight the continued use of public space for indigenous spatial practices and state-society engagement in unofficial forums in Indian cities.

The advent of colonialism brought two significant changes in public spaces in India. First, there was greater governmental control and regulation of the commons. Second, the colonists introduced a shift in the formation and use of public space in Indian cities as municipal property. Thus, "... by naming certain urban properties and spaces 'public,' drafting rules governing what activities could take place there, and enforcing these rules through new urban institutions the colonial government created both a concept and a corporeal substance – 'public space' – that had no prior history in the Indian city" (Glover, 2008, p.212).

The colonists formalized the concept of public space to regulate space and society in Indian cities. For instance, the colonists sought to depoliticize public spaces by categorizing public celebrations of religious occasions as private events (Frietag, 1991). By restricting permitted activities in specific forms of public space, such as parks or

promenades, the rulers also restricted the publics that could use such spaces. The pre-colonial version of public space was by no means all-inclusive, yet the ambiguities of use made them more accessible to different groups. In contrast, colonial formalization of public space “produced fundamental constraints on the way people could conceptualize the relationship between society and space in the colonial city, and forced older traditions of spatial practice to alter” (Glover, 2008, p.214).

In developing a new taxonomy of open spaces and civic amenities, the colonists dismantled enduring spaces of public life such as street markets, market squares and street hawker zones that were integral elements of the Indian urban-scape and political economy.<sup>28</sup> Local residents resisted the colonial administration’s attempts to discipline space and subjects alike through acts of subversion and protest (Hosagrahar, 2005; Glover, 2008). “Organized petitions, demonstrations, delays, non-cooperation, disobedience, vandalism, and non-compliance were tactics to confront the Government and to drive compromises even if they were not the outcome residents desired” (Hosagrahar, 2005, p.184). During colonial rule, everyday public spaces were also sites of national political activity and conflicts between the rulers and the ruled (Hosagrahar, 2005).<sup>29</sup> Thus the colonists’ efforts to impose a new spatial order in the public realm were

---

<sup>28</sup> Douglass and Ooi’s (2008:41) description of transformations to public spaces in Pacific Asian cities fit descriptions of public space in contemporary Indian cities today, “... replacement of traditional open markets with enclosed supermarkets and malls that have no spaces for social encounters outside of noisy food courts; advertisements and commercial signs meeting the eye at every turn; new business districts with no public sidewalks or pedestrian right of ways; widened streets to accommodate the growing number of automobiles with high fences and metal barriers to prevent passengers from crossing from one side to the other; huge gated and privately owned suburban housing developments with no rights of public access; private police with surveillance cameras in privately owned shopping areas and buildings; the enclosure of the out-of doors indoor through the complete filling of lots with buildings, leaving no spaces for public benches, greenery or non-commercial activities.”

<sup>29</sup> “During the early twentieth century when Indian nationalism was on the rise as also were protests against British colonial rule, the transformed civic square of Chandni Chowk provided the political space for dissent and demonstrations. For some time, Company Bagh, as the redesigned gardens of Begum Bagh were now called, offered an outdoor area for various Indian professional groups to convene. Subsequently

neither fully accepted nor unchallenged. Instead, colonial subjects challenged the rulers, taking recourse in courts of law or taking advantage of the “number of ambivalences built into concepts like the ‘public’ ...” (Glover, 2008, p.217).

Western conceptualizations of public space took root in Indian cities and bourgeois Indian imaginations through British colonialism and modern master planning. Post-colonial governments, as the next section on master planning discusses, privileged western models of planning. In doing so, state actors repeated and reinforced colonial spatial practices in the public realm. Public spaces in post-Independence Indian cities became a color and percentage in the planner’s palette of land uses. Designed for recreational and aesthetic purposes, planned public spaces served middle-class lifestyles and were less amenable to the informal uses of indigent groups. Thus elites and middle-class became entitled users of parks, playgrounds, streets and open spaces.<sup>30</sup> The urban poor, however, could often only access public spaces through unauthorized encroachments and using stem of bribes and patronage politics with state actors. Thus the politics of public space has become the politics of the urban poor in Indian cities.

It is noteworthy that as middle-class residents embraced modern conceptualizations of public space, the latter was no longer the uncared-for “outside” that Kaviraj describes in

---

the nationalists used the area for political meetings. Until the declaration of independence in 1947, the square served as a site for political meetings, speeches, congresses, and silent marches. As a political ‘hot spot’ it was also the locus for British reprisals and arrests of demonstrators. This transformation of a place of legendary commerce and cosmopolitanism into a political space for ordinary people was a new one. The square that the colonial authorities had meant to be didactic and to appropriate the authority of the King’s palace, ironically, was to serve against them as a public sphere in the development of democratic and Indian nationalist consciousness” (Hosagrahar, 2005, p.57).

<sup>30</sup> The concern with an ordered environment, that is safe, hygienic, unpolluted, green and uncongested, is in some ways an extension of the concern about bodily well-being. Personal health, physical and mental, is linked to ‘quality of life’ and the affluent are more able to address their anxieties about crime, disease and other stressful urban characteristics. Parks for morning walkers, temples and ashrams where they can seek spiritual succour, the ‘green’ magic bullet of ‘plant more trees’ are ingredients in imagining cities in ways that exclude basic concerns of shelter, sanitation, water and transport as they affect the lives of the working class (Baviskar, 2002).

the pre-colonial Indian city. Instead, in the planned post-colonial city, despite multiple bourgeois imaginaries of the urban, dominant middle-class concerns for aesthetic and safe public spaces have become conflated with private property and citizenship issues (Baviskar, 2003; Chatterjee, 2004; Fernandes, 2004; Nair, 2005; Arabindoo, 2011).

Growing pressure on land in the past two decades has translated into intensified struggles for public space among middle-class actors, street hawkers and state actors in Indian cities (Fernandes, 2004; Anjaria, 2006; Anjaria, 2009). Middle-class associations have targeted “the ‘hawker menace’ as a threat to a wide array of middle-class interests, including inconvenience, sanitation, fears of social disorder and the threat of declining real estate prices for residential areas marked for relocating hawkers” (Fernandes, 2004, p.2422). State actors have supported middle-class imaginaries of public space that resonate with official visions of global cities. For instance, Fernandes (2004: 2421) finds in Mumbai that the “beautification drive in Mumbai has not been limited to private civic organisations of the middle-classes, but has also represented official policy of the local state government’s Cultural Affairs ministry.” But there is also discord between state actors and middle-class groups, when planning processes adversely affect middle-class interests. Nair (2005: 189) observes about middle-class judicial activism vis-à-vis neighborhood public spaces in Bangalore:

Public interest petitions are frequently linked to the protection of private interest, or more correctly, to the value of private property. Petitions that seek to prevent civic amenity sites from being allotted to noisy kalyana mantapas, protect public parks from multiple users, or reassert middle-class zoning wherever it has suffered attrition must be viewed as actions that succeed in enhancing the ‘quality of life’ in an area, with important consequences.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> “Kalyana mantapa” is a south Indian term for a marriage hall

Indigent groups in Indian cities have not been passive against official and middle-class efforts to evict them from public spaces. Organized self-employed communities commonly make claims of tenure and economic dependence to the locations of their trade in the city. Unable to establish legal right to the location itself, they assert rights to livelihood and shelter that they access through bribes to municipality workers and vote bank politics (Chatterjee, 2004; Anjaria, 2006). For instance Anjaria (2006: 2142) notes in his study of Mumbai hawkers that “claims to space often do have the unofficial recognition of the state, which is established through ‘hafta’ and long-term personal interaction with various municipal workers...”<sup>32</sup>

Notwithstanding state actors’ unofficial recognition, official responses to the claims of indigent groups remain arbitrary and contingent on political exigencies (Rajagopal, 2001; Chatterjee, 2004; Roy, 2004). Street economies and slum dwellers serve essential (and affordable) domestic, economic and political urban functions in the city, and state actors recognize their integral role in the city’s political economy through piecemeal efforts. Chatterjee (2004: 137) explains official ambivalence in legitimizing marginal groups that encroach on public lands thus:

Large sections of the urban poor could not be treated as legitimate citizens because their habitation and livelihood were so often premised on a violation of the law. And yet, as I have mentioned before, there were powerful social and political reasons for extending certain kinds of benefits and protection to these

---

<sup>32</sup> Anjaria (2006: 2142) writes, “Whereas citizens’ groups and the media may claim there is a “free-for-all” in Mumbai’s public spaces, and outward appearances of public spaces may seem to support this, there are rather firm, albeit informal, mechanisms among hawkers to control the use of space... most hawkers in the prominent areas of north Mumbai have been hawking in the same spot for at least 10 years, and, while many were born in the city, the rest have been living and working in the city for at least 20 years. Hawkers cannot simply set up their stall where and when they please. The unlicensed hawkers will explain that everyone around them knows this is their spot, meaning only they have the ability to hawk there. Such claims carry with them the power of recognition among other hawkers in the area and among the nearby shopkeepers and residents. Moreover... these claims to space often do have the unofficial recognition of the state, which is established through ‘hafta’ and long-term personal interaction with various municipal workers [Chatterjee 2004].”

populations as necessary inhabitants of the city. Officials from diverse agencies such as the municipal authorities, the police, the health services, transport departments, electric supply companies, etc. devised numerous ways in which such facilities and benefits could be extended on a case-to-case, *ad hoc*, or exceptional basis, without jeopardizing the overall structure of legality and property.

Chatterjee's account demonstrates how the politics of indigent groups enmesh with electoral politics, while remaining outside the realm of legal citizenship and private property ownership. In contrast, urban elites and middle-class associations "could demand the attention of government authorities as a matter of right, because they represented citizens who observed the law" (Chatterjee, 2004, p.137). Members of civil society seek engagement with governmental actors within legal and official frameworks. In Bangalore, for instance, elite and middle-class associations "prefer to fight issues like zoning and regularisation through the master plan (Kamath & Vijayabaskar, 2009, p.373).

This discussion demonstrates that public spaces in Indian cities are contextual and negotiated sites of public life whose inherent ambivalence enables different groups to make conflicting claims, as opposed to private property ownership. Furthermore, it shows that claims to public space are not necessarily claims to political or cultural freedom, but they are also private claims of subsistence and shelter of indigent groups or middle-class claims to quality-of-life issues. Furthermore, the uses and claims to public space of different strata in urban society can conflict with official formulations of public space as "a controlled and orderly retreat where a properly behaved public might experience the spectacle of the city" (Mitchell, 1995, p.115). The master plan represents the official vision for the city and its public spaces. The next section examines master planning in

Indian cities and how the plan engages with multiple public and private claims to urban space.

### **2.2.2. Master planning in India**

Major Indian cities are experiencing rapid growth in the wake of economic liberalization since the early 1990s. The Central and State governments began implementing urban reforms and large public work projects in major cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad and Bangalore in response to rapid urbanization and to achieve visions of “world class” cities. The 74<sup>th</sup> CAA made “possible the expansion of the functional domain of the local governments to include development planning in both its connotations, i.e., provision of secure livelihoods and basic amenities for disadvantaged groups and provision of basic services and infrastructure” (Mishra & Mishra, 2000, p.6).<sup>33</sup> JNNURM is a large-scale urban renewal mission that embodies the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA’s goals in bringing planned development in Indian cities. Thus in the past two decades urban development policy in Indian cities underwent a paradigm shift from centralized regulations to decentralization of planning and governance.

This section examines the role, relevance and politics of master planning in the post-reforms period, in shaping Indian cities. Under JNNURM, cities are required to prepare comprehensive development plans with a component of public participation, signifying a shift from earlier versions where the plan was presented for public viewing only as a completed document. The scholarly literature concludes that the transition to decentralized planning in Indian cities is hindered by the absence of local agencies to

---

<sup>33</sup> Vis-à-vis planning, the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA gave city governments regulatory powers in urban planning; slum improvement and upgradation; urban poverty alleviation and provision of urban amenities such as parks and playgrounds.



enact state legislations, procedural problems, inadequate resources, or incomplete devolution of powers as different agencies do not relinquish or share regulatory powers (Mohan & Rajagopal 2010). For instance, Sharma (2011: 90) finds that local bodies in Chandigarh face problems such as “conflict among agencies, poor revenue sources and paucity of personnel to carry out the civic functions.” Comparing the implementation of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA by Leftist and non-Leftist parties in Kolkata, Chandra (2004: 37) finds that irrespective of their ideologies, political parties, “have similar centralized exclusionary practices towards the general polity, creating barriers for any decentralisation initiative to succeed.” Arguing that the master plan is an important document that reflects urban power politics through its inclusions and omissions, this review examines the role of the master plan as a visual commentary on the spatial politics of the Indian city.

Indian cities enwrap informal pre-colonial and formal colonial settlement patterns, traditional marketplaces and swanky malls, modern downtown buildings and old neighborhoods, small grocery stores and large commercial complexes, gated communities and slums, urban villages and revenue layouts in an unwieldy clasp.<sup>34</sup> The spatial histories, configurations and practices in urban localities are varied and reflect the origins of the localities. For instance in Bangalore, the occasional roadside “*somberi katta*” (local term meaning “idler’s platform” built around large shady trees for villagers to rest or meet) is all that remains of a village before the city absorbed it.

The urbanized village is a good illustration of divergent spatial patterns that are part of the planned city and yet not part of it.<sup>35</sup> The typical Indian village has distinct features

---

<sup>34</sup> In Bangalore, revenue layouts are tracts of land that private developers purchase, develop into housing layouts (that may or may not follow planning byelaws) and sell.

<sup>35</sup> Nair’s (2005:148) description of urban villages in Bangalore exemplifies the inability of rational planning processes to integrate the two discrete settlement patterns of the village and city, “Individual

such as the village deity's temple on the bank of a lake or river, the market street and square (all public spaces). In contrast to the indigenous village layout, post-Independence nationalist imaginations envisioned the city to be "orderly, hygienic, scientific, technologically superior, and "civilised"" (Kaviraj, 1997, p.84).

Colonial and post-colonial planning in India mirror the vocabulary of the boulevards of Haussmann's Paris, the Garden Cities of Europe and North America, and the City Beautiful movement. Post-independence, nationalist leaders were intent on setting the agrarian nation on the path to modernity by adopting Western planning principles (Gyanprakash, 2002; Kalia, 2006; Chatterjee, 2004). Indian leaders, bureaucrats and planners sought to realize visions of orderly cities using modernist planning methods (Kalia, 2006). Planners had the opportunity to design new cities like Chandigarh, Bhubaneswar and Gandhinagar. But they also had to build around existing cities since in India "most city terrain predates Master Planning" (Benjamin, 2008, p.724).<sup>36</sup>

---

village homes rarely retain their original shape, as tiled roofs and jagalis (platforms in front of the homes) have yielded place to the modern reinforced cement concrete structure. Yet street patterns continue to survive as stubborn clots in the middle of a grid, where scenes of the rural appear unexpectedly off a main road. The physical features that remain make the village settlement instantly recognizable. The temple of the village goddess opens on to a small village square, dominated by the peepul tree with its generous platform or *katte* where *panchayats* may have been held. The integration of this form into the city layout has usually never been attempted, as the principle of layout design development are rigidly geometric, and make no allowance for undulations in the topography or changing landscape. Apart from the obvious charms of occasionally picturesque settings, these villages are a sign of how certain practices survive in the heart of the metropolis".

<sup>36</sup> During his survey and study of Indian cities in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Geddes (1915: 26-7) wrote "In city planning then, we must constantly keep in view the whole city, old and new alike in all its aspects and at all its levels. The transition in an Indian city, from narrow lanes and earthen dwellings to small streets, great streets and buildings of high importance and architectural beauty, form an inseparably interwoven structure. Once this is understood, the city plan ceases to appear as an involved network of thoroughfares dividing masses of building blocks, but appears instead as a great chessboard on which the manifold game of life in active progress. As an old student and votary of the game I may be able occasionally to suggest certain advantageous moves: each will, however, result from a survey of the situation as it has arisen and will ignore none of the difficulties, nor shall I avoid them by attempting to make a clean sweep and starting a new game in which I may express my own methods. The problem of city planning, as of chess, is to improve the situation by, as far as may be, turning its very difficulties into opportunities. Results thus obtained are both more economical and more interesting, even aesthetically, than those that are achieved by clearing the board and re-setting all the pieces."

Studies shows that official planning processes are not able to reconcile the contradictions of old and new land uses (Baviskar, 2003; ALF, 2003; Nair, 2005). In his essay titled “The Unintended City”, Sen (2001) illustrates the interweaving of indigenous and modern spatial practices in contemporary Kolkata streets:

GOATS grazing on the Maidan.<sup>37</sup> A herd of cows on Ho Chi Minh Sarani, taking a quiet route across the central city. But herds of buffaloes on Shakespeare Sarani and Camac Street have difficulty with office car traffic; everything is slowed down.

A cart overloaded with hay swaying along Bondel Road, pursued by the hornblasts of an impatient bus. Laundry in a rickshaw being brought across Chittaranjan Avenue at midday: the rickshaw-walla all but gets run over by a State bus.<sup>38</sup>

A thela-walla (pushcart vendor) is stopped by the police for taking a load on a major road at a non-permitted hour, even though the road is clear of traffic; but a wedding of the wealthy on Gariahat Road in the middle of Friday evening rush-hour is permitted to back up traffic for miles around.

Sen’s portrayal of everyday life in Kolkata reiterates the complexity of Indian cities as sites of heterogeneous and contradictory spatial practices. If, as Gyanprakash (2008: 2) poignantly describes, cities are “decidedly local lifeworlds, thick with specific experiences, practices, imaginations, and memories,” whose practices and whose experiences do master plans of contemporary Indian cities realize? This research argues that this question also relates to whose use value the master plan recognizes.

The existence of multiple spatial patterns and practices not only reflects the city’s historic legacy but is also symptomatic of the master plan’s failure to regulate urban space. Furthermore master planning is not the only process shaping cities when, “Master plans exist only for 32 per cent of urban agglomerations/towns in India; only 27 per cent

---

<sup>37</sup> Local term for “open ground”.

<sup>38</sup> Rickshaw-wallah is a local term meaning rickshaw-driver.

of Karnataka's Urban Agglomerations or towns have a master plan" (Nair, 2005, p.125).

The Bangalore-based NGO Alternative Law Forum (2003: 12) reports:

... activities and institutions of planning really account for a marginal percentage of land and housing in most Indian cities and it is now widely acknowledged that Master Planned areas actually service only a small part of the city, with the rest being given over to unauthorized (middle to lower class) constructions, revenue layouts, Gramthana sites and slums. But it [is] clear that there almost exist parallel cities within most Indian cities, the city of planned development is marked by official markers of development and legality, while the other unplanned city is often represented in terms of un-orderly development, illegality and chaos.

As the ALF report suggests, a recurring critique of the planning process and the plan is that they encourage illegalities more than regulating development (Baviskar, 2003; Nair, 2005). The proliferation of slums and other illegal constructions also testify to city agencies' inability to manage or regulate demand for housing and services in Indian cities. The master plan's inability to provide affordable housing and authorized workspaces also forces indigent groups to seek shelter and subsistence in the city's public spaces (Nair, 2005). In such a planning milieu, Baviskar (2003: 92) notes that, "The development of slums was, then, not a violation of the Plan; it was an essential accompaniment to it, its Siamese twin."

Denied legal access to space in the city, marginalized groups route their claims to basic goods and services through informal and unofficial processes (Benjamin & Raman, 2001; Chatterjee, 2004). Baviskar (2003: 96) finds that in response to the disciplining efforts of the Delhi Master Plan, indigent groups in Delhi used:

... their franchise as citizens (the "vote banks" that the bourgeoisie holds in contempt), used kinship networks, entered into unequal bargains with politicians and employers, mobilised collectively through neighbourhood associations, and most recently, attempted to create a coalition of slum-dwellers' organisations, trade unions, and NGOs.

For their part, middle-class groups seek to influence governmental decisions on public space using the master planning process and judicial activism (Baviskar, 2003; Chatterjee, 2004; Fernandes, 2004; Nair, 2005; Ghertner, 2012). The master plan has acquired “importance as a vehicle for elite RWA struggles because, in the main, it is for propertied citizens who inhabit ordered, authorised spaces” (Kamath & Vijayabaskar, 2009, p.373).<sup>39</sup>

The different ways in which different social groups engage with the master plan point to the politics that underlie the making and implementation of the document.<sup>40</sup> The preceding discussion also demonstrates the master plan’s limited role in shaping urban space as other agencies and processes also weigh. Arguably the agencies and processes belong in the social, political and institutional spaces inhabiting the space between local mobilizations and official planning processes in Indian cities.

Benjamin’s (2008) concept of occupancy urbanism and Ghertner’s (2012: 1162) theory of the “cultural politics of city making” in Indian cities describe a more complex arena of spatial politics between stark formulations of top-down and bottom-up

---

<sup>39</sup> After the conflict that the Koramangala PIL against commercialisation and violations threw up, elite RWAs prefer to fight issues like zoning and regularisation through the master plan. On areas like roads that are not likely to be divisive, regular RWA activities will proceed. But they increasingly tend to address what they call “encroachments” and zoning violations by arguing for enforcement of the Master Plan. Interventions around the Master Plan are closely tied to judicial interventions and the use of RTI. Given the “quasi-legal” status of residents of “upwardly mobile” and revenue layout RWAs, they seldom appear to make use of such tools... Elite RWAs have also taken the judicial route on quite a few issues, the Koramangala PIL, being the more well known. Even when the courts give them a favourable judgment, as they are increasingly doing in recent years (Baviskar 2002; Aurobindoo 2005), it does not make much difference to what happens on the ground.<sup>8</sup> Elite RWAs have therefore articulated the need for support from a broader spectrum of groups particularly in controversial matters like “encroachments” on land. RWAs in non elite areas do not typically report use of the judicial route although some do approach the Lok Ayukta to report stalled ward works. RTI, the new tool for improved governance, seems to be extensively used by elite and upwardly mobile RWAs in core city areas but less so by revenue layout RWAs in peripheral areas. The RTI is used to get information on a number of activities ranging from monitoring violations and encroachments to enquiring the status of the JNNURM to put pressure on government.” (Kamath & Vijayabaskar, 2009, pp.373)

<sup>40</sup> A critique of the master plan has been that it “fails to include as constituent elements the conflict, ambiguity and indeterminacy characteristic of actual social life” (Holston, 1991, p.166).

dominance in shaping urban space. The concept of occupancy urbanism speaks directly to this research for at least two reasons. First, it “focuses attention on the politics of developmentalism - projects, policy and master planning programs” (Benjamin, 2008, p.720). Second, occupancy urbanism that occupancy urbanism “views cities as consisting of multiple, contested territories inscribed by complex local histories.” Benjamin (2008: 720) elucidates:

Occupancy urbanism contests narratives that view cities as passive stage sets, acted upon by a macro-narrative (usually ‘The’ economy). Instead, following Massey (2005), it opens spaces of politics revealed via ethnographic explorations of land, economy and institutions.

In his ethnographic research in Delhi, Ghertner (2012) finds that middle-class RWAs have an important role in moving courts to order slum eradication in middle-class neighborhoods. As middle-class residents implicate slums as a nuisance to the urban environment, Ghertner (2012: 1162) locates Delhi’s global aspirations not in capital-driven governmental policies, but “in everyday contestations over the meaning of “the public” and proper uses of public space.”

These accounts challenge narratives of official control on urban space and call for a reconceptualization of state-society relations at the local level where subaltern and middle-class groups assert their claims to urban space (Benjamin, 2008; Ghertner, 2012). The literature review shows in their struggles for public space in Indian cities, actors of state and society negotiate an uneven and political terrain of flawed plans, subversive land takeovers and multiple (and conflicting) claims. Given this unevenness in state, space and society in Indian cities, it remains an open question whether local mobilizations produce “politics that will result in either greater urban democracy or new forms of political domination” (Purcell, 2002, p.106). The next section examines the

politics and possibilities of Lefebvre's *right to the city* concept as a grassroots approach to asserting claims to space in Indian cities.

### **2.2.3. The Right to the City**

As official planning processes and local spatial uses transform, privatize or obliterate everyday public spaces, they affect spatial and social practices associated with those spaces. As the preceding review demonstrated, public spaces can be highly contested sites as users challenge official transformations of everyday public spaces. Recent scholarship equates grassroots struggles for public space with Lefebvre's (1968) *right to the city* concept (Mitchell, 2003; Roy, 2005; Anjaria, 2009; Harvey, 2008; Harvey, 2012; Crossa, 2009; Maringanti, 2011; Sundaresan, 2011). The research engages with the *right to the city* literature as an entry point into a discussion about grassroots claims to public space. Notwithstanding its normative visions of inclusive urban spaces and life, the *right to the city* concept identifies conflict as integral to struggles for urban space based on use value (Lefebvre 1968). This literature review finds that the *right to the city* concept does not substantively inform spatial politics in Indian cities, encouraging the researcher to seek more grounded answers in theorizing ongoing politics of public space in Bangalore.

Lefebvre (1968) describes the *right to the city* as a call and demand for disenfranchised city residents to assert their right to participate in producing and using urban space. It is a collective right that city residents make as users and producers of urban space and not through any claims of socioeconomic status or property ownership (Lefebvre, 1996). It is also a demand for planners to acknowledge other imaginaries of urban life that complement scientific knowledge of the city (Lefebvre, 1996). Two aspects of Lefebvre's conceptualization resonate with claims to public space. First, the

*right to the city* is the right of every inhabitant that lives in the city and uses urban space. Second, the *right to the city* concept asserts that urban inhabitants are integral to the process of city-building.<sup>41</sup>

*Right to the city* struggles demand emancipation from lopsided and exclusionary planning policies. Describing the *right to the city* as a collective right to reshape urban space, Harvey (2008: 23) asserts, “The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.” Struggles for public space are claims of groups seeking inclusion of their spatial practices in the planned city. Struggles for public space are at best claims, as residents assert their use value to municipal property (that may have served as the commons in the pre-colonial city). This brings the politics of state actors to the fore as they validate certain spatial claims over others. For instance, official policies do not treat the claims of indigent groups to the city as rights because that “would only invite further violation of public property and civic laws” (Chatterjee, 2004, p.40). But as the preceding discussion demonstrates, vocal middle-class groups seek legitimacy in claims of “civic freedom and rational law” (Chatterjee, 2004, p.4). For instance, the master plan has acquired “importance as a vehicle for elite RWA struggles because, in the main, it is for propertied citizens who inhabit ordered, authorised spaces” (Kamath & Vijayabaskar, 2009, p.373).<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> Lefebvre (1996:154) states that “Urban strategy resting on the science of the city needs a social support and political forces to be effective. It cannot act on its own.”

<sup>42</sup> After the conflict that the Koramangala PIL against commercialisation and violations threw up, elite RWAs prefer to fight issues like zoning and regularisation through the master plan. On areas like roads that are not likely to be divisive, regular RWA activities will proceed. But they increasingly tend to address what they call “encroachments” and zoning violations by arguing for enforcement of the Master Plan. Interventions around the Master Plan are closely tied to judicial interventions and the use of RTI. Given the “quasi-legal” status of residents of “upwardly mobile” and revenue layout RWAs, they seldom appear to make use of such tools... Elite RWAs have also taken the judicial route on quite a few issues, the



Relevant to the current discussion is the question of how *right to the city* struggles look on the ground and who the authors of such struggles might be. Lefebvre (1968) is unequivocal in identifying the working class that is excluded from the planned city, as the vanguard in struggles for the city center.<sup>43</sup> However it is not just the working class that is affected by exclusionary official planning processes (Purcell, 2002). The discussion on public space and master planning show that grassroots fights against displacement from urban public spaces are not just fights against capital-driven state developmental projects. They are also the fights of urban elites to keep control of neighborhood parks, environmentalists' campaigns for green spaces, street vendors' struggles for sidewalks and marginalized groups' for safe and tolerant public spaces. Terming *right to the city* struggles as a "variegated politics of identity and of difference," Purcell (2002: 106) argues:

To my mind, the key weakness in Lefebvre's concept is that he conflates his idea of 'inhabitant' with the category 'working class.' He argues that the right to the city must be realized by a 'social force' that brings about a 'radical metamorphosis' in society (1996, 156) and that 'only the working class can become the agent, the social carrier or support of this [social force]' (1996, 158). If inhabitants are imagined to be essentially equivalent to the working class, then their agenda becomes reduced to anti-capitalist resistance. They must challenge the *capitalist* city rather than challenge, for example, the racist city, the patriarchal city, or the heteronormative city, all of which confront inhabitants in their daily lives.

---

Koramangala PIL, being the more well known. Even when the courts give them a favourable judgment, as they are increasingly doing in recent years (Baviskar, 2002; Arabindoo, 2005), it does not make much difference to what happens on the ground.<sup>8</sup> Elite RWAs have therefore articulated the need for support from a broader spectrum of groups particularly in controversial matters like "encroachments" on land. RWAs in non elite areas do not typically report use of the judicial route although some do approach the Lok Ayukta to report stalled ward works. RTI, the new tool for improved governance, seems to be extensively used by elite and upwardly mobile RWAs in core city areas but less so by revenue layout RWAs in peripheral areas. The RTI is used to get information on a number of activities ranging from monitoring violations and encroachments to enquiring the status of the JNNURM to put pressure on government." (Kamath & Vijayabaskar, 2009, pp.373)

<sup>43</sup> The working class in Lefebvre's 1960s conception were "the youth, students, and intellectuals, armies of workers with or without white collars, people from the provinces, the colonized and semi-colonized of all sorts, all those who live ... in residential ghettos, in the mouldering centres of old cities and in the proliferations lost beyond them" (Lefebvre, 1996, p.158-9).

Theoretically, the *right to the city* concept is a right of all city dwellers, old or new, rich or poor, marginalized or privileged (Purcell, 2002; Zukin, 2010; Marcuse, 2012). If as Harvey (2003) argues, the *right to the city* is a basic human right, the middle-class resident's claims to the neighborhood park may be considered akin to the claims of the urban poor to affordable housing.<sup>44</sup> Thus formulated, middle-class residents have the right to demand access to public spaces as vociferously as marginal groups do for their rights to basic services and rights.<sup>v</sup> But the middle-class does not have the right to control public space any more than the urban poor. Like the urban commons, the *right to the city* concept belongs in the area of multiple contesting claims.

Observing that unlike marginalized groups, urban elites are capable of protecting their turf, Harvey (2012: 71) asserts that "... the analyst is left with a simple decision: Whose side are you on, whose common interests do you seek to protect, and by what means?" Marcuse (2012: 31), on the other hand, sees no conflict between the demands of middle-class and indigent groups, arguing that "the sources of dissatisfaction for both arise out of equally organic and essential human needs." Interpreting Lefebvre's formulation of the *right to the city* as both a cry and demand, Marcuse (2012) proposes that the cry is for a recognition of the basic necessities and legal rights of deprived indigent groups. Whereas the demand represents "the aspiration for the future by those discontented with life as they see it around them and perceived as limiting their potentials for growth and

---

<sup>44</sup> Harvey (2008:23) writes of the *right to the city* concept that, "The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights." What does the "remaking of self" imply? It is the evolution of the city resident as a political actor who seeks official recognition in the city?

creativity” (Marcuse, 2012, p.31). He seeks to resolve the question of prioritizing demands by suggesting that (2012: 31):

Where choices must be made, the demands of the deprived are entitled to priority over the fulfillment of the aspirations of the alienated, but they should not be seen as in conflict, but as complementary.<sup>45</sup>

In the context of public spaces, how do planners find complementarity in the demands of the alienated and the deprived? A socially and spatially just city would neither alienate middle-class groups nor would it would disallow deprived marginal groups legal access to urban space. As the literature on master planning shows, formal planning processes are limited (in their process, design and regulation) in their ability to build socially and spatially just cities (Benjamin & Raman, 2001; Baviskar, 2003). Harvey’s (2012) analyst would find that government actors do little to legally enable the urban poor. The *right to the city* it does not just represent struggles between privileged and marginalized groups for common resources. It also represents struggles for inclusion of privileged and marginalized groups displaced from urban space due to official plans and projects. As Sen (2000) argue, struggles for rights begin as claims voiced in public arenas such as government offices, courts of law and most relevant to this research, in urban public spaces. The existence of physical public space becomes a prerequisite for urban groups to voice claims to the city. For, as Mitchell (2003: 147) suggests:

If the right to the city is a cry and a demand, then it is only a cry that is heard and a demand that has force to the degree that there is a space from and within which this cry and demand is visible. In public space – on street corners or in parks, in the streets during riots and demonstrations - political organizations can represent themselves to a larger population and through this representation give their cries and demands some force. By claiming space in public, by creating public spaces, social groups themselves become public.

Though scholars evoke urban space as the cause and the stage for *right to the city* struggles, there is little academic clarity on how such struggles materialize on the ground (Purcell, 2002; Merrifield, 2011). Harvey (2012: xvii) asks, “So is the pursuit of the right to the city the pursuit of a chimera?” He answers his own question suggesting that the concept provides a conceptual rallying point for political struggles for inclusion in the city (2012: xvii):

In purely physical terms this is certainly so. But political struggles are animated by visions as much as by practicalities. Member groups within the Right to the City alliance consist of low-income tenants in communities of color fighting for the kind of development that meets their desires and needs; homeless people organizing for their right to housing and basic services; and LGBTQ youth of color working for their right to safe public spaces. In the collective political platform they designed for New York, the coalition sought a clearer and broader definition of that public that not only can truly access so-called public space, but can also be empowered to create new common spaces for socialization and political action.

If, as Harvey (2012: xvii) argues, the city is a site where “multiple practices within the urban that themselves are full to overflowing with alternative possibilities,” the city’s public spaces are the sites that accommodate such possibilities. But the *right to the city* concept’s strength as an all-inclusive phrase is also its greatest weakness. As multiple conflicting claims emerge from diverse city publics, whose claims take precedence? Concluding that the answer to this question lays in examining the social, institutional and political dynamics in the city, this research moves past the *right to the city* concept to examine the micro-politics of public space in Indian cities.

#### **2.2.4. Summary**

After this comprehensive overview of literature on the politics of public space in Indian cities, this section discusses my contributions to the literature based on empirical findings in the chapters that follow. This research leads to a more nuanced understanding

of space, state and society, and calls for a reconsideration of key theories vis-à-vis spatial politics in contemporary Indian cities. As described in literature, public spaces are contested spaces with multiple meanings for different users. This research reiterates that struggles for public space in Indian cities are struggles for inclusion of various spatial practices in the city. Instead of being struggles between subaltern groups and middle-class actors, this research find different socioeconomic groups conflicting with state actors to reclaim public spaces with use value to them. Though the master plan and courts of law define lawful uses of urban space, this dissertation reveals that they are very political processes. Thus fights for public space are also enacted through negotiations and mutually-beneficial arrangements between local groups, politicians and state actors.

Counter to prevalent theories that middle-class associations work with state actors to fulfil visions of green cities that exclude the urban poor, this research proposes a more complex arena of engagement between actors of state and society. In this arena, the ability of middle-class groups to influence state actors is not assured. This is particularly true when state actors are acting under political pressures or following a fixed developmental agenda. Rather than treating middle-class actors as civil society and subaltern groups as political society, this research suggests that state actors' interactions with vocal social groups depend on the amount of pressure that the latter can exert on them.

Studies note that organized middle-class groups seek resolution for their demands in formal forums and platforms developed by state actors to facilitate participatory governance. As centralized planning processes avoid local resistance to displacement, tools of planning such as the master plan and urban renewal projects remain in the control

of the state government. Though state actors invite middle-class groups to official forums of participatory governance, this research finds that planning decisions occur behind the closed doors of state politicians and bureaucrats, or on the ground through subversions and encroachments. This finding indicates that middle-class groups' participation in official forums does not affect urban space or governance significantly on the ground. Contradicting formulations of middle-class actors as civil society, this dissertation finds that they engage in public life outside civil forums, protesting on streets to capture the attention of unheeding or sluggish state actors (Wood, 2012).

Local elected representatives and municipal officials do not have a voice in the official forums of engagement between civil society and bureaucrats. However elected representatives wield considerable power in their own wards. The empirical data shows that, unable to approach and influence state-level politicians and bureaucrats, middle-class actors engage with elected representatives in mutually-beneficial vote bank politics. This is contrary to existing literature that finds a mutual disengagement between elected representatives and middle-class groups.

### **2.3. Conclusion**

This literature review examined the three topics of public space, master planning and the *right to the city* concept in Indian cities as utopian conceptualizations of urban space. As the review shows, the conceptually utopian roots of these conceptions of spatial relations get entangled with the different actors' claims to urban space. Lived public spaces emerge as sites of intense contestations and negotiated uses. The master plan in Indian cities presents as a political document with limited control over urbanization

processes. The *right to the city* concept provides an entry point of inclusion for displaced groups in the city, but does not explain how local groups actualize their claims and the outcomes of such struggles on urban space. In sum, the literature review shows that struggles for public space in Indian cities are triggering interactions and negotiations that invite a renewed look at state-society relations and democratic life in the city. Having summarized salient findings of the literature review, this section identifies specific questions that I will engage with in the empirical chapters of this research.

As state actors and private actors take over public spaces in Indian cities, struggles for public space are occurring in different quarters of the city irrespective of income or social status. Existing literature provides detailed accounts of state-society engagement and politics vis-à-vis contestations for public space, but there is little academic inquiry into how local contestations shape public spaces and their uses. Examining three different cases of grassroots mobilizations, this research examines the impact of local contestations in shaping public space in Indian cities.

The master plan is a political document fraught with interruptions and interferences from conceptualization to implementation. With large-scale urban renewal projects and illegal encroachments playing a significant role, the master plan is not the only official tool shaping space in Indian cities. Procedurally, urban reforms mandate greater autonomy to local bodies in planning and governance even as agencies at the central and state level retain control of their regulatory powers. This research seeks to understand how power politics within government agencies and their interactions with local communities play out in the arena of local spatial politics.

Notwithstanding their ability to influence official decisions, elite and middle-class groups have better access to state actors and formal planning processes than indigent groups. This research asks how the entry of elite and middle-class actors into the arena of spatial politics affects local struggles for public space and also the implications of their mobilizations for spatial justice.

Existing literature is not attentive to the diversity within the Indian urban middle-class and their imaginaries and politics of urban space (Mawdesly, 2004; Kamath & Vijayabaskar, 2009).<sup>46</sup> This research follows Kamath & Vijayabaskar's (2009: 375) argument that "it is important to recognise the multiplicity of middle-class mobilizations and motivations to understand how public service gets shaped by their actions" to engage with the question of how different middle-class perspectives shape local power politics.

In Indian cities, the politics of public space is inseparable from the spatial politics of urban indigent groups. Scholars have commented on the role of the master plan in exacerbating the marginalization of indigent groups through neglect and omission from the planned city (Benjamin, 2003; Baviskar, 2003). Marginalized groups depend on local politicians and local officials for help in accessing basic public goods and services (Benjamin & Raman, 2001; Chatterjee, 2004; Ghosh, 2005). Faced with growing official takeovers of public space and competing middle-class claims, this research also engages with the question of how indigent groups maintain their foothold in the city.

This chapter identified gaps in the literature that I seek to address by examining of the micro-politics of grassroots struggles for public space in Indian cities.

---

<sup>46</sup> In his study of middle-class activism against street vendors in Mumbai, Anjaria (2009:403) observes that, "Despite their financial resources, privileged access to power, and the support of the media, citizens' groups do not necessarily comprise an inexorable force sweeping the city."



## Chapter Three

### Planning and Politics of Public Space in Bangalore: History and Present

#### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter traces the history and politics of public space in Bangalore to contextualize the case studies in the following chapters. Drawing on scholarly research, literary accounts and media reports, this chapter examines different formulations and struggles for Bangalore's public spaces. In Bangalore (as in all colonial cities), uses of public space span pre-colonial conceptualizations as the commons to colonial and post-colonial formulations as government property intended for public use. Ongoing struggles for public space in Bangalore indicate that different groups struggle for official inclusion of their spatial practices in the city. Existing literature delineates the terrain and protagonists of local contestations for public space, but does not discuss role of grassroots mobilizations in shaping public space and governance in Bangalore. Outlining various struggles for public space in Bangalore, this chapter develops a background for a deeper inquiry into local struggles for public space.

Historic narratives reiterate the role of public spaces as integral to the city's culture, economy and communal life. During pre-colonial and colonial times, a system of manmade tanks fed water to the city and during the dry months, and functioned as *totas* (agricultural and horticultural gardens) and large spaces of communal activities. Public streets acted as conduits between the private realm of domestic and commercial activity

and the public realm of bazaars, processions, festivals and political activities. While these spaces retain their historic functions in the contemporary city too, master plans in the post-colonial city have assigned new nomenclature and functions to the same spaces. Modern plans describe assign lakes, parks and gardens as ecological, recreational and aesthetic facilities and categorize markets, streets and civic institutions under urban amenities.

With the advent of colonial rule in the early 1700s, Bangalore evolved as a dual city consisting of the 16<sup>th</sup> century *peté* and the British Cantonment. As the literature review on public spaces in Indian cities in the preceding chapter demonstrates, public spaces in pre-colonial cities functioned as the commons as spaces of negotiated use. In contrast to the private domestic realm, the commons were integrated into the daily social, economic and political aspects of urban life. In Bangalore, colonial rule introduced a new formal vocabulary of public space of parks, promenades and boulevards in planned isolation from the pre-colonial city. Post-colonial planning policies adopted modernist planning models reflecting western criteria promoting health and hygiene. Modern spatial planning has been less attentive to pre-colonial spatial practices in the public realm such as street bazaars and the cultural functions of the city's lakes.

But the physical city is a composite of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial spaces and spatial practices. Beside their transportation function, streets in contemporary Bangalore are also sites for weekly *bazaars*, religious celebrations, ritualistic processions, and political protests. Continuing the pre-colonial practice of vending in public spaces, vendors and hawkers set up their businesses in street corners and outside parks and playgrounds in middle-class neighborhoods. Middle-class residents build temporary

*pandals* and cordon off residential streets and sidewalks for private celebrations such as marriages, cultural events or neighborhood religious festivities.<sup>47</sup> These disparate and quotidian examples indicate the manner in which societal uses of public space blur distinctions between informal pre-colonial and formal post-colonial spatial practices. More significantly, these illustrations show the continued relevance of diverse spatial practices in the public realm spanning different social, cultural and political milieus.

As the literature review in the previous chapter demonstrates, local struggles for public spaces in Indian cities arise in response to conflicting claims and takeovers of the commons. Master planning processes aim to “supply public goods (such as affordable public housing, health care, education, paved streets, sanitation, and water) to an urbanized working class” (Harvey, 2012, p.73). Neither the master plan nor urban renewal policies engage with the informal or unofficial spatial practices occurring in public space. Furthermore, growing demand for prime urban property has led to authorized and unauthorized encroachments on Bangalore’s lakes and civic amenity sites (Srinivas, 2004; Nair, 2005).

Bourgeois groups validate claims to urban public spaces through the mobilization of tropes of legality and citizenship, using these tropes to dislodge counter claims of indigent groups to the city’s public spaces (Anjaria, 2009; Arabindoo, 2011). Marginal communities evoke their rights to shelter and subsistence in protesting eviction from public spaces. These contestations indicate different motivations and processes among actors of state and society that shape public space in Bangalore.

---

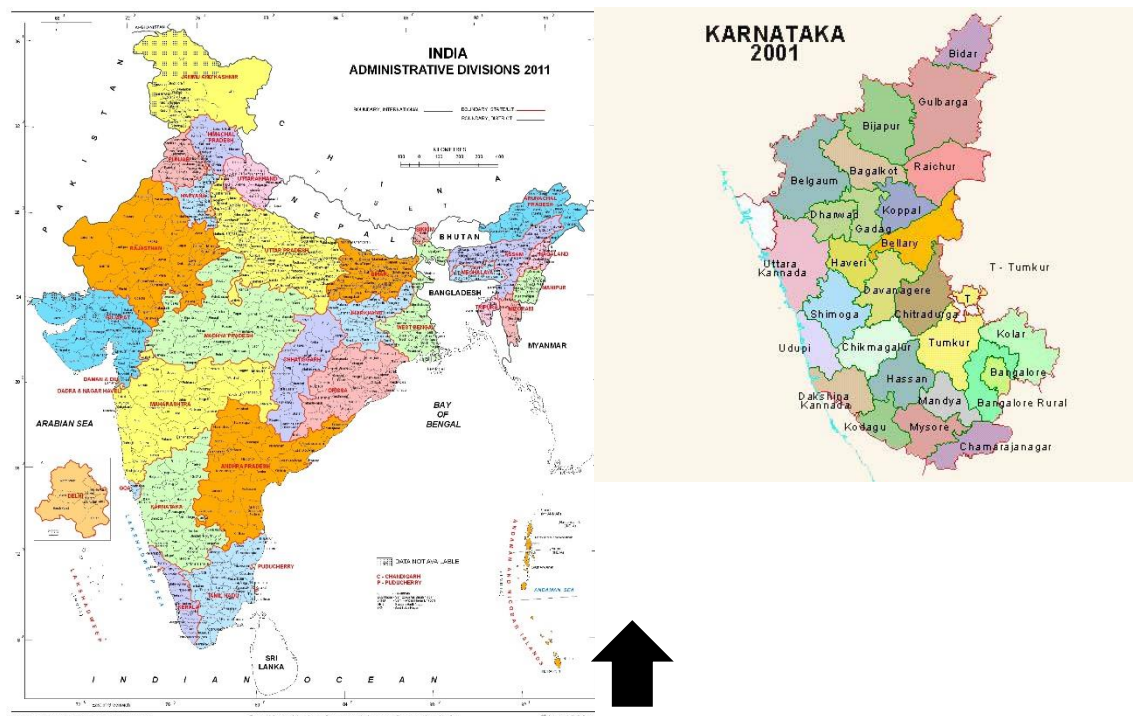
<sup>47</sup> A “pandal” is an Indian term a temporary fabricated structure that is either stand-alone or as an extension to a permanent structure as a shelter for a religious or cultural ceremony.

The following sections in this chapter examine the political economy of Bangalore, with a focus on ongoing contestations over local public spaces. The chapter proceeds as follows. The next section develops a profile of Bangalore and its spatial development since Independence. The following section reviews ongoing contestations of public space in Bangalore, highlighting emergent conflicts and roles of different actors of society and state therein. The last section concludes with a brief discussion of the three case studies that comprise the empirical part of this research in the next three chapters.

### **3.2. Bangalore: Peté to InfoTech City**

This section traces the transition of Bangalore from a 16<sup>th</sup> century market and military town to India's fifth largest metropolis in the 2000s, focusing on how changes in the economy contributed to spatial transformations in the city. Known as a middle-class city, Bangalore's image as a global city got a boost since it became a national hub for the information and technology industry in the late 1980s. As the city grew in status and population, so did demand for a range of housing and infrastructure services particularly to bolster the city's global image. State planning agencies were unable to keep up with housing and service provision for the city's multiple publics (Nair, 2005). The gap in supply and demand for urban infrastructure helped the entry of local real estate developers, corporate firms and international consortia into the arena of spatial planning in Bangalore (Benjamin, 2008). This section attributes ongoing contestations for public spaces in Bangalore to rapid urbanization, governmental planning policies, unregulated real estate development and grassroots subversions.

Bangalore is the administrative, commercial and cultural capital of the south Indian state of Karnataka (Figures 3.1 & 3.2).<sup>48</sup> Established as a military-trading town in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Bangalore also developed as a prominent Cantonment town during colonial rule. Endowed with a salubrious climate and a rich horticultural heritage, Bangalore earned the epithet “Garden City” since colonial times. The city was also known as a “Pensioner’s Paradise” because of its dominant middle-class ethos and laidback lifestyle as many public sector employees chose to settle there after retirement.



India

Karnataka State

Figure 3.1. Maps of India and Karnataka (Source: Census of India Maps 2011)

Bangalore’s pre-colonial economy relied on a flourishing textile industry that produced and traded in silk and cotton textiles. Since the 1940s, the central government established several public sector companies in the fields of electronics, space and aviation

<sup>48</sup> Bangalore was officially renamed as Bengaluru in 2007. However, in keeping with the colloquial usage this dissertation adheres to the Anglicized version of the city’s name viz. “Bangalore”.

in Bangalore. The city grew into a cosmopolitan, middle-class town with several public sector companies attracting white-collared workers from all over the country. The large public sector companies occupied hundreds of acres creating “little communities with their own educational institutions, transport systems, health facilities and housing societies” (Pani et al, 2010, p.20). Over the decades the city developed as an important commercial, educational and cultural center in Southern India, growing in population and size (Graphs 3.1 & 3.2).

The growth in public sector jobs saw a corresponding dip in the agricultural sector in and around the city, as the following quote from Heitzman’s (2004: 45) book on Bangalore describes (Graph 3.3):

The addition of 30,000 public sector manufacturing jobs on the outskirts of the city within a period of less than twenty years helped drive the metropolitan population to 1,207,000 in 1961 and significantly increased the pressure on infrastructure. It also irrevocably shifted the economic balance of the area around the city. In 1951, 71 per cent of the workers in Bangalore District still worked in agriculture; by 1961, this had declined to 50 per cent, and by 1971, to 40 per cent. This transition was accompanied by a general decline in the female workforce, a rise in the use of child labour concentrated in manufacturing and repair industries, and the spread of slums.

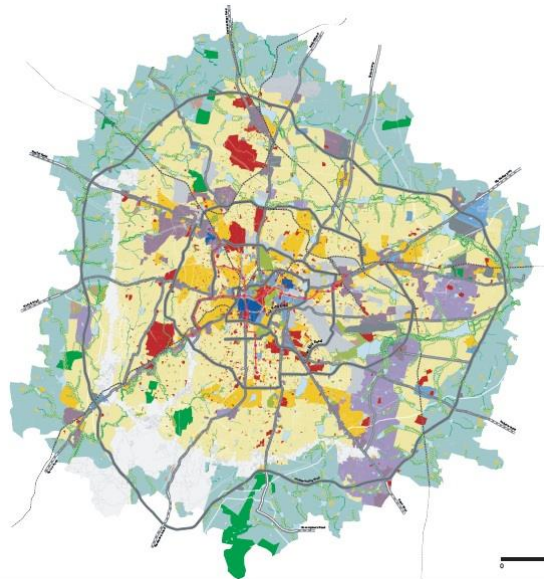
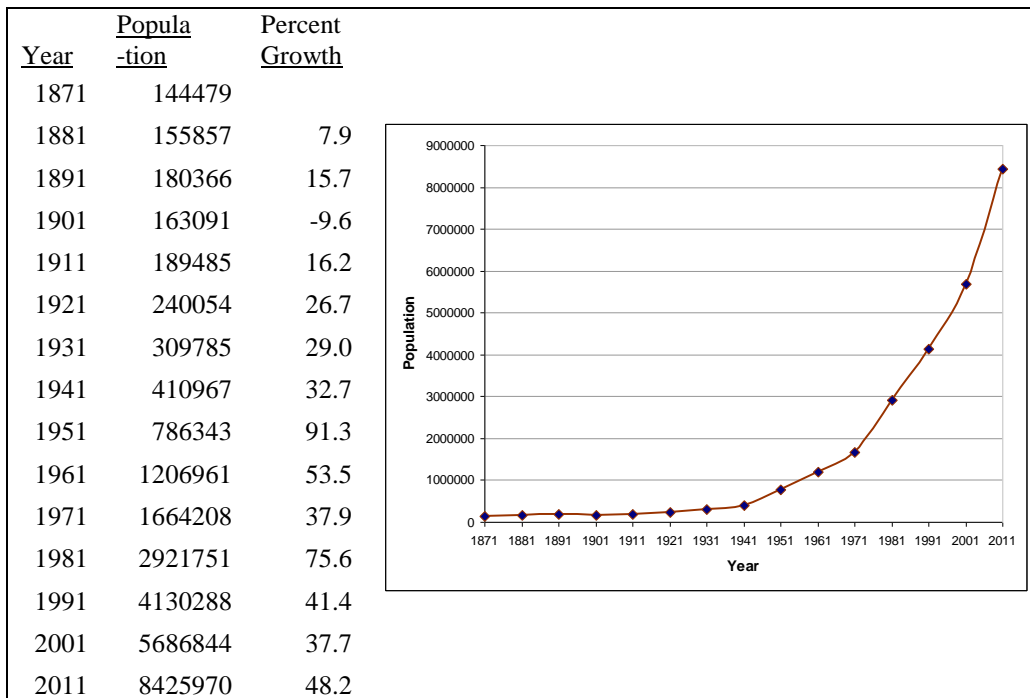
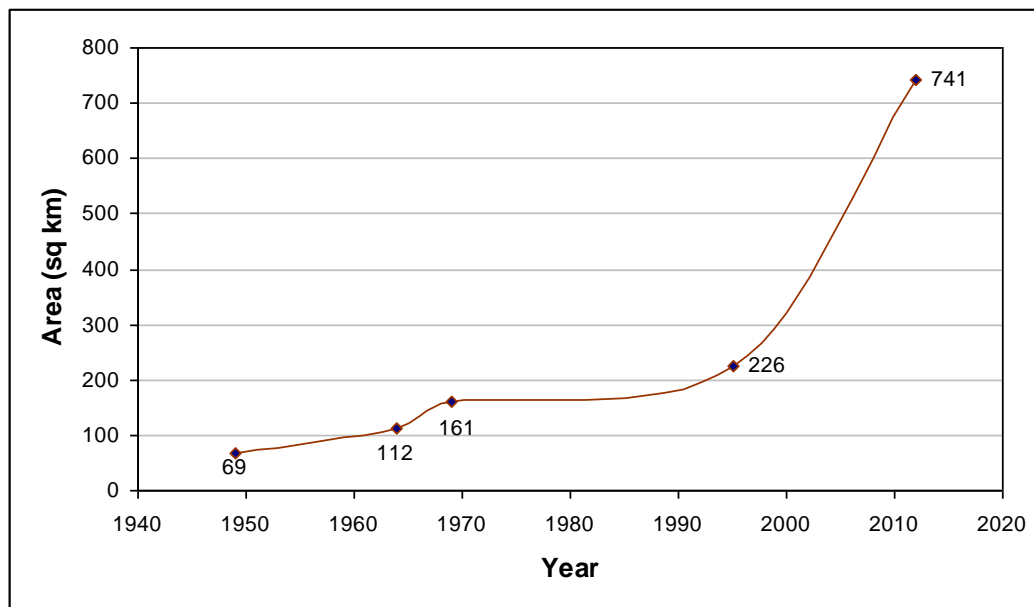


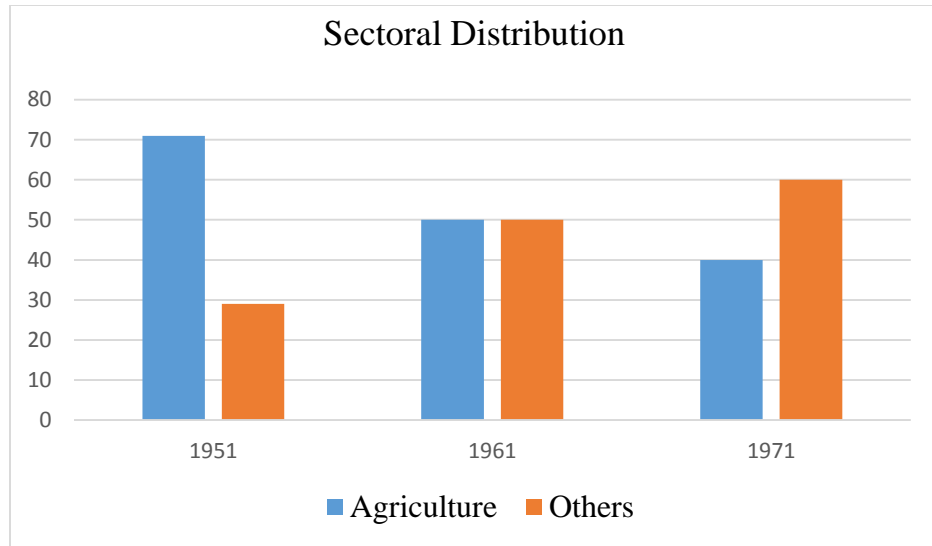
Figure 3.2. Bangalore City  
Source: CDP 2015 Draft Report 2007



Graph 3.1: Population Growth in Bangalore City, 1871-2011  
Sources: Census of India; Bangalore City Profile



Graph 3.2. Bangalore City Corporation Limits 1949-2011  
Sources: Census of India; Bangalore City Profile



Graph 3.3. Decadal Decline (percent) in Agricultural Sector in Bangalore from 1951-71 (Data Source: Heitzman, 2004)

The shift in economic sectors in the city had a direct impact on the urban form with the proliferation of slums to accommodate low wage workers (Heitzman, 2004). The growing population and corresponding demand for housing led to the development of a parallel informal housing market. Private developers transformed villages subsumed in the city into pockets of intense construction activity with little heed to zoning regulations or building byelaws. Heitzman (2004: 56-7) notes that “by the mid-1980s, there were about 150,000, housing nearly one-fifth of the population of the agglomeration, without official approval and without officially planned utilities or roads...”<sup>vi</sup> From the late 1980s, the city experienced an economic and spatial boom as a major national hub for information technology and biotechnology firms.<sup>49</sup> The city’s population and area grew

<sup>49</sup> Hindustan Aeronautical Limited (HAL), Indian Telephone Industries (ITI), Bharat Electrical Limited, Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited (BHEL), Hindustan Machine Tools (HMT), National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL), New Government Electric Factory (NGEF), Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Central Power Research Institute (CPRI) are examples of public sector companies in Bangalore. Prominent examples of information technology corporates are Infosys and Wipro. Biocon, whose chairperson Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, is a member of the ABIDE committee, is a prominent example of the biotech sector.



rapidly, raising demand for housing, services and amenities (Table 3.1). With growing demand for land, there was “an increase in the value of land in the city by 20 times between 1973-87 and 10 times between 1980-97” (Ravindran, 2007, p.127).<sup>vii</sup>

---

**Land Use in Bangalore, 1963-2011**

---

Classification (Area in Acres)	1963	1972	1983	1990	2011(Proposed)
Residential	10,528	14,537	14,276.57	24,407.67	60,216.32
Commercial	683	958	1,566.78	1,668.10	4,061.53
Industrial	3,069	3,069	4,834.78	5,037.41	9,498.70
Public and semipublic	2,100	2,596	6,260.62	6,463.25	12,129.92
Parks and open spaces	2,206	2,485	5,065.95	5,268.57	19,244.52
Agricultural	2,940	2,940	0	0	0.00
Defense or unclassified	6,474	7,179	5,224.29	5,224.29	5,470.65
Transport		1,356	12,890.74	22,107.12	28,903.39
<b>Total</b>	<b>28,000</b>	<b>35,120</b>	<b>50,119.74</b>	<b>70,176.40</b>	<b>1,39,525.02</b>

Table 3.1. Land Use in Bangalore, 1963-2011

Source: Srinivas (2004, p.51)

The city’s lopsided development gained further steam with the growing information and communication technology (ICT) industry in the city. Dittrich (2010: 239) describes the rising land prices corresponding to the ICT industry’s entry in Bangalore:

The exponential city growth and the domination of the ICT and ICT-enabled sector in the realty market has witnessed skyrocketing prices in housing and real estate sectors. In the case of the Electronics City, which is located on Hosur Road about 20 km from the heart of the city, land prices jacked up more than 300-fold from Rs.23,000 per hectare in 1982 to Rs.8,750,000 in 2004 (Rs.100,000 are equivalent to about US\$ 2005; as on November 2008). Developed land at the sector of the Outer Ring Road, where a number of investment projects are expected to be realised, also experienced escalating land prices. In Sarjapur, a little town 30 km south of Bangalore, land prices shot up by 10 times in only one year. This is also true for vacant plots in the suburbs, where business parks, commercial complexes, stylish apartment blocks and upmarket townships are coming up to meet the needs of the well-to-do ICT employees.

Alongside intense pressure for land to cater to the needs of the city's middle-class population, there has always been a corresponding demand for housing and services for lower income groups. State actors were the primary providers of affordable housing options for lower income groups in the city. But researchers have noted and planning bodies themselves acknowledged governmental inability to meet the housing requirements of lower income groups in Bangalore.<sup>50</sup> The Vision Document for the Bangalore Master Plan 2015 (2007: 30) discusses the growing privatization and informalization of land use as private actors enter the housing market:

In 1991, the city's housing stock comprised of 43.1% public housing, 23.5% Informal housing in form of sites/plots, 17.7% slums and 7.3% traditional housing. The remaining 8.4% consisted of housing in the villages, cooperative housing and housing built by private builders... In 2001, the Bangalore City Report survey helped to highlight the important changes in the structure of housing production. While public housing (CITB, BDA, KHB, and BMP) represented 43.1% in 1991, it was almost reduced to half in 2001 (22.8%). However, the informal housing in form of plots/sites in 2001 totaled 55.9% while it barely represented one quarter of the housing in 1991. At the same time, the production by the private builder increased from 0.8% to 5.2%. Although the results of this survey need to be interpreted with caution, they point to important changes in the process of housing production. They illustrate the difficulties encountered during the last decade by public bodies / departments to contribute to the housing supply. During this decade, a large part of the demand of housing was supplied by villages in and around the city and by different forms of informal housing.<sup>51</sup>

This review of the growth patterns, economic trends and governmental land management vis-à-vis housing in Bangalore provides a brief glimpse into the dynamics of private space in the city. Due to rapid urbanization and governmental inability to deliver

---

<sup>50</sup> Nair (2005:193) notes, "Indeed in the past few decades, the state has seriously defaulted on its commitment to the urban poor. A 1995 GO which insisted that builders give 25 per cent of their flats/sites to Economically Weaker Sections and the poor has been honoured only in the breach and proved unworkable."

<sup>51</sup> Dittrich (2010:239) notes, "It is estimated that there is a shortage in low cost housing sector of about 400, 000 units."

adequate affordable housing, private actors became dominant players in the informal housing market. These development trends point to certain conclusions regarding official policies and practices of land management in Bangalore. First, this review reveals the challenges that public agencies face in providing services in the rapidly growing city to multiple publics with diverse needs. Second, it demonstrates the dominant presence of the private sector in shaping space in the city.

Public space is “traditionally differentiated from private space in terms of the rules of access, the source and nature of control over entry to a space, individual and collective behavior sanctioned in specific spaces and rules of use” (Smith & Low, 2006, p.3-4). Ostensibly rules for official management of public space are different from official rules for managing private space. As a first step towards understanding ongoing contestations for public space in Bangalore, the next section traces the history of public space in Bangalore. It emerges that public spaces in the Bangalore are locations of diverse spatial practices originating from different points in the city’s history with continued relevance in the contemporary city.

### **3.3. A history of public space in Bangalore**

Like other Indian cities, today Bangalore is a mosaic of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial spatial formations and uses that overlap and intersect in everyday spatial practices. The city’s origins go back to 1537 AD when a local chieftain Kempegowda built a fort-and-market settlement to consolidate his growing political power in the region. Thereon Bangalore developed into an important trading and military center under the rule of a succession of Hindu and Mughal rulers.

In 1791 the British seized Bangalore from its Mughal ruler Tipu Sultan and handed the city to Krishna Raja Wodeyar III, the king of Mysore State. With the Wodeyars' consent, the British built a military Cantonment in 1809 to the east of the *peté* and thus established their presence in Bangalore till India gained Independence in 1947. This section traces the different formulations of public space in Bangalore across three phases of the city's history. The first phase is the pre-colonial period (1537-1791) when regional chieftains built the city as a military and trading post. The second phase is the colonial period (1809-1947) when the British took over Bangalore and developed a Cantonment town near the pre-colonial settlement. The third phase is the post-colonial city (1947 onwards). The following discussion demonstrates that each phase of Bangalore's development added new socioeconomic, political and spatial categories to the city form.

### **3.3.1. The pre-colonial *peté***

Bangalore was built on an elevation on the rocky Deccan Plateau and did not have direct access to a perennial water source. Instead, the "region relied on tanks which were constructed right across this territory as the principal source of water for agricultural and domestic needs" (Nair, 2005, p.27).<sup>52</sup> In the 1700s, the Bangalore settlement consisted of a fort and the *peté*, commonly referred to today as the "City" area. Before the advent of British colonialism (Pani et al, 2010, p.28):

Bengaluru was then a military town in every sense of the use of the term in the second half of the eighteenth century. As conflicts between states at the time were still not concentrated at their boundaries, the population had to be brought into a well-fortified town that could be defended. The entire Bengaluru with the *peté*

---

<sup>52</sup> Nair (2005:28) notes, "The site was located on an elevated ridge that sloped west to east. To the west were rocky hills, while the eastern areas were undulating. The cities of Bangalore would thus become what R.L.Singh has called a 'ridge and valley town, the old city occupying the valley portion and the new one including the Cantonment, the High Ground.' These distinctive physical features would soon be mapped on to the economic, social, and cultural spheres, resulting in what has been referred to as the 'east-west' zonation of the contemporary city."

(market town) in the north and the fort in the south, was surrounded by high walls and deep dry ditch. Entrance into the city was only possible through well-fortified gates, generally named after a place in the general direction it opened up to.

Within the *peté*, two major intersecting streets named *Doddapeté* (Kannada term for “big market”, known today as Avenue Road) and *Chikpeté* (Kannada term for “small market”) combined with a grid of smaller streets define the layout of Bangalore *peté* (Figure 3.3). Each street in the *peté* was named for a trade or merchandise available there, such as grains, musical instruments, textile trade, oil, flower market, fresh produce, garments and textile manufacturing. The *peté*'s private realm consisted of commercial, manufacturing and residential uses while its public life took place in its streets, tanks, temples and institutions.

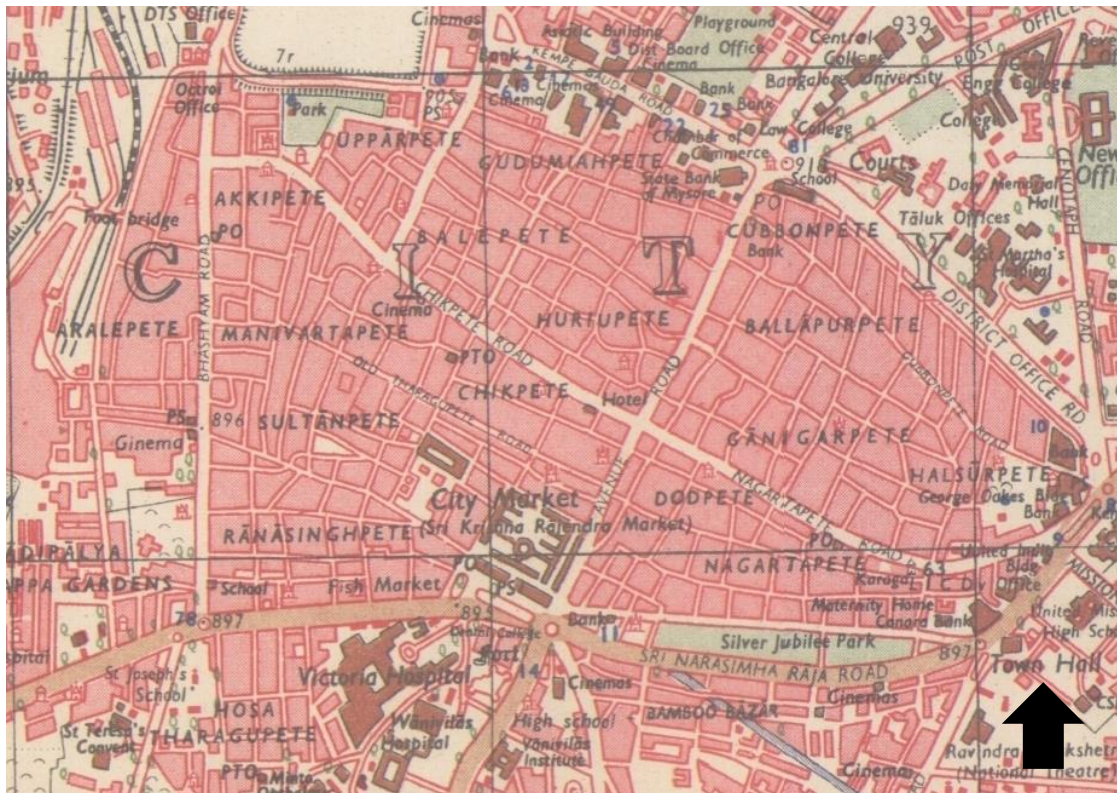


Figure 3.3. Map of Bangalore *Peté* (Surveyed in 1961 and published in 1969)  
Source: The Indian Institute of World Culture, Bangalore 2010

The following description of public life in the *peté* in the 1930s underlines the role of the public street as an extension to the private realm in pre-colonial Asian cities (Norris, 1996, p.22):

Through it (the *peté*) ran the broad Doddapeté or High Street, on either side of which, and in the roads leading off it, were the bazaars. Here wares were displayed on open stalls arranged on shelves within convenient range of the squatting proprietor, comfortably ensconced in the middle of his shop while his customers stood in the street or sat on a small ledge. Transactions were not purely commercial and were never begun or concluded without the observance of formalities – offering of refreshment and the exchange of pleasantries. As in the towns of medieval Europe it was customary for dealers of the same sort of goods to congregate together in one part of the bazaar, an arrangement which was convenient for the customer who knew exactly where to go if he wanted to purchase metal objects, silk cloth, vegetables, grain, bales of string or candles and gave him the opportunity to compare prices and the quality of goods. The most picturesque parts of the bazaar were the Tharagupeté, the ancient grain market where the grain was unloaded in the street in vast heaps so that the retailers could measure it before storing it away in their godowns, and the Aralepet, the Cotton Market, whose shops were choked with bulging bales of cream-colored cotton.

Even today, though products from Bangalore's newer economic sectors (e.g. textiles and electronics) have replaced some traditional wares, the *peté* has changed little in form and function, and remains a thriving hub of social, economic and religious activity (Pictures 3.1-6). The *peté* holds special significance as the location of Bangalore's historic *karaga jatre*, an annual festival celebrated by the Vahnikula Kshatriyas, a traditional community of horticulturists (Srinivas, 2004).

Today the *peté* is but one locality in Bangalore; yet the *peté*'s public culture finds resonance in other street markets, religious festivities and in the numerous villages subsumed in the expanding city (Pictures 3.7 & 3.8). The *peté* culture is not a traditional relic that finds expression only in religious events or special events, but is part of everyday life in the contemporary city. Colonial rule ushered a significantly different

spatial order from the Bangalore *peté*'s order adding a new layer to the urban morphology.



Picture 3.1. Bangalore Fort with policemen in the foreground (2009)



Picture 3.2. Preparations for Karaga Jatre in KR Market (2009)



Picture 3.3. Dodda peté, now known as Avenue Road (2009)



Picture 3.4. Byelane on Avenue Road with a temporary shrine installation (2009)



Picture 3.5. Blenders and kitchen implements for sale in Chikpeté (2009)



Picture 3.6. Large cooking utensils for sale in Chikpeté (2009)



Picture 3.7. The village shrine next to Bellandur Lake in Bellandur village which was split in the middle to make way for a Ring Road connecting the Information Technology corridor to the city (2009)



Picture 3.8. *Somberi katte* or idler's platform on the main street of Bellandur village where people socialize under the shade of a banyan tree (2009)

### 3.3.2. The *peté* and Cantonment

Soon after their occupation of Bangalore in 1799, the British rulers began the construction of the Cantonment as their military base (Figure 3.4). The Cantonment stood three miles away from the *peté* in keeping with the colonial practice of building their stations “at some distance from a native city partly for reasons of health and partly for security” (Norris, 1996, p.23).<sup>53</sup> Native settlements grew around the British quarters in the form of a General Bazaar and residential areas for local residents drawn to the Cantonment for trade and services (Pictures 3.9-12). In his book “Bangalore: Through the Centuries,” Hasan (1971: 125) describes Indian settlements around the Cantonment thus:

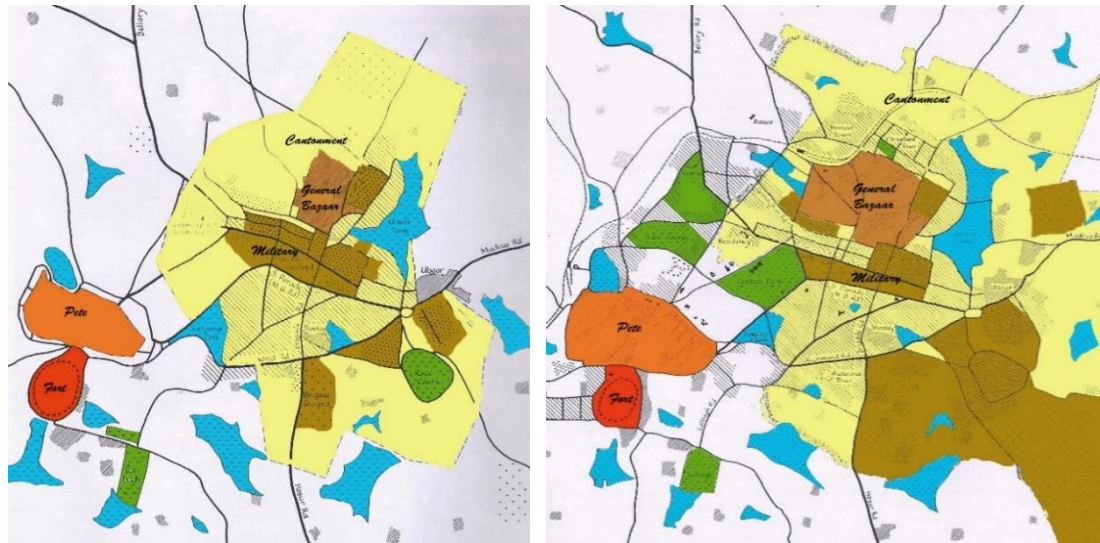
When the British troops first cantoned near the Halasoor village, in 1809, they little knew that they were laying the foundation of a City-State close to the old town of

---

<sup>53</sup> Pani et al (2010:13) describe the planning of the Cantonment thus, “The geographical distance between the Cantonment and the *Peté* was consciously maintained. The station was built around Halasur Lake, a few miles from the *Peté*, and the Commanding Officer of the station was instructed to ‘extend the private buildings as little as possible towards the petteh of Bangalore. The road between the two was over such terrain that it made access from the *Peté*, to the Cantonment quite difficult. A Welseyan priest who visited Bengaluru in the 1840s noted that, ‘Bangalore ... is ... completely hidden by a dense tope (grove), which stretches round it, and is penetrated at different points by roads leading to the gates.’”



Bangalore...<sup>54</sup> Soon very private dwellings sprang up on the fringe of the military lands. Prospects of profitable trade, public and private employment and more earnings rising out of the presence of British troops made natives to settle down in large numbers. Bazaars sprang up with goods in dazzling display. Mercers, fruit-sellers and grocers began their deals with the opulent Europeans in scarlet uniform with all the ardour lent to novelty. Gradually streets were laid out across bleak lands and fringing the streets were built, shops, mosques, temples and churches. Before long a native town was bristling with activity.



1850

1895

Figure 3.4. Maps of Bangalore Fort, *Peté* and Cantonment, 1850 & 1895  
Source: Adopted from the book, “Monkey Tops: Old Buildings in Bangalore Cantonment” (Staley, E. 1981).

The *peté* and the colonial Cantonment, also known as the Civil & Military Station (C&M Station) had very different spatial and functional configurations. In her book “The Promise of the Metropolis: Bangalore’s Twentieth Century”, Nair (2005: 47) describes the differences in the two towns as follows:

In striking contrast to the old city area were the broad, straight tree-lined avenues that formed the central axis of the C&M Station, avenues intended for parades of wheeled vehicles or spectacles of military power... There were well spaced areas for European bungalows in Richmond and Langford towns, though none were too far from ‘native quarters’ or lines, which provided vital supplies of domestic and other labour. Those areas which were designated as ‘native quarters’ included Blackpally (later Shivajinagar) to the north of the parade ground, Ulsoor, and

<sup>54</sup> Misspelled as “contoned” in original quote.

some quarters near Shoolay and the Arab Lines bore stronger resemblance to the old city area.

The separation between the *peté* and Cantonment was not just physical but also cultural. The British deliberately created a distance between the indigenous *peté* and their military station. The two towns differed in demographic compositions too. Avoiding local communities, the colonists employed migrants from other states.<sup>55</sup> Thus while the *peté* had a concentration of locals from Mysore State, the Cantonment was more multicultural consisting of British administrators and military men, Anglo-Indians, civilians from the neighboring Madras Presidency and from far away Multan and Rajasthan.<sup>56</sup> The morphology of the Cantonment developed to reflect the mixed culture within. In contrast to the spacious, orderly and planned British quarters, the “Indian areas within the Cantonment, like the old city area, were oriented towards pedestrian traffic, with narrow streets containing a mix of workshops, dairy farms, manufacturing areas, and residences” (Nair, 2005, p.48).

If Indian spatial patterns permeated into the Cantonment area, western planning principles began influencing the planning of indigenous neighborhoods in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The *peté* and Cantonment grew steadily in population, drawing migrants from neighboring states for employment and business with the colonial rulers. To decongest

---

<sup>55</sup> “Beyond such physical constraints were the cultural barriers. The population of the Cantonment was brought in from outside Mysore, ‘the clump of Hindu dwellings interspersing the cantonment being tenanted by foreigners, who have come from the Tamul country in quest of the trade and employment incident to the presence of a large European force. It is a singular fact, that, though the English have held the place for nearly half a century, you scarcely find a single Mysorean among their menial servants; but if employed at all, it is as a gardener, bearer or wet-nurse. The other offices were filled with Tamul people or Mussalmauns.’<sup>28</sup>” (Pani et al, 2010, p.13)

<sup>56</sup> Pani et al (2010:14) describe the Eurasians in the Cantonment thus, “The close proximity in which Europeans and Indians dwelt inevitably saw the emergence of a mixed race. The Eurasians as they were then called – who are now better known as Anglo-Indians – had to find a place in the schools and churches of the Cantonment.”

the *peté* and accommodate new growth, the British rulers built Bangalore's first planned extensions Chamarajpet and Sheshadripuram in 1892 (Figure 3.5). Other neighborhoods such as Basavannagudi, Vishvesharapuram and Malleswaram took shape in the aftermath of a plague outbreak in 1898 (Nair, 2005).<sup>57</sup> The following description of Basavannagudi's formation indicates a transition to modern planning principles while the spatial segregation based on caste and religious divisions in indigenous settlements, remained (Figure 3.6):

This is situated to the South of the Fort. The four main roads, each 100 feet wide, are so constructed as to lead into the Extension from the important places in Bangalore City. The Extension is laid out in a rectangular form, its boundaries on the North, South, East and West forming the four sides of the Extension, with the streets, and lanes running parallel to those boundaries. This plan gives the houses constructed in the streets an auspicious cardinal point in agreement with the astrological Hindu usage. Villa residences are provided for on 25 sites which surround a square plot of ground reserved for the location of Government Offices and other large public buildings. The Basangudi or Bull Temple and the Anjuneya Temple are allowed for the acreage around these sacred edifices, 9 acres and 6 acres, respectively.<sup>58</sup> In addition to the intersecting, intermediate roads there are four diagonal ones, 100 feet wide each, which connect the corners in the outer or boundary roads. By placing the bazaars along these diagonal roads the location of traffic and convenience of the inhabitants are nicely served. The principal divisions are arranged according to the castes, viz., Brahmins, Mahomedans, Hindus, Lingayets and Native Christians (Campbell's Directory as quoted in Pani et al, 2010, p.182-3).

---

<sup>57</sup> "Basavannagudi was the location of the plague camp in the months immediately following the outbreak of the disease in August 1898, but the demand for a permanent exit from the old city area was so great that a layout was planned on 440 acres of dry land. Another 291 acres were acquired for the Malleswaram extension. Both of these were promoted as 'model Hygiene suburbs', well spaced and, most important, so well drained that a 'deluge of six inches would not leave a vestige of standing water in any of the house sites'. The Basavannagudi extension appears to have followed the rectangular design, with boundary roads running north-south and east-west, and intermediate roads parallel to them to enable 'houses being built facing the cardinal points in accordance with ancient Hindu usage'" (Nair, 2005, p.51).

<sup>58</sup> Misspelled in the original, the actual pronunciation being "Basavannagudi."



Picture 3.9. Army Barracks on Cubbon Road (2011)



Picture 3.10. Furniture shops on Infantry Road (2011)



Picture 3.11. Commercial Street (2011)



Picture 3.12. A bye lane in the General Bazaar (2011)



Picture 3.13. Fruit-sellers on street in Basavannagudi (2010)



Picture 3.14. Conservancy lane in Basavannagudi (2009)

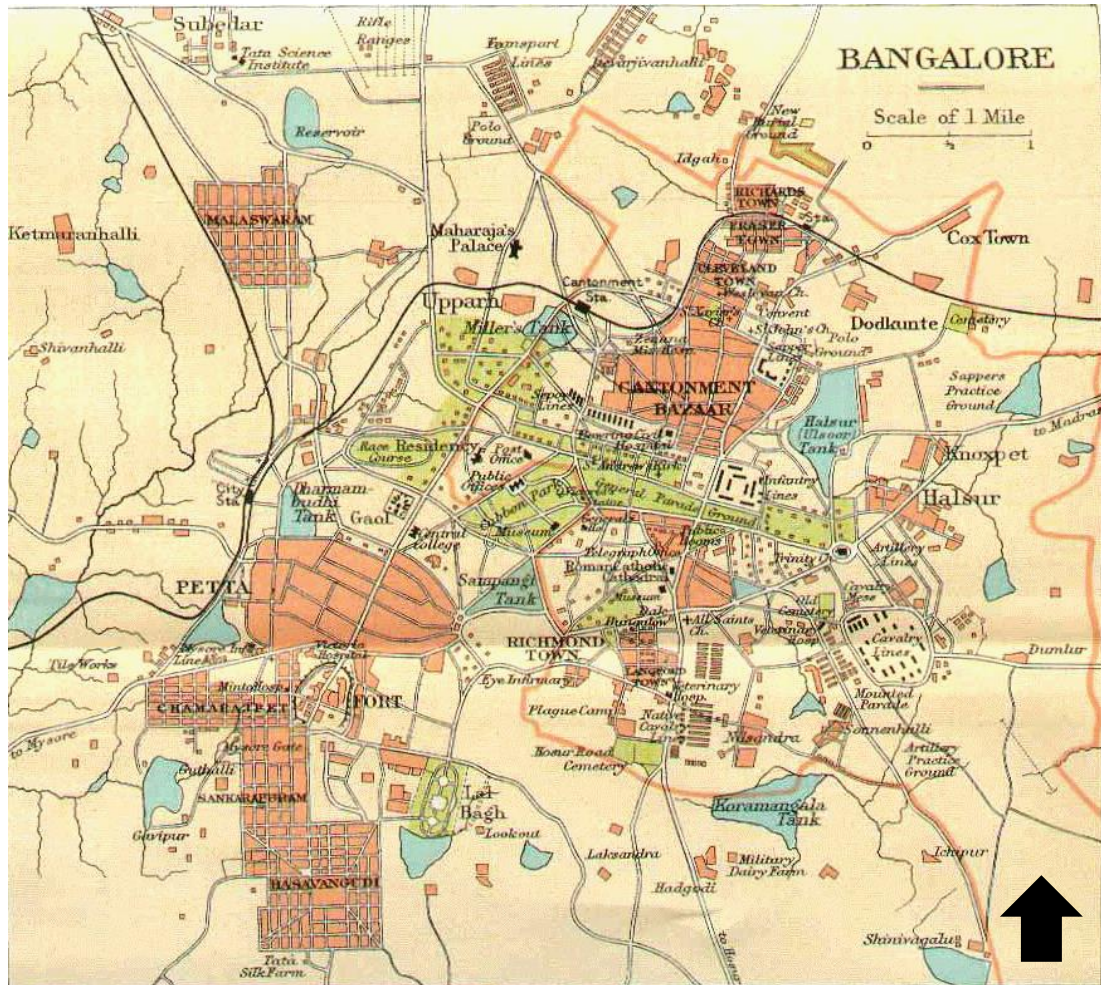


Figure 3.5. 1924 Map showing the fort, *peté*, Cantonment, Cubbon Park and military grounds separating the two towns and the new Indian suburbs to the south of the *peté*  
 Source: Murray's 1924 Handbook.

This hybridized spatial organization of Basavannagudi followed modern planning principles based on health and hygiene (Pictures 3.13 & 3.14). But the social organization mimicked the *peté* in following divisions dictated by the Indian caste system. The planned layouts echoed colonial formulations of public space in the form of streets, parks and gardens. As in the Cantonment, there were traces of the *peté* even in planned Indian

layouts. The market areas around the newly planned layouts reflected the *peté* culture of busy streets teeming with commercial, civic and religious activities (Pictures 3.15-18).<sup>59</sup>



Picture 3.15. Shop in Gandhi Bazaar with vegetables spilling over to sidewalk, Basavannagudi (2009)



Picture 3.16. Sidewalk in Gandhi Bazaar Market, Basavannagudi (2009)



Picture 3.17. Shopkeepers step out to worship deity being carried in local festivities in Gandhi Bazaar Market, Basavannagudi (2009)



Picture 3.18. Flower vendor with shop set up on Gandhi Bazaar street, Basavannagudi (2009)

---

<sup>59</sup> Nair (2005:58) describes the reflection of the *peté* in the Cantonment thus, “The Indian areas within the Cantonment, like the old city area, were oriented towards pedestrian traffic, with narrow streets containing a mix of workshops, dairy farms, manufacturing areas, and residences. Religious structures jostled for space with commercial and workshop spaces, and the links between commerce and religion were never denied.”

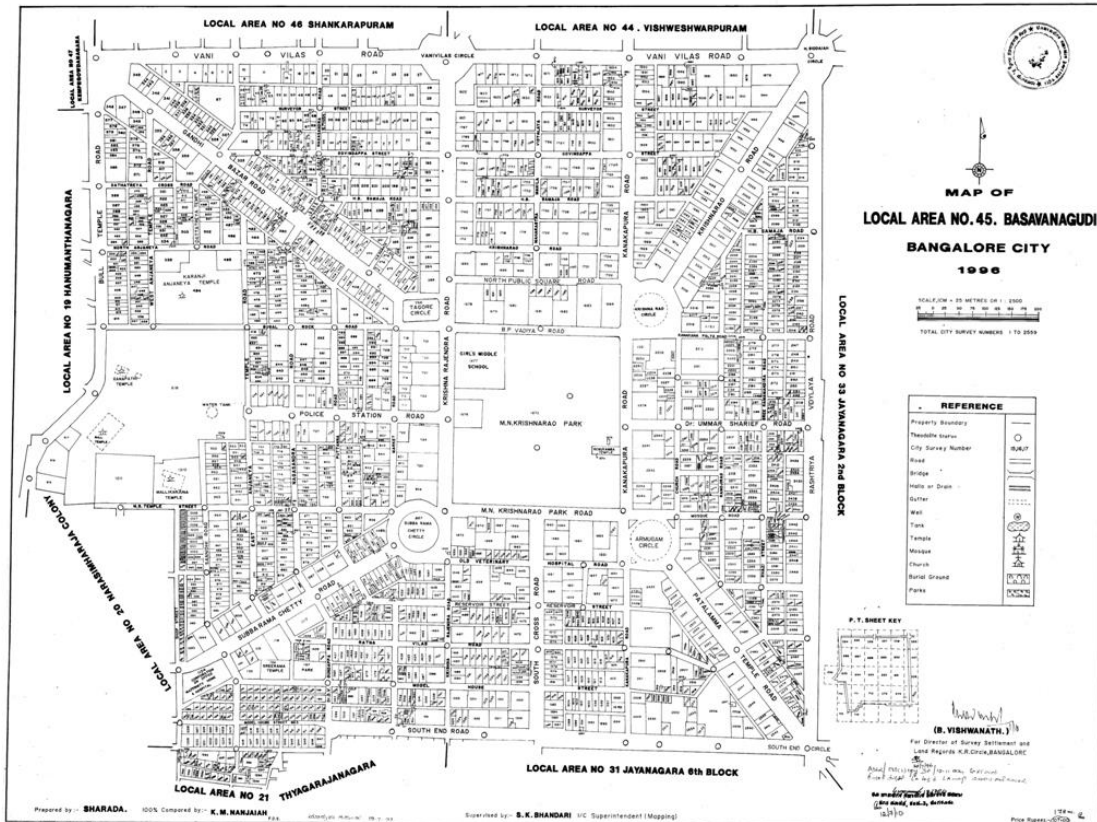


Figure 3.6. Map of Basavannagudi, 1996  
 Source: Survey, Settlement and Land Records Office, Bangalore

### 3.3.3. Planning public space in postcolonial Bangalore

The previous section reviewed the history of public space in Bangalore where pre-colonial and colonial formations delineated informal and formal types of public spaces respectively. This section engages with post-colonial planning of public spaces in Bangalore. Beginning in 1881 the two towns had their own municipalities. The Bangalore City Municipality governed the *peté* and the Bangalore Civil and Military Station municipality maintained the Cantonment area. After the British left India in 1947, the two municipalities governing the *peté* and Cantonment were merged to form a single governing body called the Bangalore Municipal Corporation in 1949. Over time the municipal body's name was changed to Bangalore Mahanagar Palike (the Kannada

translation of Bangalore Municipal Corporation) and is presently known as Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagar Palike (BBMP, meaning “Greater Bangalore Municipal Corporation” in Kannada). The changing name of the municipal agency not only reflected Bangalore’s fast paced growth but also an embracement of the local language Kannada as the official language.

BBMP is an elected body with a Mayor-led Council of locally elected representatives or corporators who represent different administrative wards of Bangalore. BBMP carries out maintenance and taxation in the city while the task of Bangalore’s planning and development is vested in a non-local, state-level agency. The City Improvement Trust Board (CITB), a planning body created in the 1940s, originally oversaw the planning, development and building new housing layouts in Bangalore. In 1976 the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) replaced CITB.

Unlike BBMP, BDA is a parastatal agency staffed with town planners and headed by state government-appointed bureaucrats. Together BDA and BBMP are in charge of planning and maintaining the city of Bangalore. Unlike BBMP, whose functionaries are accessible to local residents as their elected representatives, there are no officially-mandated forums for regular interaction between BDA officials and local residents on matters regarding planning.

The Karnataka Town and Country Planning (KTCP) Act of 1961 provides the legal framework for planning in the entire state of Karnataka. One of KTCP Act’s objectives is, “to preserve and improve existing recreational facilities and other amenities contributing towards balanced use of land.” Under the KTCP Act government agencies can use eminent domain, police power and economic incentives to acquire urban land and



develop public spaces (Ravindran, 2007). The KTPC Act empowers the local planning authority to “make Town Planning Schemes duly providing for allotment or reservation of land for roads, open spaces, gardens, recreation grounds, schools, markets, green belts and diaries, transport facilities and public purposes of all kinds” (Ravindran, 2007, p.48).

At the city level, the 1976 BDA Act and 1985 BMRDA Act provide specific guidelines for the planning and development of Bangalore. The amended version of the BDA Act of 1984 states that BDA should “provide the reservation of not less than fifteen percent of the total area of layout for public parks and playgrounds and an additional area of not less than ten percent of the total area of the layout for civic amenities.” (Section 16, BDA Act, 1984). The BMRDA Act enforces similar regulations in layouts outside BDA limits but within the metropolitan area. Similarly the 1976 Karnataka Municipal Corporations Act mandates that BBMP make provisions “for the planting and maintenance of trees on road sides and elsewhere (Section 58(18)) and the provision of public parks, gardens, playgrounds and recreation grounds. (Section 58(25))” (Ravindran, 2007, p.52).

Since 1972 BDA has prepared four master plans for Bangalore, the latest plan being in 2005. The master plan classifies commons like streets, institutions and markets under regulated public uses such as transportation, utilities and amenities. In the first three plans, open space is listed under recreational land and includes “sports grounds, stadium, playgrounds, parks, swimming pools, other recreational uses, cemeteries, garden land, and crematoria” (Ravindran, 2007, p.72). The latest CDP 2015 lists lakes under “Green zones,” playgrounds under “Urban Amenities,” and a separate category for “Parks and

Green Spaces.” The 12<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA lists urban planning and environmental protection among the functions of urban local bodies.<sup>60</sup>

This brief discussion of official policies reveals a decided emphasis on the recreational, aesthetic, environmental or institutional functions of urban public space. Undoubtedly these represent legitimate functions facilitating public health and aesthetics, but “open space serves functional and ideological roles that differ from political public spaces” (Mitchell, 1995, p.121).<sup>61</sup> If political freedom is a hallmark of public space, then planned open spaces do not necessarily signify the latter.

There are other instances where government agencies have facilitated the privatization of public space for lack of funds and resources to maintain them. For instance the parastatal agency Lake Development Authority (LDA) leased out lakes to private entities such as hotels, developers and schools for maintenance. BDA leases civic amenity sites

---

<sup>60</sup> “The 12th Schedule of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of India, defines 18 new tasks in the functional domain of the Urban Local Bodies, as follows:

- 1) Urban Planning including town planning.
- 2) Regulation of land use and construction of building.
- 3) Planning for economic and social development.
- 4) Roads and bridges.
- 5) Water supply for domestic, industrial and commercial purposes.
- 6) Public health, sanitation conservancy and solid waste management.
- 7) Fire services.
- 8) Urban forestry, protection of the environment and promotion of ecological aspects.
- 9) Safeguarding the interests of weaker sections of society, including the handicapped and mentally retarded.
- 10) Slum improvement and up gradation.
- 11) Urban poverty alleviation.
- 12) Promotion of cultural, educational and aesthetic aspects.” (Natural Resources Data Management System, n.d.)

<sup>61</sup>“There are many reasons for the growth of open space-preserving ecologically sensitive areas; maintaining property values by establishing an undevelopable greenbelt; providing places for recreation; removing flood plains from development; and so on. But in each case open space serves functional and ideological roles that differ from political public spaces. It is rare that open spaces such as these are designed or appropriated to fulfill the market and civic functions that mark the public space of the city. More typically, these open spaces share certain characteristics with pseudo-public spaces. Restrictions on behaviour and activities are taken-for-granted; prominent signs designate appropriate uses and outline rules concerning where one may walk, ride, or gather. These are highly regulated spaces” (Mitchell, 1995, p.121).

to private developers to run public services such as schools, hospitals, and institutions. Similarly, since the late 1990s, BBMP has been inviting private parties and resident welfare associations to maintain or monitor the maintenance of neighborhood parks. Such acts have increased the scope for privatization or commercialization of public space.<sup>viii</sup>

### **3.4. The politics of public space in Bangalore**

The preceding discussion demonstrates that Bangalore's public tanks, gardens and streets were integral to the economic, social and cultural life of the *peté* area. These spaces remained relevant, lending themselves to new interpretations and uses in the colonial and post-colonial periods. The colonial Cantonment also depended on the pre-colonial tank as a source of sustenance and recreation while the British introduced new categories such as parade grounds, parks and boulevards in Bangalore. Post-colonial governments adopted modern principle models promoting health, hygiene and orderliness, but have been less attentive to pre-colonial forms of urbanism though they remain vibrant spaces of social, economic and cultural activity.<sup>62</sup>

Being in charge of municipal property, state actors have a central role in shaping the city's public spaces. This section examines official and unofficial formulations of public space and the politics of lakes, roads, markets and parks as enduring symbols of public life in Bangalore. The politics of the different public spaces show that publicness is an uneven quality that reflects the use values of different groups. Government actors treat public space as property as opposed to the use value-based claims of actors of society.

---

<sup>62</sup> Nair's (2005) description of Rajajinagar as a post-industrial middle-class layout.

Consequently different actors of society push back at official conceptualizations that decontextualize public space and their users from location and use value.

### 3.4.1. Tanks / Lakes

“Tanks, which Buchanan called wet lands, were used to gather surface water and deposits eroded off a gneissic terrain with the help of constructed earthen embankments or bunds.<sup>63</sup> They were networked through sluices and weirs, forming systems of ‘not-flows’ as much as overflows. When waters receded in the tanks, plants were accommodated and clay and silt were harvested. There were times when tanks were available for other activities – fairs, camps, festivities, sports. For much of the year and sometimes more than a year, tanks did not appear anywhere like the *tota* Buchanan would expect to see.”<sup>64</sup> (DaCunha & Mathur, 2008, p.27).

As this quote reveals, Bangalore’s tanks were more than reservoirs for domestic and agricultural needs (Pictures 3.19-22). Communities lived and grew around tanks that served multiple purposes depending on the season of the year. The tank beds sustained fishing communities during the wet months and transformed into *totas* or gardens in the dry months, yielding vegetables, fruits, and flowers sold in Bangalore’s markets. Several villages, now absorbed in the city, developed around tanks that provided them daily sustenance and also served their recreational and religious needs. Though the Dharmambudi tank was long replaced by a sports stadium, the tiny shrine outside the stadium continues to be the starting point of the annual *karaga jatre* in the *peté* city.

---

<sup>63</sup> Sir Francis Buchanan was a British East India Company employee who traveled across the south Indian states in 1807 and chronicled his journeys in a book titled “Journey from Madras: Through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar.”

<sup>64</sup> *tota* means “garden” in Kannada. Da Cunha and Mathur (2008:23) write, “He [Buchanan] travelled from Madras to Mangalore identifying, among numerous other things, three cultivated grounds: the *tota*, the wet land and the dry field. The wet land and dry field he describes as ‘open’ and planted with crops and grains. The first was irrigated with water collected as tanks, the second was dependent on rains alone. The *tota*, which he [Buchanan] translates as garden, was by contrast enclosed and of four kinds: the kitchen garden (*tarkari tota*) for growing vegetables, the coconut garden (*tayngana tota*) which included other fruit trees, the betel-leaf garden (*yellay tota*) producing the leaf chewed with betel (*supari*) and the flower garden (*huvina tota*) cultivated by those who made garlands.”

Residents of Bellandur village still take the village deity on a boat ride across Bellandur Lake during village festivities.

Though many tanks retain their pre-colonial and colonial nomenclature, in official terminology they are known as lakes. Since the 1950s several tank beds have been converted to BDA housing layouts, stadia, bus stops, slums, mills and dumping yards (Srinivas, 2004).<sup>65</sup> Planning agencies have been the biggest encroachers, building upon many tanks in prime locations of Bangalore. In 1985, the Karnataka government set up the Lakshman Rau Committee to study the status of Bangalore's lakes. The Committee's preliminary assessment report recommends that, "... the tank beds should be utilized only for parks, Regional Parks, mini forests, Picnic spots and water sheets and on no account the tanks beds be allowed to be used for any other purposes."<sup>66</sup> This recommendation recognizes the tank bed as an ecologically fragile system, but in suggesting only recreational activities, it does not recognize the other roles of the tank as a space of communal life in the city.



Picture 3.19. Bellandur Village Lake (2009)



Picture 3.20. Lal Bagh Lake (2010)

---

<sup>65</sup> See Appendix Two for BDA's list of lake conversions.

<sup>66</sup> Copy of letter containing recommendations made by the Experts Committee in First Meeting held on 9.8.85 from the Secretary to Government of Karnataka, Housing & Urban Development Department, addressed to the Commissioner, BDA and Commissioner BCC and copied to Director of Town Planning.



Picture 3.21. Ulsoor Lake (2010)



Picture 3.22. Sankey Tank (2010)

Despite official recommendations, authorized and unauthorized encroachments of tank beds continued unabated as demand for housing and other facilities grew along with the expanding city (Manjusainath, 2011). After Bangalore’s nearly 390 water bodies dwindled to 81 functional lakes, the Karnataka state government established the parastatal Lake Development Authority (LDA) in 2002. LDA’s Vision Statement states that it was created due to the “unchecked deterioration of lakes in and around Bangalore and... their critical role in maintaining healthy environs and recharging of ground water.”

Being a policy body, LDA has no control over or means to maintain the lakes, and acts in an advisory capacity to the multiple government agencies in charge of Bangalore’s lakes (The Bangalorean, 2008).<sup>67</sup> LDA has the authority to outsource the maintenance of city lakes under “Adopt a lake” schemes to private parties. The parastatal “... can grant approval to the proposal of any organisation or association of persons living in the vicinity of lakes and interested in development of lakes who come forward to take up

---

<sup>67</sup> “For instance, Bellandur Lake in South Bangalore was managed at different times by different agencies. There are Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), Lake Development Authority, Minor Irrigation Department, Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board, Karnataka State Pollution Control Board and Fisheries department” (The Bangalorean, 2008).

activities approved for development and regeneration of the lakes” (LDA Memorandum of Association and Byelaws of Association & Rules, 2002, p.3).

Using the public-private partnership (PPP) model, LDA entrusted four lakes to real estate developers and hotel chains for maintenance. The agency entrusted the Chellakere Lake to a private education trust in 2006 for maintenance for a five year period. In 2007, LDA entered a PPP with a private hotel chain to maintain and develop Hebbal Lake, where in addition to a floating restaurant, “the lake shore will have a cafeteria, a children’s park, a handicrafts and gift centre, a waterfall and a statue, and a medical centre.”<sup>68</sup> The developer planned to fence the lake and charge an entry fee of Rs.20 per person. In 2008, the Bangalore-based local nongovernmental organization Environmental Support Group (ESG) filed a public interest litigation (PIL) against LDA, “challenging the privatization of management and rehabilitation of lakes in Bangalore (WP 817/2008) ...” (ESG, 2011).

In November 2008, the Karnataka High Court ruled on the PIL directing “the LDA not to enter into fresh agreements that would enable private parties to own lakes” (Khandekar, 2008). In one case, LDA cancelled the contract and retook charge of Agara Lake since the private developer was not maintaining the lake as per terms of contract. After LDA took back the lake, local residents and environmentalists joined hands with residents of Agara village “to make the lake area the thriving eco-system that it once was” (Yajaman, 2013).

---

<sup>68</sup> “Under the terms of the PPP, EIH can use the lake for 15 years on payment to the LDA of Rs. 72 lakh a year with an annual escalation of 1.5 per cent of this sum. Besides a floating restaurant, the lake shore will have a cafeteria, a children’s park, a handicrafts and gift centre, a waterfall and a statue, and a medical centre, all developed for Rs. 16 crore. The lake will be fenced and an entrance fee of Rs. 20 charged. It is expected to attract 2,000 visitors a day.” (Gandhi, D. & Shivanand.S, 2007).

This article excerpt highlights several aspects of grassroots participation in restoring the urban commons. First, it reveals a collaborative model of engagement between government bodies and middle-class associations. Second, it demonstrates the dominance of middle-class groups in shaping discourses about a common resource where other claimants such as the Agara villagers were an audience at the table. Third, it reveals a subtle shift in public perceptions of the lake from an everyday common to an enclosed, protected ecological space. What has changed is the claimants that have access to, and therefore a voice in shaping the space.

### **3.4.2. Parks**

For a long time, planners and senior citizens alike have been strongly committed to an ideology of city beauty, marked by a nostalgic longing for a time of fewer people and therefore much less pressure on the resources of the city. Indeed, it is not so much redevelopment, or even reconstruction, but beauty that is emphasized frequently in the writings of those concerned about the festering slums of the city. Bangalore's reputation as a "Garden City" rarely refers to the substantial part of the city that was given over to the cultivation of fruits, flowers, and vegetables, right up until the 1960s. It refers to the compounds and gardens in which private residences or public buildings were set (Nair, 2002, p.1224).

As Nair (2002) suggests, private gardens and public parks have a special role in defining the public aesthetics of the Garden City. Parks have a long history in Bangalore dating back to Tipu Sultan's rule in the 1700s. Parks developed in the colonial period still dot the Cantonment area (Patrao, 2013). The taxonomy of public parks ranges from the historic Lal Bagh Botanical Garden and Cubbon Park to neighborhood pocket parks in planned BDA layouts (Pictures 3.23 & 3.24).<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> The Mughal ruler Hyder Ali commissioned Lal Bagh [Hindi version of "Red Garden" for the gulmohar flowers that abound in the garden], to be developed on the lines of a Mughal garden in 1760. He used the services of the Tigalas, a community of horticulturists from Tamil Nadu in creating Lal Bagh. Today Lal Bagh Botanical Gardens includes the Lal Bagh Lake and occupies 240 acres of property between the *peté* and the 19<sup>th</sup> century suburbs of Bangalore. The British developed Cubbon Park in 1870 in the land separating the *peté* and Cantonment. Cubbon Park occupies 300 acres of land in the centre of Bangalore's administrative area and houses many administrative buildings amidst sprawling recreational grounds.





Picture 3.23. Lal Bagh, the city’s historic botanic garden. Local residents have protested planning projects such as Bangalore’s Metro rail project and proposals for a Singapore theme park in Lal Bagh (2010)



Picture 3.24. Cubbon Park was developed in 1870 as a divider between the *peté* and Cantonment. A popular site for public protests, the park lost land to official buildings and roads, and more recently to Bangalore’s Metro rail project (2010)

Neighborhood parks are fenced plots with paved pathways, trees and lawns with “No Walking” signs (Pictures 3.25-30). Other facilities include a tot-lot for young children, a walking/jogging track, park furniture and a park-keeper’s room. Signboards on the gate posts indicate park hours while signboards within caution users from engaging in a variety of activities that interfere with the aesthetics, safety and tranquility of the park. For instance, children are not allowed to bring in play objects, pets are not allowed, and food and drink are prohibited in the parks.

BBMP maintains parks located in BDA-planned layouts and these are all located in middle-class and elite neighborhoods. Other unplanned residential layouts such as slums, revenue pockets and urban villages do not have planned park spaces and in many cases no open spaces at all. In the planned layouts, BBMP seeks inputs of prominent local residents and their representatives in developing parks to suit their requirements. In some instances, BBMP outsources the maintenance and upkeep of parks to private companies and resident welfare associations. In doing so, the municipal agency allows for the

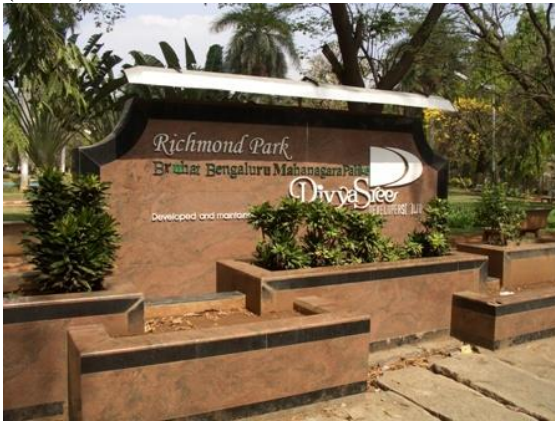
embourgeoisement of the public parks as private developers and middle-class residents impose their interpretations of publicness on the park.



Picture 3.25. Park in Jayanagar locality (2010)



Picture 3.26. Krishnarao Park, Basavannagudi (2010)



Picture 3.27. Richmond Park maintained by DivyaSree Real Estate Developers.



Picture 3.28. Gated park in Arikere locality



Picture 3.29. RWA Signboard outside Children's Park in Defence Colony



Picture 3.30. RWA Signboard outside Senior Citizen's Park in Defence Colony

In BBMP's (and many RWAs') conceptualization, the urban park is "a controlled and orderly retreat where a properly behaved public might experience the spectacle of the city" (Mitchell, 1995, p.115). At the same time, government agencies are regular encroachers of public parks, civic amenity sites and playgrounds in the city. In his research on open spaces in Bangalore, Ravindran (2007) makes the following observations about encroachments in the historic M.N.Krishnarao Park in Basavannagudi. This account exemplifies official and private takeovers of public space that occur routinely in the city (Navya, 2011):

The M.N.Krishna Rao Park, considered to be one of the major lung spaces in the south of Bangalore, was reported to have shrunk from the original extent of 32 acres to 2 acres (The Hindu, 09/02/2003). Reportedly the "first women's park" in the country, the park is reported to have been occupied by both private and state agencies – the Basavangudi Police Station and police quarters, the DSERT building, the office of the BWSSB Assistant Executive Engineer, Renukamma Temple, a gymnasium, and many clubs. As per the zonal regulations (CDP - 1995), the list of permitted uses even under special circumstances does not include quarters, office buildings, temple etc. Such division is also clearly violation of the section 6 and 8 of the Karnataka parks, playfields and open spaces act, 1985, that prohibits use of these areas for any purpose other than it was used and prohibits construction of buildings. The current extent of the park as per the data obtained from BMP is 6.963 ha or 17 acres, clearly signaling the failure of regulatory agencies to ensure protection of this lung space" (Ravindran, 2007, p.135).

This quote highlights not only the failure of governmental agencies to protect the park, but it shows that public agencies build public facilities in park spaces. There are instances where local councilors have built their offices in public parks. Unlike encroachments by private developers or homeless people, it is more difficult for local residents to challenge official encroachments on public spaces, since they represent municipal property.

### **3.4.3. Streets**

Life on a road with all the hustle bustle goes on as usual. One fine day, residents and traders on that road wake up to the fact that there are strange markings on

many of the properties which have appeared overnight. The President of the Traders Association gets a letter from the municipality that the road where they do business and reside is up for expansion. Reason: need for better connectivity from the city centre to the new international airport... Undeterred by the official notice, the residents of the road decide to fight back in their own innovative way. They rub off all the markings which the authorities have put up (Mohan & Vaidyanathan, 2009).

This excerpt from an online magazine on civic issues in Bangalore refers to the four hundred years old Avenue Road in the *peté* area. This narrow street supports hundreds of businesses, livelihoods and families, many having been there for generations. Avenue Road is among ninety-one streets selected for a municipal road-widening project started in 2004 to decongest traffic and improve connectivity across the city. Citing traffic improvements, BBMP used eminent domain to take over private and public property across the city (Pictures 3.31-34). The markings on the boundaries walls in Pictures 3.31-34 indicate the number of meters that the road widening would take away from the property. BBMP offered compensation for displaced traders and business owners in the form of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR). Under TDR:

... if the Planning Authority or Local Authority wants to widen an existing road, form a new road, provide parks, playgrounds and open spaces or any other civic amenities, they can acquire land demarcated for these purposes from the owner for free and in exchange give the owner “development rights in the form of additional floor area, equal to one and half times the area surrendered.” The owner can either use these development rights on the remaining part of surrendered land or anywhere in the local planning areas or he may transfer the development rights to another person.<sup>70</sup>

There is however, no compensation for the vendors and hawkers that ply their trade on the streets and sidewalks. In locations such as CMH Road, a bustling commercial street (Pictures 3.35 & 3.36), and Nanda Road, a verdant street in an affluent locality, trees,

---

<sup>70</sup> TDR Bazaar Infrastructures Pvt. Ltd

parks and businesses were uprooted along with streets to accommodate the Metro project, a public rail transit line.



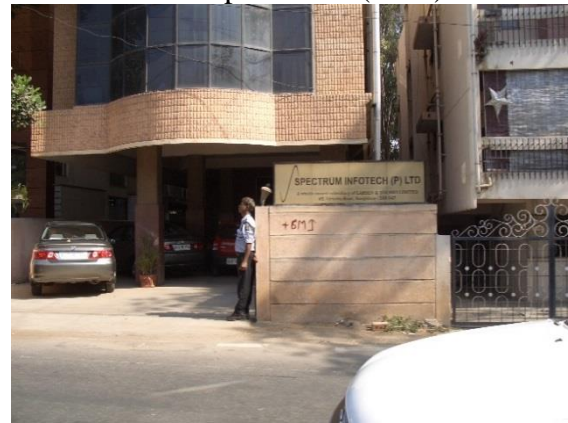
Picture 3.31. Infantry Road (2010)



Picture 3.32. Airport Road (2010)



Picture 3.33. All India Radio Road (2010)



Picture 3.34. Ulsoor Road (2010)



Picture 3.35. Road work to accommodate Metro project on Chinmaya Mission Hospital Road, Indiranagar (2010)



Picture 3.36. Metro work passing by a slum on 100 Feet Road, Indiranagar (2010)

The Metro alignment passes through the city's busiest neighborhoods, displacing communities and disrupting property. The state government created Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL), a Special Purpose Vehicle to implement and manage the Metro project with limited interactions with the local government and local residents. These different projects that are transforming public right-of-ways indicate the significant changes being made to public spaces with little consideration to anything but the transportation role of the street.

#### **3.4.4. Markets**

“At midnight on the 24th of January, the Greater Bangalore Municipal Corporation (*Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike*, or BBMP) erased one such popular landmark in Bangalore: the Gandhi Bazaar. The bazaar is over a hundred years old, home to fresh fruits, flowers and vegetable vendors and some of the most delicious local fast food joints... In less than an hour, in the dead of the night, the corporation carried out an anti-encroachment drive and evicted all vendors and street hawkers who plied their trade on both sides of the main road. The reasons given were that most of the encroachments were illegal and getting in the way of pedestrians and traffic. The cleared footpaths and adjoining roadway will now make room for easy movement of traffic and more parking slots. The municipal corporation has also promised to provide 'alternative' commercial space for the vendors as close as possible to the market” (Rao, 2012).

Bangalore has three distinct categories of public market places selling fresh produce and domestic supplies linked to pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. The markets of Bangalore, or *santhes* as they are known in Kannada, date back to pre-colonial times when each village or town had its own market in the main street or the square. Next came the sprawling colonial-style market structures built in the Cantonment area such as Russel Market, Coxtown Market and Johnson Market that remain bustling centers of commercial activity today (Ramani, 2011). In the post-colonial city, the planning authorities have constructed market complexes in every BDA Layout. All three forms of markets remain vibrant centers of economic activity in contemporary Bangalore.

Every locality in Bangalore has a daily or weekly market selling fresh produce and other household wares. In newer localities, farmers from adjacent villages sell fresh produce on the main street early in the morning. Notably such markets are located either on the fringe or centers of villages now absorbed in the city. The villages have lost their boundaries, but the markets remain. There is the Madivala *santhe*; Adugodi *santhe* and Thippasandra *santhe*.<sup>71</sup> The rows of shops with wicker baskets overflowing with fresh produce and flowers are reminders of the indigenous and rural origins of the markets.

Many street-side markets occupy entire sidewalks, sometimes spilling onto streets and hindering pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Pedestrians, motorists, shoppers and occupants of buildings abutting the sidewalk weave in and out of the market space. Bangalore's traditional markets remain in their original locations with generations of vendors plying their businesses in fixed locations determined by negotiations amongst the communities and with government officials. But as the city grows, local authorities (and sometimes local residents) put pressure on vendors to relocate to legal hawking zones or BDA market complexes built in situ.<sup>72</sup>

Vendors have resisted official efforts to relocate them to alternate commercial spaces because, they argue that they would lose their location and business if they moved. Examples include Madivala Market and Krishna Rajendra Market where vendors refused to occupy higher floors of local BDA Market Complexes because they did not expect customers to climb stairs to find them and buy wares.<sup>73</sup> Dislodging street economies from

---

<sup>71</sup> Santhe is the Kannada term for market.

<sup>72</sup> In her dissertation documenting the politics of street vendors in Bangalore, Raman (2010:277) notes, "There have been two predominant forms of intervention at Bangalore to improve street traders' claims on location: these are the construction of market complexes and, more recently, the allocation of hawking zones."

<sup>73</sup> A study by the NGO Janaagraha provides a similar account of the Coxtown Market stating that, "The rise in the local population and the subsequent increase in demand for Cox Town Market's services have

their long-term locations also weakens the social, economic and political links that they form with the places.<sup>74</sup> This discussion highlights the significance of location to street vendors' economic sustenance. State developmental goals and pedestrians' claims to walkable streets undermine the vendors' economic rights by framing their informal spatial practices in terms of illegality.



Picture 3.37. KR Market, the *peté*'s oldest market



Picture 3.38. Annual peanut festival on street outside the historic Bull Temple in Basavannagudi

This review of the politics of public spaces in Bangalore indicates that different groups are contesting official development projects that are transforming everyday public spaces. Local resistance to official projects affecting public space indicates that different publics have different imaginaries of public spaces and their use value. These grassroots struggles for public space challenge governmental formulations of public interest and highlight the unevenness of public space, that is "... always contoured through the

---

necessitated improvements in the market's building structure. In 1981, an alternative market facility was constructed for the Cox Town Market vendors on Lazar Road, within a kilometer from the original market site. The market facility had low visibility, due to its location behind a row of one-storey shoplots. As a result, the vendors refused to move to the new facility. (Cox Town Market Rejuvenation Project, 15<sup>TH</sup> June 2004–18<sup>TH</sup> July 2004, Sarvagnanagar Citizen's Forum & Janaagraha).

<sup>74</sup> This reiterates Raman's (2010:286) point that "locality constitutes an important political space for street traders, as is evidenced by findings relating to the influence of everyday relationships and embeddedness on street traders' ability to draw on their networks."



playing out of unequal social relations ...” (Massey, 2005, p.153). Yet the changes are being made to municipal land, and beg the question of how different social groups frame their claims to public property. The next section briefly introduces the three case studies addressing the central research question of what the claims of different groups reveal about spatial politics and planning in Bangalore.



Picture 3.39. Gandhi Bazaar Market



Picture 3.40. Madivala Santhe

### 3.5. Case Studies

This section introduces the three cases that inform this research empirically in the next three chapters. The cases represent different economic groups with different access to power and resources in government and private sector. Yet the conflicts are similar because they challenge official formulations of public space claiming use value to public space. Central to this chapter are questions regarding what the claims of different groups to public space reveals about the inclusivity of planning and governance processes in Bangalore. What claims are city residents making to public space and how are state actors responding to their claims? How is public space shaped as a result of these contestations? Who are the actors involved and who holds power in these struggles? The following discussion briefly discusses the cases, highlighting their theoretical

underpinnings and the questions that they raise regarding the politics of public space in Bangalore.

### **3.5.1. KR Road bamboo weavers and Metro project: private claims to a public sidewalk**

The KR Road case represents the struggles of a community of bamboo weavers resisting displacement from a public sidewalk that state actors were modifying to build a public rail project. The weaver community had built their lives and livelihoods around the social, economic and political fabric around KR Road, a major arterial road. Officials of the rail company BMRCL took the help of municipal officials and police to forcibly evict the weavers from the sidewalk. Countering the weavers' claims of use value and economic needs, BMRCL and the local municipal agency BBMP cited public interest and the weavers' illegal status on the public sidewalk to justify their eviction. Despite their eviction, the weavers returned to work on the reconstructed sidewalk and petitioned BMRCL for rehabilitation housing and work space in the same location.<sup>75</sup>

In their long tenure on the sidewalk, the weavers countered previous threats of evictions from municipal workers and police with regular bribes and later with the support of a local *dalit* leader. However, neither the weavers nor their dalit leader could use similar tactics to resist BMRCL, a state government-appointed agency insulated from local resistance.<sup>76</sup> BMRCL and BBMP acceded to the weavers' demands for housing but

---

<sup>75</sup> “Similarly, locality constitutes an important political space for street traders, as is evidenced by findings relating to the influence of everyday relationships and embeddedness on street traders' ability to draw on their networks. Street traders rely on the support of other economic and political agents for establishing new claims and in countering opposition. Because of their circumstances, although street traders have networks with one another across localities, their subversive strategies are localized. The importance of locality is underestimated in the literature as well as by movement actors. Further, given the changes in the cities, there is a need for more studies on locality to draw conclusions about urban processes and relationships” (Raman, 2010, p.286).

<sup>76</sup> Further, the municipal governments are closely monitored; mega city programmes and JNURRM are implemented by different state institutions, and are supported by new laws to acquire land or evict

did not recognize their economic rights. The KR Road sidewalk case begs the question of why BMRCL responded to the weavers' demands for housing when they had no legal claims of residence on a public sidewalk. Furthermore the KR Road case invites an inquiry into how state actors address the economic rights of urban indigent groups.

### **3.5.2. The Tree as a Metaphor for the City – The activism of Hasiru Usiru**

The Hasiru Usiru case examines the activism of a middle-class network campaigning against official destruction of the greens and open spaces in Bangalore. The network provides a discursive forum for bourgeois imaginaries that seek a reconciliation between ongoing development trends and protection of public spaces in Bangalore. While Hasiru Usiru members express bourgeois concerns for green cities, making planning suggestions based on scientific knowledge to develop the city, they do not have an exclusionary vision of the city. Instead, the network aims to create a broader platform by integrating the claims of marginal communities in their petitions against tree felling.

Hasiru Usiru filed a PIL against BBMP's tree felling in the Karnataka High Court. The court gave a favorable ruling, directing BBMP to include Hasiru Usiru in future decisions regarding tree felling. The court verdict symbolically gave the network a voice in planning decisions, but BBMP continued the tree felling. The Hasiru Usiru case challenges academic accounts of a unitary bourgeois imaginary of Indian cities as clean, green and exclusive sites of urban life. Furthermore the case raises questions about the ability of bourgeois imaginaries that oppose governmental policies vis-à-vis public space, to find a voice in planning and governance in Indian cities.

---

occupiers. These laws are often instituted by the regional state without much publicity. Not only are the local governments bypassed, there is also a process of enclaving mega city programmes in special cells within a municipality. Such cells are insulated from elected representatives and are monitored directly by a commissioner and a senior bureaucrat (Raman, 2010, p.285).

### **3.5.3. Park politics in 3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala**

This case examines the contestations of elite-class neighborhood residents for a civic amenity site in 3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala, an affluent locality in Bangalore. Local and non-local residents used the space as a playground. In the 1990s, the planning agency BDA made changes in the master plan to validate proposed civic amenities on PO Ground. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents filed a PIL in court against BDA, challenging the proposed changes. The court ruled against BDA, directing the planning agency to restore PO Ground as an open space. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents then took the help of a local politician to regain control of the Ground from private encroachers.

Notwithstanding their high-level connections with high-ranking public officials and the court victory, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents had to struggle for a decade to gain control of PO Ground. The case shows a growing willingness among elite and middle-class groups in Indian cities to engage in vote bank politics. The case also demonstrates that in the process of fighting for PO Ground, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents transformed from consumer-citizens to political actors. The PO Ground case raises questions about the role of elite residents in shaping local spatial politics as they forge bonds of opportunity and opportunism with local public functionaries.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter maps the terrain of the politics of public space in Bangalore, bridging the conceptual framework in the previous chapter and the empirical chapters that follow. This chapter finds that struggles for public space in Bangalore emerge as different actors of state and society articulate their conceptualization of public space on the ground. In

these struggles, different social groups' claims to public spaces as contextual, use value-based sites of urban life collide with governmental formulations of public property.

The three case studies that follow this chapter endorse the description of public spaces as places “formed through a myriad of practices of quotidian negotiation and contestation; practices, moreover, through which the constituent ‘identities’ are also themselves continuously moulded” (Massey, 2005, p.154). Furthermore the case studies highlight the challenges to local groups in engaging with centralized planning processes that cite public interest to overcome grassroots resistance. The ensuing spatial politics suggest that local residents seek resolution for their claims to public space in electoral politics and caste-based politics rather than in official processes of planning.

## Chapter Four

### Private claims to public space: Urban renewal and subaltern politics on KR Road

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the contestations of a subaltern community for a public sidewalk in Bangalore. In May 2009 the local municipal agency BBMP helped Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) evict a community of bamboo craftspeople from a sidewalk on a busy arterial street Krishna Rajendra Road (KR Road) to build a public rail alignment.<sup>77</sup> This research examines the community's struggles to privatize public space in a planning milieu that keeps street economies on the periphery of the formal city (Benjamin & Raman, 2001; Baviskar, 2003). In the KR Road case, the weavers seek inclusion in the formal city using informal claims of tenure and use value. The case shows that state actors are neither able to accommodate the weavers nor ignore their claims to the city. Spurred by exigencies of development, state actors adopt the dual policy of appeasement and control with housing resettlement schemes where "land is promised but never secured" (Roy, 2005, p.150). The KR Road case also highlights the role of *dalit* politics in shaping urban space where formal planning processes fail to address the economic and political rights of subaltern groups.

---

<sup>77</sup> "The project will create considerable direct displacement as a result of land acquisition (current tally is 1500 families including 300 slum dwellers). Indirect displacement will also take place due to commercialization and gentrification of the area. The BMRCL is acquiring a total of 228.614 acres for the Metro Rail Project" (CASUMM, 2007).

The twenty-six mile long Metro rail alignment runs along some of Bangalore's busiest commercial streets and has caused considerable disruption and displacement of both formal and informal street economies.<sup>78</sup> There were public protests from middle-class residents, traders' associations and environmental activists against the Metro's impact on private property, businesses and public spaces (Down to Earth, 2007). There has been little inquiry regarding the response of marginal groups displaced by the Metro project and official efforts to rehabilitate displaced street economies.<sup>ix</sup> With regard to governmental responses, while some studies "have argued that ongoing transformations have created more inclusive spaces and compelled the state to engage more directly with the urban poor, others have highlighted the state's disengagements from this population and its political demands" (Weinstein, 2009, p.401). In examining the weavers' contestations for the KR Road sidewalk, this chapter examines the "role of non-elite groups in the process of urban change" (Crossa, 2009, p.49).

The KR Road weavers' story belongs in narratives of marginal self-employed communities that conceptually and physically occupy the periphery of the master planned city.<sup>x</sup> The street vendor, an integral feature of Indian street life, increasingly finds little or no favor with official and middle-class visions of world class Indian cities (Rajagopal, 2001; Baviskar, 2003; Chatterjee, 2004; Fernandes, 2004; Nair, 2005; Roy, 2005; Anjaria, 2006; Benjamin, 2008; Anjaria, 2009; Bhan, 2009).<sup>xi</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> "The project will create considerable direct displacement as a result of land acquisition (current tally is 1500 families including 300 slum dwellers). Indirect displacement will also take place due to commercialization and gentrification of the area. The BMRCL is acquiring a total of 228.614 acres for the Metro Rail Project" (CASUMM, 2007).

The 2009 National Policy on Urban Street Vendors endorse street vendors' rights to occupy and vend in public spaces in a regulated manner.<sup>79</sup> Yet, local governments have at best been ambivalent towards street economies, in the form of limited hawking licenses and ill-planned "designated" hawking zones. At worst, official actions have been violent, resulting in forcible evictions of hawkers and vendors (Rajagopal, 2001; Chatterjee, 2004; Anjaria, 2006). Thus street economies in contemporary Indian cities operate in a grey zone of uncertainty under the watch of a "predatory state, a state that constantly demands bribes and threatens demolitions – against which a licence or other formal recognition provide security" (Anjaria, 2006, p.2145).

Despite official and judicial recognition of street vendors as productive members of urban society, state actors engage with street vendors as political society whose constituents "have to be both looked after and controlled by various governmental agencies." (Chatterjee, 2004, p.38).<sup>80</sup> Marginal groups are caught between their subsistence needs and governmental ambivalence where a "certain arbitrariness attends the state's interactions with those outside the law" (Rajagopal, 2001, p.109). Thus urban indigent groups adopt different strategies to maintain a foothold in the city relying on

---

<sup>79</sup> One of the objectives of the National Policy on Urban Street Vendors (2009:3) is "To give street vendors a legal status by formulating an appropriate law and thereby providing for legitimate vending/hawking zones in city/town master or development plans, including zonal, local and layout plans, and ensuring their enforcement;"

<sup>80</sup> "Almost every locality in Bangalore has its daily or weekly road-side bazaars, commonly known as "Santhes". This has been happening on a daily or weekly basis for many years. The conflict between hawkers and vendors and municipalities as well as citizens' groups anxious to protect public spaces from encroachment is one that is repeatedly played out in various cities of India including Bangalore. The Supreme Court of India has recognized the right to carry on trade or business on streets and pavements (subject to regulation) as part of the fundamental right guaranteed under Article 19(1)(g) of the Constitution. The Supreme Court has held that street trading cannot be denied on the grounds that streets are meant exclusively for passing or repassing and for no other use" (Alternate Law Forum Report, 2003, p.94).



vote bank politics, working with pro-poor NGOs and self-help groups, and participation in *dalit* politics, thus acting as “active political agents” (Benjamin, 2003, p.204).<sup>xii</sup>

As the preceding paragraphs suggest, informal economies engage with state actors from their place “outside the ambit of formal citizenship rights” (Rajagopal, 2001, p.109). This research proceeds on the premise that “the intensity of economic needs *adds* to – rather than subtracts from – the urgency of political freedoms” (Sen, 2000, p.148). If the only way to gain citizenship rights in cities is through officially recognized citizenship rights, where does this leave informal street economies and their claims to urban space?

Recent studies frame the struggles of disenfranchised groups for urban space as struggles for a *right to the city* where excluded groups seek inclusion in the formal city as users and producers of urban space (Lefebvre, 1968, Crawford, 1995; Mitchell, 2003; Harvey, 2008; Anjaria, 2009; Crossa, 2009; Bhan, 2009). Locating their protests against displacement in claims of economic and social networks, Crossa (2009: 54) argues that the street vendor’s struggle for public space is as “more than a territorial struggle; rather it is a struggle over their rights as citizens.”<sup>81</sup> As the KR Road case shows, such claims provide a conceptually sound basis for vendors battling displacement, but find little traction in official planning policies of urban renewal and modernization.

Though the weavers demanded workspace on the sidewalk, highlighting its use value in terms of location, visibility and identity, BMRCL and local agencies responded by offering resettlement housing. The KR Road weavers were asking for their economic and

---

<sup>81</sup> “But policies such as the *Programa* also disrupt kin networks, social relations between different groups of street vendors, and disturb a sense of community that has existed and has been a source of strength in the context of a harsh economic crisis. Street vendors’ resistance over the practices of the *Programa* is thus more than a territorial struggle; rather it is a struggle over their rights as citizens to remain as members of the Historic Center.” (Crossa, 2009, p.54)

political rights in demanding workspace on the sidewalk, but they had to ensconce their demands in *dalit* politics and not as productive members of urban society. As illegal occupants of a public sidewalk, the weavers were not eligible for resettlement housing, yet BMRCL offered them housing as compensation for their eviction. The weavers' actions and BMRCL's response suggest a certain arbitrariness in official responses to subaltern struggles where the public sidewalk gives the latter traction in negotiations with state actors.

In examining the politics of KR Road, the chapter proceeds as follows. The next section outlines the life of the bamboo weavers on KR Road, highlighting the role of the public sidewalk as a context-place of locational, social and economic significance linked to the community's survival in the city. The following section discusses the role of the Metro project in undermining the weavers' access to local space and local government. The next section examines the role of *dalit* politics in filling the void in planning for marginal groups, politicizing space and governance in the process. The final section summarizes the findings of the case. The KR Road reiterates the role of public space as economic space for indigent groups in Indian cities. In seeking visibility on the sidewalk, the weavers seek visibility and citizenship in the planned city. As centralized policies illegalize indigenous spatial practices to keep marginal communities on the periphery of planning processes, the latter take recourse in *dalit* politics to gain a foothold in the city. Owing to exigencies of development, state actors are forced to engage with vocal marginal communities such as the KR Road weavers. The KR Road case demonstrates that the struggles of marginal remain in the realm of welfare planning as they use caste politics to gain entry into official planning processes.

#### 4.2. The bamboo weavers and Krishna Rajendra (KR) Road



Picture 4.1. Doddapeté



Picture 4.2. Chikpeté

This section examines the significance of KR Road and the eponymous KR Market for the bamboo weavers' conceptualization of public space and life in the city. The weavers' community occupied the sidewalk for more than fifty years. In this time, the lives and livelihoods of consecutive generations of the community became interwoven into the social, economic, cultural and institutional fabric of the KR Market area (Pictures 4.1 & 4.2). The KR Road sidewalk had locational significance for weavers as a place that gave them visibility and identity.

Named after a ruler of Mysore, KR Road is an old arterial street that connects the historic *peté* (original Bangalore settlement built in 1537 AD) to other parts of the city. KR Road runs along a bustling wholesale market known as Krishna Rajendra Market or City Market (Picture 4.3). The weavers occupy a stretch of KR Road that runs between the *peté* and old residential suburbs built in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Map 4.1). Rajagopal's (2008:138-9) description of the *peté* area orients the reader on the spatial, economic and social context to the weavers' daily lives:

Located at the geographical centre of Bangalore, the *Peté* forms a distinct entity. It is bound by major roads which are formed on the original footprints of the fort

wall. Historically, streets oriented along the cardinal directions led to the four gates of the fort wall. Dense and cavernous networks of streets form the historic and indeed the contemporary fabric of the *Peté*. Main streets formed several *petés* or markets which were associated with various trades and professions of the inhabitants ... With a population of 1,12,076 persons inhabiting an area of 2.24 kilometres, the *Peté* has become the largest informal economy for the Bangalore region.



Picture 4.3. KR market, Bangalore *Peté*

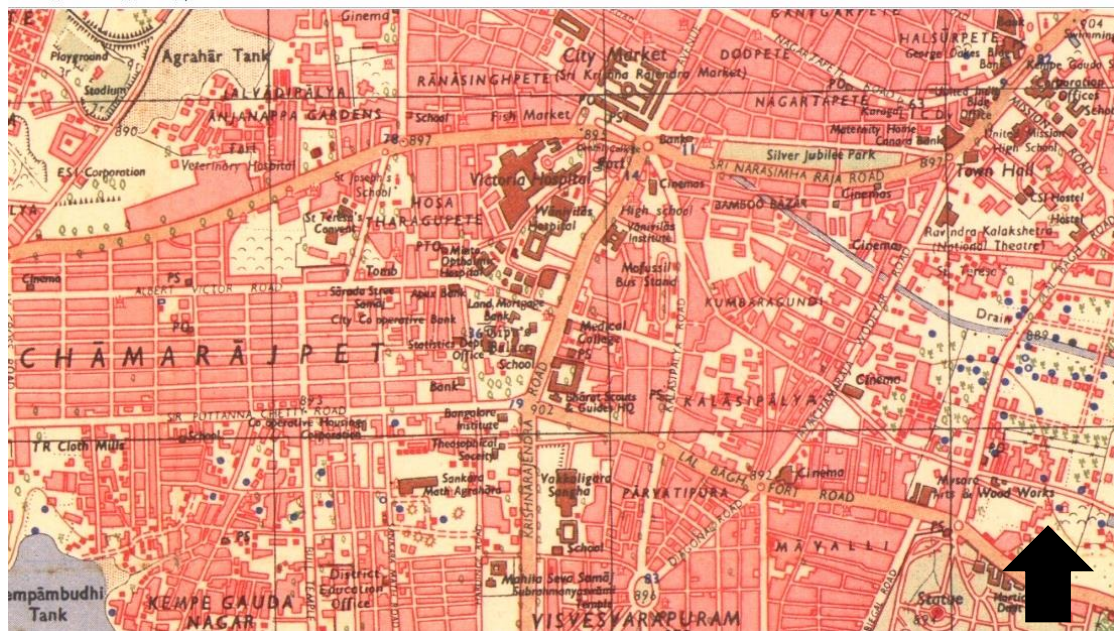


Figure 4.1. KR Road in 1961

Source of Map: Indian Institute of World Studies, Bangalore

#### 4.2.1. KR Road as social and economic space

The weaver's stretch of KR Road consists of mostly public institutional structures, some of which have stood there for many decades (Figure 4.1). These include an old temple, two wedding halls, a junior college, office buildings, a sports club, a private nursing home, a music school, a charitable youth hostel, The Theosophical Society of India and a few private residences. Other than the private residences and the marriage halls on occasion, the other buildings are vacant in the evenings, leaving the weavers as sole users of the sidewalk. Arguably the public nature of the surrounding land uses helped the weavers to remain relatively undisturbed on the sidewalk for so long. Most of the institutional buildings are vacant by evening and there was little activity on the sidewalk after work hours. The sidewalk played the dual role of public and private space for the weavers, as they vended their wares in the day and spent the nights in makeshift shacks that also sheltered their wares on the sidewalk.

The bamboo weavers of KR Road are an itinerant community, originating from the neighboring Mysore district. They belong to the *medhara* community which is a sub-caste within the *coramaru* caste. The Indian Constitution defines *coramarus* as a *dalit* group. Within the Indian class and caste system, people belonging to the *dalit* category, represent traditionally marginalized communities. As a step towards repairing historic, and prevalent, inequalities in social and economic status, the Indian Constitution provided reservations and legal protections to *dalit* communities. The *coramaru* caste finds mention in Francis Buchanan's (1807: 204) travel chronicles titled "Journey from Madras, Through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar" where he writes about their basket-weaving trade:

The trade in salt from the lower *Carnatic* is very considerable, as none but the poorest people eat that made in the country. It is carried on by two classes of people: the *Woddaru*, or tank-diggers; and the *Coramaru*, who, in the intervals between their commercial expeditions, make baskets.

In the 1940s, a bamboo merchant who lives and works in the City Market area, saw a business opportunity where he could use the weavers' skills to package fresh produce in KR Market. He brought five families of the weavers' community from Mysore district and engaged them in the basket-weaving business in the City Market area. He explained the weavers' choice of workspace in the KR Road area as follows:

One bamboo stick is 20-25 feet in length. So it is not possible to sit and work inside the house with these long bamboo sticks. There is not so much space. There used be such space some time back. Some 50-60 years back the entire road was ours. KR Road had only trees back then – it used to be called the “Tree Road”... Now everything got divided. We need to sit under the shade of the trees to do our work because we need shelter from the sun. We go searching for spots which provide shade – our “*jaati*” (Kannada term for “community”) is such. We are known for being nomads. We do not have one “*jaaga*” (Kannada term for “permanent place”). We've been living like that for long, but now it is not possible to live like that. Now we have to stay in one place and work. Since 60 years we have been working on KR Road.<sup>82</sup>

Five families of the weavers' community arrived in Bangalore in the 1950s. Now they have grown to thirty-five to forty families, depending on varying accounts. Most of them are related to each other either by birth or marriage. In the 1950s, the weavers' stretch of KR Road was surrounded by open spaces, including a water tank and playground. In the fifty-odd years of their tenure on the sidewalk, the community firmly established roots and thrived in and around the KR Market area (Figure 4.2). They built makeshift homes

---

<sup>82</sup> Different respondents gave different estimates of the number of years that the weavers had been on the sidewalk, varying from 35 to 60 years. One of my respondents from the weavers' community was an elderly lady in her seventies and she claimed to be among the first batch of migrants to Bangalore when she was a young woman. So, I have used 50-60 years as a safe estimate of the time that the weavers have been on the sidewalk.

on the wide sidewalk.<sup>83</sup> Their marriages are conducted in a temple on a street behind KR Road. Some of the families own homes in Chikkanna Gardens, a registered slum located behind the temple. Most childbirths in the weavers' families take place in Vanivilas Hospital, which is a five-minute walk from the sidewalk. Their children attend a municipal school which is also an easy walk from the sidewalk. Thus the weaver community's lives became interwoven in the social, economic and institutional fabric of the KR Road area. Most significantly the sidewalk gave the weavers the advantages of tenure and location, and thus, economic independence which also translated into upward mobility for their future generations.<sup>84</sup>

The weavers' daily routine involved purchasing bamboo poles from the wholesale bamboo merchant whose depot was located in a by-lane behind KR Road. They worked on the sidewalk from daybreak till dusk, weaving various bamboo products used as household items. They sold their wares to wholesale dealers in KR Market and to passersby and commuters on KR Road.

Some of the second and third generation family members have also diversified into other professions. Some of them ply auto rickshaws while others work as *coolies* (manual

---

<sup>83</sup> According to a staff member of the Theosophical Society (2010), "They erected some bamboo and tin structures within the compound too [I guess now he is referring to the leased space between the two compound walls]. They were using that space for storage, bathing, etc. That water used to come in. Almost the entire compound wall was encroached. The people had encroached to an extent where the compound wall could not even be seen."

<sup>84</sup> Crossa (2009:52) gives a similar account of the daily life of street vendors in Mexico City writing, "For many street vendors the street is the place that provides them with an honorable and respectable means of making a living. At the same time, the street is a place where they construct and strengthen ties with friends and family members. Many of today's street vendors have engaged in this form of economic activity since they were children, either helping their parents who were also street vendors, or working for a friend or family member. Those who were relatively new to street commerce were helped by existing ties to kin/social networks embedded in street-vending activities in the Historic Center. For many street vendors the street is both their workplace and their home. As they have expressed: '... here I feel at home. Like with my family. I mean, among us we really help each other. There is more communication here among us than in my own house where I just eat and sleep. This is like one big family. We basically live here' (interview, April 2004)."

labor) in KR Market. Some of the families are financially stable and they have hired other younger people to work for them. The weavers also continue to maintain their ties with Mysore district through links of marriage, agricultural property and extended families. While the weavers themselves said that they barely made Rs.100-200 per day, a long-term caretaker of the temple claimed that the weavers got a lot of business in Bangalore and one family earns Rs.5,000-10,000 per day.



Figure 4.2. Land use on the KR Road sidewalk  
Source of Map: Google Maps

In relation to their surroundings, the weavers had a part contentious, part symbiotic relationship with the occupants of the institutions in the plots behind the sidewalk. A respondent from the weavers' community said that the few families residing in properties



abutting the sidewalk had a harmonious relationship with the weavers who saw themselves as “eyes on the street”. But the property owners were more ambivalent in their response regarding the weavers. Some property owners forbade the weavers from occupying the sidewalk in front of their buildings. The proprietors of the two marriage halls called the police to move aside the vendors whenever a social event took place in the halls. In the words of the manager of one of the wedding halls:

When there is a function in our *choultry* (local term for “event hall”), they barge in and eat food. We get scolded by our bosses. They don’t come for water and toilet. They used to come earlier, and fill water from a common tap we had out there. But now they don’t come so much . . . We never stopped them, and they are not stoppable either. If we push them out from this side, they come in from the other side. Since we are sympathetic towards these poor people, we tolerate them. They drink and fight with each other and sometimes get taken to the police station. When they fight, then my boss tells me to kick them out.

The people on the adjacent properties also left the weavers alone because they did not want to be accused of discriminating against them as a *dalit* community. A detailed discussion of Indian caste politics is beyond the scope of this chapter, but as mentioned earlier, the Indian legal system made laws to protect *dalit* communities from harassment from other sections of society based on caste difference.<sup>85</sup> The legal protections have provided *dalits* the confidence to speak out against caste-based harassment, but there are instances where *dalits* claim harassment when the cause of discord (in this case, encroachment upon a public sidewalk) could be entirely unrelated to casteism. For their part, the weavers did not mention the role of caste politics in maintaining a relatively uneventful coexistence with their neighbors. However, the role of *dalit* politics becomes

---

<sup>85</sup> The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act is an example of a governmental law to protect *dalit* groups from harassment based on caste.

more significant as the chapter moves closer to examining the weavers' contestations for the sidewalk.

Over the years some weavers acquired homes in and around KR Road, but they spend their days on the sidewalk making and selling bamboo wares. Strewn with objects related to domestic life and trade, the municipal sidewalk serves the private functions of daytime home and workplace of the weavers. It is noteworthy that the weavers view the sidewalk as municipal property free for "public" use, yet they see no contradiction in using it for private use too. The weavers' use of the sidewalk reflects what Kaviraj (1997: 108) terms as plebianisation of public space where poor people "would reply that they settled there precisely because this space was *pablik*, not owned by individual property owners, and as poor people they had a quasi-claim to settle in such state or municipal property."

The weavers occupied the sidewalk as municipal property to which they had nearly exclusive use. Pedestrians managed to find walking space on the edges of the sidewalk. But according to other respondents, the weavers did not allow other hawkers or vendors outside their community to vend in their territory. The city grew rapidly between the 1950s and the present, but the weavers' lives or links with the sidewalk did not change. However there was a gradual shift in the nature of the sidewalk from the commons to municipal property with growing surveillance of local police and municipal workers. The community's leader described life on the sidewalk when he was a child four decades ago as follows:

When our elders came here, there was nothing here. It was a "free" open space.<sup>xiii</sup> Our people were not educated and they were not very deep-thinking people. They saw the free space here to sit and work. The police and the corporation people also left them alone during my father's time ... There was one single road here. There was a huge wide footpath then. We should have built our homes here at that time. Our forefathers did not have the foresight to do so. They were under the

impression that life in Bangalore would continue the way it was then forever wherein they lived and worked on the footpath and sold their wares in the City Market. When I grew up too, I did not think about having a more permanent residence here since it was life as usual.

In thinking of the sidewalk as a “free” space, the leader was invoking the notion of the sidewalk as the commons, the rights to which “are shared in some roughly equitable fashion and to a significant degree are subject to the will of the group” (Childs, 2004, p.21). In regretting that they did not appropriate “free” municipal space to serve a private purpose, the leader’s words again convey a pre-colonial understanding of public space that was contested yet less surveilled by the state. Eventually though, it was less due to the sidewalk’s historic significance and more due to corruption in local government that enabled the community to remain on the sidewalk.

#### **4.2.2. The weavers and government – illegalities and invisibility**

The weavers were regularly paying *hafta* (Hindi word meaning “bribe money”) to municipal workers and police in order to retain their place on the sidewalk (Picture 4.4). The local municipality and police left the weavers in relative peace on the sidewalk as the city grew outside the dense *peté*. But the weavers and their propertied neighbors claimed that local officials made several attempts in the past to evict them. In Indian cities, indigent groups and local elected representatives share a mutually dependent and beneficial relationship, where local corporators help the urban poor access municipal goods and services in return for votes (Benjamin & Raman, 2001; Chatterjee, 2004; Ghosh, 2005).<sup>xiv</sup>

The weavers claimed to have approached corporators and MLAs for protection from the police and municipal workers. However, local elected representatives did not play a significant role in the weavers’ tenure on the sidewalk. The weavers said that politicians

representing the wards that they lived in approached the latter for votes during elections. The ward representatives helped the weavers within their wards, but the weavers did not get any elected representative's help in their demands for workspace on the sidewalk. A respondent from the weaver's community articulated their ties with local representatives thus:

Yes, I vote. The politicians do approach us. I vote for whichever politician helps us. I voted for the local BJP (a prominent Indian political party) corporator ... We did not have water. He helped us get water. We did not have electricity. He helped us get electricity. We had a *kuccha* (unpaved) road. He had it cemented... He does not get votes from here on this sidewalk. People living on the sidewalk are not eligible to vote. So he did not help people here.



Picture 4.4. Police on KR Road conversing with the leader of the weaver community

Elected representatives preferred to help ward residents as they could repay the favor in the form of votes. Politicians had little incentive to help the weavers, suggesting that there were groups among political society that had “low political clout” (Benjamin, 2003, p.246).<sup>xv</sup> A slum activist explained the lack of incentive for local politicians to help the weavers thus:

Vote *illa* (the weavers cannot vote). Because they are living on the street ... And even if they are on the voters list, they are too few in number to be of much importance to the local politician.

A respondent of a property abutting the sidewalk viewed the non-interference of politicians in the weavers' occupation of sidewalk as an indirect form of help:

That's the help they've given; by leaving them (the weavers) alone. [The weavers are living here] illegally – they are leaving them, no? That is the indirect help.



Picture 4.5. Bamboo baskets waiting to be transported to KR Market



Picture 4.6. Equipment for weaving bamboo blinds under a makeshift canopy shelter



Picture 4.7. The sidewalk as domestic space



Picture 4.8. Selling bamboo wares to passers-by

Urban indigent groups like the weavers are more likely than their more privileged counterparts to rely on public facilities, institutions and representatives to negotiate everyday life in the city. This is not only for reasons of affordability but also because of

access to power and resources. The sidewalk, City Market and surrounding amenities formed the core of the weavers' work and personal lives, but the very publicness of these spaces meant that the community could not make exclusive claims to any space in the city. With little or no help from elected representatives, the weavers turned to private parties such as the bamboo merchant, social workers or NGOs for help in procuring voter identity cards and ration cards as proof of residence. These instances of help were sporadic and not consistent across the entire community.

The weavers knew that their claims to the sidewalk were not legal but they maintained their place on the sidewalk through a system of bribes with the local police and municipal workers. The sidewalk as a physical place remained intact, as did the relations between the weavers, their propertied neighbors and the local authorities. Public spaces are places “formed through a myriad of practices of quotidian negotiation and contestation; practices, moreover, through which the constituent ‘identities’ are also themselves continuously moulded” (Massey, 2005, p.154). The Metro project on KR Road transformed the sidewalk and relations between the weavers and state actors. The Metro project loosened the weavers' tenuous hold on the sidewalk and their ability to negotiate with BMRCL officials who were not accessible to the weavers, unlike local municipal officials.

#### **4.2.3. The weavers and the dalit leader – politics of protection and exploitation**

The weaver community maintained its hold on the sidewalk over several years, weathering intermittent threats of eviction from local authorities. Following a common practice among street vendors in Indian cities, the community paid bribes to the local

police and municipal workers to remain on the sidewalk.<sup>86</sup> Thus the weavers continued on the public sidewalk, not using it as a public good but as an unofficially rented space. In the 1990s, the weavers heard from a cobblers' community in the City Market area about a *dalit* leader Venkataswamy, who heads an organization named Samata Sainik Dal (SSD). Venkataswamy has been working since the 1980s with Bangalore's street hawkers and slum dwellers and was well-known as a protector of the city's indigent groups against local police and municipal workers. The weavers approached Venkataswamy for protection from the local authorities' harassment. He posted signboards bearing the name of his organization, his picture and contact information on the two ends of the sidewalk. A member of the weavers' community described how they benefited from Venkataswamy's protection:

There are these cobblers near the Market – near Apsara Talkies. We saw the SSD board and asked the cobblers how they were able to work on that sidewalk un-accosted by the police and Corporation. They told us that they were under the protection of Venkataswamy who helped them keep the policemen at bay. So we went and met Venkataswamy and asked to him to help us as the police were troubling us. So he came and helped us come together in a group. So, we declared that *annavaru* (vernacular term for “elder brother”) is behind us and rallied under him saying “*Annavaru, zindabad*” (Long live *Annavaru*). He put up his SSD boards on our sidewalk. Thanks to his protection, the police have not harassed us since then till today. After he came and supported us, the Corporation could not touch us.

---

<sup>86</sup> Here I cite Anjaria's (2006:2145) description of the hafta system among Mumbai hawkers to explain how it works, “In fact, demands for hafta by state authorities and the concomitant insecurity of hawkers' work is the single biggest source of worry for most hawkers. It has been estimated that hawkers pay tens of crores in hafta each year. In nearly every interview, and every conversation with hawkers, the most important problem they face is not the lack of sales or access to credit, or, even work conditions, but the constant fear of demolitions and daily harassment from authorities. In interviews and conversations with hawkers throughout the city, hawkers repeatedly claim, “We only want to work here in peace”. The economic costs, of course, are high: On an average, Rs 1,200-1,400 a month is taken by officials in the form of unofficial fines or hafta.”

Ever since the SSD boards were put up, the police and municipal workers have stayed away from the weavers. In the words of a respondent from a property abutting the sidewalk:

These bamboo weavers belong to the Ambedkar Yuvaka Sangha. No one can move such people.

The *dalit* leader Venkataswamy talked at length about his achievements in protecting vendors in different parts of the city. He described fights against displacement of established vendors as the authorities either tried to relocate old street markets to modern BDA market buildings or displace vendors for road widening projects. Venkataswamy and his supporters would rush to the sites where demolition was either underway or scheduled to take place, stall the demolition with protests and if necessary, muscle power against the workers and officials conducting the demolitions. Venkataswamy claimed that the police did not try to stop his supporters from beating up the government workers. The SSD workers would then install their signboards as a warning to the authorities to desist from future evictions. He claims (a claim that the KR Road weavers endorsed separately) that the authorities were reluctant to evict street vendors who had SSD signboards as protective talismans.

SSD is one of the many *dalit* organizations that mushroomed in post-Independence India. Following the most prominent *dalit* ideology promulgated by the freedom fighter and Parliamentarian Dr. Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar, many *dalits* convert to Buddhism in a gesture of rejection of the oppressive Hindu caste system. The “Ambedkarite Buddhist identity challenges the “immoral”, unscientific and regressive mode of social system and is hopeful of building a modern social order based on human values” (Wankhede, 2008, p.50). Despite Constitutional protections, caste-related injustices



prevail in Indian cities and villages, leading to *dalit* struggles and counter-movements challenging power structures in society and government.

*Dalit* politics in Indian cities are now an integral part of mainstream Indian electoral politics, bringing together local communities in mass protests and political rallies in shows of solidarity and strength.<sup>87</sup> Like other political parties, *dalit* organizations have a tiered system branching out into associations in every slum or low-income neighborhood of the city. While different *dalit* organizations have different ideologies and politics, SSD's politics, according to the Bangalore division's leader Venkataswamy, have a militant streak. The organization's members engage with government bodies in *dharnas* (protests in front of government offices from whom restitution is sought), mass rallies and violent confrontations with public officials.

The sight of SSD signboards on city sidewalks and SSD initials painted on cobblers' booths across of the city, indicate the extent to which marginal groups depend on *dalit* organizations for protection from police harassment and evictions. The signboards also act as visual markers of the hold that *dalit* politics have on everyday public spaces in the city. Questions of legality, encroachments and entitlements appear to be subordinated to exigencies of daily survival that organizations like SSD address in a day's work.

---

<sup>87</sup> Wankhede (2008:50) writes about the growing significance of dalit politics in India as follows, "The year 2007 will be contemplated in the history of dalits as one of the most significant years as it witnessed a new rise of dalit assertion in the arena of politics and religion. The emphatic victory of Mayawati's Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in Uttar Pradesh ridiculed all "poll pundits" and showed that the dalits' political activism has come of age and it was high time that dalits got their proper share in the national political mainstream. At the same time in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh, while celebrating the 50th anniversary of Babasaheb Ambedkar's Buddhist conversion, numerous dalit castes are converting to Buddhism. Both these historic events should be linked together and seen as the progressive realisation of Ambedkar's vision, to which the dalit masses are paying their tributes. Dalits, differing from the mainstream political discourse, are demonstrating a new path for social and political transformation. Both the modern Buddhists and the new aggressive dalit political elites reject all "the given" liberal identifications and "cultured" nomenclatures, eventually constructing a socially robust political identity in the public domain."

Venkataswamy illustrated this point with his account of his organization's encounter with Metro officials preparing to take land from the premises of a hostel for *dalit* students:

These Metro people on MG Road – they acquired some SC/ST hostel land.<sup>88</sup> They literally came and acquired it. That was the only place for SC/ST students in Bangalore city – some vacant space. Finally we rushed [there]. We have beaten the Chief Engineer. Literally beaten him in front of the police, DCP, BMRCL people, BBMP, Social Welfare, Commissioner and all that. So he was admitted [in a hospital with injuries]. And we warned – **publicly** we warned those people [that] acquisition process to be deleted ... we immediately erected the Ambedkar statue there on the same land. And finally we insisted [that] the Metro people acquire the land belonging to Oberoi [Hotel across the road] or some other people. “Why do you come to SC/STs land?”<sup>89</sup> ... Finally the land remained a hostel only.

This incident reveals how official policies of eminent domain and public interest get subordinated to caste politics and intimidation tactics on the ground. The *dalit* leader's efforts to protect subaltern interests from the authorities, also fed into his political goal of consolidating *dalit* communities across the city under the SSD banner. In return for his protection, Venkataswamy would summon *dalit* communities for a show of strength in SSD rallies in Bangalore.<sup>90</sup> By their own account, the weavers had approached Venkataswamy for protection and with no agenda to be part of a larger political

---

<sup>88</sup> A blogger wrote about this incident as follows, “The Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) on Saturday faced the wrath of students of the Government Science College Hostel in Trinity Circle... The students came out to protest against the acquisition of 0.922 acres of land belonging to the social welfare department, next to the hostel for Metro work... Tension prevailed on Saturday as BMRCL officials started work on the Trinity station for Reach 1 (Byappanahalli to Chinnaswamy Stadium) of the metro... The protest began at 9 am and went on till late in the evening as members of various Dalit organisations also joined in. Heated arguments ensued between police, students, Dalit leaders and BMRCL officials... “The land belongs to the hostel. The social welfare department had promised to provide the space to the students for recreational activities; but now the metro work has been started without any prior information,” said Sandarsh, a BE student... The problem began when metro officials started barricading work in the morning. The students obstructed the work and began a dharna.

The protest turned violent later in the afternoon as police resorted to mild lathi-charge to quell the protestors... In the meanwhile, the BMRCL alleged that the protesters had assaulted their officials. “The land was given to us long back and we had to start work for the metro station.” (Ullasavadan, 2009)

<sup>89</sup> The Karnataka Department of Social Welfare owned this land.

<sup>90</sup> It is interesting to note the distinction that one NGO activist made between *dalit* rallies and political party rallies. According to him, rallies were a confidence building show of strength for *dalit* communities, while political rallies were confidence boosting exercises for the party leaders.

movement. The weavers’ community did not appear to appreciate the greater significance of their participation in citywide processes. Some of them did not like that they had to go whenever he summoned them and attend rallies at the cost of a day’s wages. They were not happy that Venkataswamy and his associates were “using” them. But they continued to take his counsel and support. Thus Venkataswamy’s role in the weavers’ story continued as the Metro project commenced.



Picture 4.9. Painting of Babasaheb Ambedkar, the dalit icon in a lower income neighborhood



Picture 4.10. SSD's and Venkataswamy's names on cobbler's booth



Picture 4.11. The KR Road sidewalk after demolition (Source: Sreenivasa)



Picture 4.12. SSD sign at the bamboo merchant's depot

As noted before, the weavers were no strangers to police harassment and municipal evictions during their long tenure on KR Road. Despite the evictions, the sidewalk was always there for them to return to after they had weathered the eviction. But the Metro

incident of May 2009 demolished the sidewalk and also marked an end of their way of life in the city. The displacement not only affected the weavers' ability to pursue their trade, it also loosened their hold on the city. The KR Road sidewalk became a critical staging ground for the bamboo weavers in asserting their right to productive space in the city.

The National Policy on Urban Street Vendors recognizes self-employed vendors and hawkers as productive members of society with rights to work in urban public space (Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation, 2009). What is up for question is the efficacy and outreach of official policies in compensating displaced street economies. The next section examines the politics of the Metro project to understand how state actors responded to the weavers' demands for workspace on the public sidewalk. Since the weavers had no legal claims to the public sidewalk, BMRCL was not obligated to compensate them for their displacement. The agency's inability to ignore the weavers' demands however, indicates that there were other factors at work that spurred the agency to engage with the weavers. BMRCL's response of providing resettlement housing in lieu of workspace reflected the limitations of formal planning processes.

#### **4.3. The Metro Project – contradictions in public interest and accountability**

The Metro project in Bangalore commenced in 2007 (Pictures 4.13-16). The Government of India and Government of Karnataka jointly set up a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) named Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (BMRCL) to build and execute the rail project with funding and support from an international consortium. Official mandates allowed BMRCL and state agencies to conduct an environmental

impact assessment, use eminent domain to acquire land, and design the Metro alignment without public input.<sup>91</sup> Running through three landmark business districts (Majestic, City Market and Mahatma Gandhi Road), the Metro rail alignment would acquire 228.614 acres of prime urban property in the process (CASUMM, 2007).



Picture 4.13. Road dividers with Metro construction on the other side of the road



Picture 4.14. Demolished buildings to make space for Metro, CMH Road Indiranagar



Picture 4.15. Metro pillars along CMH Road, Indiranagar. The space between the pillars are used for parking vehicles



Picture 4.16. The Metro alignment sits uneasily close to commercial buildings on CMH Road, Indiranagar

<sup>91</sup> “As per the most recent EIA Notification (September 2006), new, expansion or modernization of any activity falling within the eight categories of developmental and industrial activities shall be undertaken in any part of India only after it has been accorded environmental clearance by the MoEF in accordance with the procedures specified in the notification. Since urban transportation projects such as the Delhi Metro Project are not included in the Schedule of the notification, hence conducting an EIA or carrying out Public Hearing are not mandatory (Central Secretariat, 2006).

The following government agencies were involved in the Metro project - Central Government Ministry of Transportation; Karnataka Urban Development Department (UDD); Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB), Karnataka Slum Clearance Board (KSCB - henceforth referred to as Slum Board in this chapter); parastatal agencies such as Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) and Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC), and the municipal agency BBMP. The Ministry of Transportation had the authority to give clearances for the project, superseding the authority of state and local agencies in order to expedite the project construction. KIADB acquired land within Bangalore for the Metro project. BBMP assisted BMRCL with on-site logistics of clearing slums and acquiring properties along the alignment. The state planning agency BDA was not directly involved in either planning the Metro alignment or in the land acquisition process.

A Board of members consisting of bureaucrats from all the agencies was created to supervise the project's progress. The BBMP Commissioner, an appointed bureaucrat, was part of the Board, but BBMP Council members who are elected representatives, were not included. This is noteworthy because it is the corporators, and not the BBMP Commissioner, that could have provided some representation for city residents that voted for them. The Metro project was a public works project built in public space in the public interest, but there was little official enthusiasm about including public opinion. If BMRCL was following a model of development that characterizes planning processes in Indian cities, official policies attempted to insulate the Metro agency from local resistance with various clearances. The design, planning and management of the Metro

project focused on executing the project expeditiously and efficiently, with minimal interaction with, and hence, interference from local residents and agencies.



Picture 4.17. The entrance to BMRCL's resettlement housing colony in Peenya



Picture 4.18. A street in the BMRCL resettlement housing colony, Peenya



Picture 4.19. Kitchen garden and firewood stalked in the backyard of one of the housing units at Peenya



Picture 4.20. Clothes spread to dry on the street are evocative of older lifestyles

The Metro alignment was designed to pass through some of the busiest commercial streets of Bangalore to maximize ridership. Since commercial streets draw shoppers, they are also locations for thriving street economies. People visiting the formal shops, also did business with street vendors. The road-widening that preceded the Metro alignment disrupted both formal and informal businesses. The Metro project provoked protests from middle-class neighborhood residents, traders' associations and environmental activists against the alignment's impacts on residential areas, commercial streets and public spaces

(CASUMM, 2007). The protestors objected to the Metro project's negative impacts on property values, businesses and quality of life in their neighborhoods. According to a business owner on CMH Road (one of the roads in the Metro alignment), BMRCL compensated displaced shop owners and private property owners with monetary packages. Street hawkers and vendors on the other hand, were not entitled to compensation for the Metro's impact on their livelihoods.

BMRCL cleared two registered slums in the city's old suburbs and offered compensation for the displaced residents in the form of resettlement housing in Peenya, on the city outskirts. Peenya is an industrial suburb on the north-west periphery of the city and the Metro's main depot is located there (Pictures 4.17-20). A Metro engineer who arranged for my visit to the Peenya housing project, praised the quality of the resettlement housing in comparison to the demolished slums. Indeed the resettlement housing was far superior to the humble residences that had been razed. However the location of the resettlement housing distanced the residents from their lives and livelihoods built over generations in the slums.

According to a senior Metro official who helped design the alignment, BMRCL acquired only sixteen percent of private land, while the remaining eight-four percent was public property (Sharma, 2010). This arrangement benefitted BMRCL in two significant ways. First, it minimized displacement, and hence compensation, of private property owners. Second, BMRCL did not have to pay BBMP for the eight-four percent of public land; the assumption being that state actors could reclaim public space in the public interest. By law, the reclamation of public parks, playgrounds and sidewalks for the Metro project was a legitimate replacement of one public purpose with another.



According to government officials, the transformations or changes in form and function of public parks, playgrounds and sidewalks affected the everyday life and spatial practices of local residents, was an inevitable casualty of development.

The struggles for the KR Road sidewalk pitted BMRCL's lawful claims of a broad public interest against the weavers' unauthorized, private use value-based claims. Despite BMRCL's authorized takeover of the KR Road sidewalk and the weavers' illegal occupancy, not all the official clearances were enough to quell the displaced weavers' contestations that finally took the unofficial route of subaltern politics. The next section examines the politics of the Metro project on KR Road that led BMRCL offering the displaced weavers resettlement housing and no work space.

#### **4.3.1. Metro project on KR Road**

BMRCL officials claimed that they gave the weavers adequate notice about the Metro project before asking them to vacate the sidewalk. The weavers refused to comply with the Metro officials' request as they would lose their livelihoods if they moved. On 26 May 2009, Metro workers took the help of BBMP and local police to forcibly evict the weavers from the sidewalk. When the weavers put up a resistance, the police beat up all those who resisted, including men and women. The police locked them up in a police station while the Metro workers cleared the sidewalk, demolishing the weavers' sidewalk dwellings. Depending on varying accounts from community members, BBMP workers either destroyed their belongings or delivered them to the evicted families' residences in different parts of the city.

While the weaver community had survived threats and evictions in the past, they were able to return to the sidewalk because it remained a material, accessible space. But the Metro evictions were different because the form and politics of the sidewalk had changed with the road-widening (Pictures 4.21 & 4.22). The lawyer representing the weavers against BMRC described the transformation thus:

Earlier, it [the sidewalk] was more aesthetic for the Corporation than utilitarian. So they [would] clear or demolish and they (weavers) come back there. But [now] Metro occupies that space. So the two roads were not there earlier. That was the footpath – half of it was footpath and half of it was road. So they occupied the space and they have actually been moved. That is why it gains more significance than just being cleared.



Picture 4.21. KR Road before widening



Picture 4.22. KR Road after Metro work began

Unlike earlier evictions, the Metro-related sidewalk demolition signified a permanent change to the sidewalk. The sidewalk was for the weavers what Mitchell (1995: 115) calls “representational space, one that had been taken and appropriated from the outset.” The loss of the sidewalk meant that the weavers had no material space to occupy or appropriate, thereby losing their economic stability and ability to survive in the city.

Finding out about the demolitions, the *dalit* leader Venkataswamy and his associates rushed to the police station to have the weavers released. The freed weavers rallied under Venkataswamy and held peaceful protests outside the offices of BMRCL, BBMP and the Slum Board for nearly a week. The leader of the displaced community described the events following the sidewalk demolition thus:

We went and protested at the Metro office last May that our livelihoods are at stake if they displace us from here. After our protests, the Metro people told us to move to the inner part of the footpath closer to the building line and we did that. This is all Corporation land. But now, the residents of these buildings are demanding that we keep this space free and clean, because they want to use it for parking... The building owners have no ownership over this land. This is a matter related to the BBMP, this being city government land. The building owners have control over is only their private property. They have no right to tell us what to do. But still they go to the police to lodge complaints against us... We are just petitioning the government, police and the corporation to let us work in peace on a narrow bit of this sidewalk because we and our children are accustomed to this place now. It is close to K.R.Market where we get our raw material and where we sell our wares... Just let us have an 8 foot strip on the outer side of the road to earn our livelihood. They are free to do whatever they want with the back portion of the land. Because passersby can see us and they think, ‘Oh, these *medharas* are here. We can give them an order for some bamboo products. We can buy some baskets from them.’ ... So when the public sees us, they are able to make these purchases and thus help us make our living. If we sit at the back, they will not be able to see us.

When I was conducting interviews in July 2010, the parks between the sidewalk and private properties were destroyed, the sidewalk had been halved and the road was being laid. The weavers were also unable to retain their hold over the sidewalk despite their

historical claims and use of *dalit* politics. Local police and municipal workers had no role in protecting the weavers from BMRCL, instead siding with the agency to evict the community. This loosening grip of local actors of society and state over local land is also linked to the undermining of local social, cultural and political institutions in the following ways.

First, intense pressure to develop and upgrade the city gives little leeway to both state actors and local residents to negotiate over local space.<sup>92</sup> Second, as the organizational structure of the Metro project shows, official planning processes undermine the ability of local residents to negotiate and work out arrangements with local public agencies regarding local space. Third, the gap between special purpose agencies such as BMRCL and local residents (the weavers) and their representatives (the *dalit* leader) is difficult to bridge as because BMRCL had legal mandates to override local resistance against the Metro.

Yet, official institutional safeguards meant to clear the path to Metro's progress in Bangalore were not enough to quell the resistance of a small displaced community. Though the weavers were not legally entitled to rehabilitation, BMRCL officials went into discussions with BBMP and KSCB to work out possible options for housing the evicted weavers. The next section examines official discussions regarding the weavers' demands, and the rationale behind BMRC's allocation of housing.

---

<sup>92</sup> Weinstein (2009:400) makes a similar observation notes in the context of a redevelopment project in Dharavi slum writing that, "I claim that global land speculation and the interests of global and domestic developers have put pressure on the local state to convert low-productive land uses, such as squatter settlements and small-scale industrial enclaves, into higher-profit developments."

#### **4.3.2. Official and subaltern claims to public space**

This section examines notes and circulars representing internal communication between BMRCL and state agencies regarding compensation for the displaced weavers. The brief notes provide key insights into how various agencies debated about the weavers' demands, finally moving them to the realm of welfare housing. The communication highlights the alacrity with which the BMRCL officials responded to the community's protests. Notably, BMRCL was willing to provide housing in exchange for the weaver's evacuation from the sidewalk, since the exchange value of land along the Metro was too high to be squandered on the humble weavers. Seeing that BMRCL did not give the weavers workspace, the agency's approach to the weavers' demands suggests a politics of appeasement prompted by exigencies of development. The weavers were demanding their right to shelter and subsistence. But governmental responses keep the weavers demands in the realm of welfare rather than legitimizing the self-employed weavers' economic autonomy.

#### **Communication between BMRCL and state agencies**

**May 29, 2009**

Subject: Displacement of the Bamboo weavers for Bangalore Metro Rail Project at

K.R.Road

Bamboo weavers numbering about 30-35 families who occupied footpath at K.R.Road in Reach 4 and surrounding areas near Shivashankar Circle, K.R.Road, were vacated on 26.5.2009 with Police Assistance. These people under the leadership of SSD have submitted a representation to MD, BMRCL (after a peaceful *dharna* [Hindi word meaning "protest"] in front of BMRCL office and insisting that representation will be

submitted only to the MD) for providing rehabilitation and also alternative place for carrying on their bamboo weaving business.

[Copies to: (1) Principal Secretary of Government, Urban Development Department, (2) Commissioner, BBMP, (3) Deputy Commissioner, Bangalore Urban District, Bangalore.]

**10 December 2009:**

“Subject: 35 houses for the displaced under JNNURM scheme

Minutes of meeting – BBMP will build 35 houses.”<sup>93</sup>

**12 December 2009:** Internal communication in BBMP

“They have to check the place where they were staying to see if they have own houses there, within 15 days from 16 Dec 2009.”

**7 February 2010:**

From BMRCL to BBMP

“18% of budget (from State Government scheme to BBMP) given to BBMP for rehabilitation. If they do not have own house, they should get housing from BDA under EWS schemes.”

**22 February 2010:**

“Subject: Communication from BBMP to District Commissioner (DC)

DC has said that BBMP has to get land from the Revenue Department to build housing. BBMP will write to the Revenue Department and after seeing what the Revenue Department says then they will make the decision about what to do next.”

It is noteworthy that BMRCL wrote the first letter within three days after the demolition took place, as it shows that BMRCL officers were treating the weavers’

---

<sup>93</sup> This note does not mention where the houses would be located.

matter expeditiously. Despite the official line that the weavers had no legal claims to the public sidewalk, the communication suggests that the state agencies did not take the weavers' demands lightly. Instead of questioning the validity of the weavers' claims to municipal property, the letters show the agencies discussing the modalities of providing housing to the displaced weavers. This is interesting since the Metro officials were not convinced of either the veracity or validity of the weavers' claims of residing on the sidewalk, as the following account of a Chief Engineer in BMRCL suggests:

KR Road has to be widened on both sides to accommodate the Metro. The place that the bamboo weavers are living does not belong to those people. Legally they have no right to be there. It belongs to the BBMP. We took only the space that was needed. They are not living there. It is a political stunt. For instance, there are no cooking utensils to indicate that they live there. Perhaps 5% of them remain there in the night, but they are all back there in the morning by 7 am... We first asked them to vacate in May 2009 – very politely. They did not go. Some self-proclaimed leaders who we don't believe to be from that community - it is very embarrassing to ask them such questions (whether the leaders really represented to the community) - also came and started making demands. Pavement dwellers do not have an address on their ration cards. They also did not have any permanent structures on the pavement. If you give compensation to these people you are encouraging encroachment. Metro has given compensation to legal holders. What would we lose by compensating the bamboo weavers too [if they were legally entitled]? ... Obviously the weavers did not go. They asked for compensation. BMRCL has reimbursed the legal property owners. We compensated slum dwellers which were authorized by the Corporation... But some 30-40 people were not keen to vacate. They only told us where we should take their belongings in lorries. So we loaded things in 8-10 lorries to their places 8-10 km away... Subsequently they came to the Metro office... The BMRCL cannot give these people compensation because they have no legal standing, but the state can... We have promised to help them through the Corporation (BBMP), and recommended them to the Urban Development Ministry. There was a meeting with GOK, Metro, KR Road bamboo weavers and BBMP. Everybody agreed that they would be given houses.

The official's account suggests that the government agencies were employing a policy of appeasement of the weavers to clear hurdles to the Metro project. In offering resettlement housing, BMRCL could not only proceed uninterrupted with the project

construction but also achieve its goal of creating higher value properties with floor area ratio (FAR) up to 4.0, free of scenes of unaesthetic poverty. But the officials did not agree to the weavers' demands for workspace on the sidewalk. As the previous quote indicates, BMRCL officials did not want to set a precedent of encouraging "encroachment" of public spaces. At the same time, the Chief Engineer's next words indicate that he understood the sidewalk's locational benefit for the weavers:

Those people do very little work there [on the sidewalk, but] they want that place because the entire Bangalore knows where bamboo baskets are available. They work there for economic reasons. Every 15-30 minutes they work and sell their wares. It is an additional work area probably. Sales are intermittent... For me it becomes inhuman to evict them when they are not obstructing the Metro... Finally BBMP agreed to give them housing though that is not what they really need. They want working space which we do not owe them.

The BMRCL official's words reflect an understanding of the weaver's demands for workspace but at the same time, reveal official perceptions of what state actors "owe" self-employed indigent communities. At a conceptual level, state actors acknowledged the economic and shelter rights of the urban poor in the city, and therefore in urban space. However, there was less official commitment in transferring or translating these rights to material and contextual places of significance to hawkers and vendors. In her dissertation research on the politics of location of street vendors in Bangalore, Raman (2010: 12) observes that:

While acknowledging citizens' right to livelihoods and therefore, life, the Supreme Court judgment also upheld the state's right to evict squatters when alternatives are provided. However it did not define the nature of alternatives, which affected street traders' in that they can be evicted by the local government and shifted to any location in the city. Consequently, street traders' interests relating to location is often overlooked while demarcating hawking zones.

As Raman also notes, official policies of relocating street economies are not attentive to the relevance of location and contextuality of particular places. In the KR Road case,



the official response to the weavers' demands was to offer resettlement housing in a distant location that was neither conducive to their lives or livelihoods. If state actors used a definition of public property as material space allocated for public interest projects, the weavers were making other private claims to the public sidewalk. In pursuing their divergent agendas, both BMRCL and the weavers were subverting the public-ness associated with the sidewalk.

#### **4.3.3. Subaltern voices and claims to the city**

In offering housing to the weavers, BMRCL avoided directly addressing the weavers' demands for a workspace. BMRCL's response of routing compensation to the weavers through BBMP and the Slum Board while directly compensating "legal" individuals or groups, also indicates an official blindness to very visible informal street economies. As a public agency, BMRCL could make claims of public interest in evicting the weavers. But the weavers were part of the city publics and their privatization of the sidewalk for private purposes had been acceptable when corrupt BBMP officers and police monitored the space. Ostensibly BMRCL's advent changed the politics and the weaver community's hold of the sidewalk. In the following accounts, members of the community voiced different opinions about BMRCL's offer of housing, revealing in the process their interpretations and expectations of governmental responses to their demands.

##### Respondent One

Yes, we are fine with wherever they give us homes. We are willing to move there. But we want some space to work here. It is not feasible for the government to give us homes on this pavement because it is Corporation land. But at the same time we need a public place where people can see us and buy our wares. There is no use displacing us to a location where no one can see us or buy our wares.

### Respondent Two

How is it possible for us to move wherever they give us housing? Our business is here. The market is here. If they relocate us somewhere in the city, how are we to make our living? If they want to give us housing, we are fine with wherever the houses are. But we want space to work on this road here.

### Respondent Three

Yes, if they give us homes, we have no other choice but to relocate ... But our livelihood will suffer if we move from here. Some [of our community] say we should remain here. Some say it is enough if they give us homes. Even our people are not united in their opinion about staying or leaving. We are being told that the land and the housing are being readied for us, but there has been no news from the authorities on how long it will take.

All respondents in the weavers' community emphasized the sidewalk's significance for their work and trade, but there is less consistency regarding their perceptions of resettlement housing. The varying perspectives in the quotes came from the individual circumstances of the respondents and their links with the KR Road area. Respondent One is the leader of the community. According to the bamboo merchant who brought the weavers to Bangalore, the leader owns property and has other sources of income in Bangalore and Mysore. Respondent Two said that she and her family resided in her mother's two-storied house in Chikkanna Garden Slum behind KR Road since the past two decades (Pictures 4.23 & 4.24). Respondent Three was an elderly lady who, according to the bamboo merchant, also lived in a rented house in another neighborhood. These quotes and other respondents' answers indicate that the weavers' claims of housing were secondary to their need for productive space on the sidewalk. The next section compares official policies for street vendors with how the politics of housing actually unfold for displaced indigent communities in cities like Bangalore.



Pictures 4.23 & 4.24. The registered Chikkanna Gardens slum behind KR Road where some of the weavers reside

#### **4.4. Spatial politics of slums and vending**

Official policies recognize street economies as integral and productive elements of everyday life in Indian cities. The National Policy on Urban Street Vendors (2009) recommends legalization and accommodating of street vendors in the urban public spaces. As discussed in the previous section, the Policy provides broad guidelines that do not necessarily meet the specific needs of street economies. As the case of the KR Road weavers shows, there is a gap between the latter's demands and official responses, forcing marginal groups to seek other means and strategies to legitimize their claims to the city.

This section discusses the weavers' efforts to retain their place on the sidewalk through a redefinition of the space and their own identity in the process. The ensuing politics reiterate the role of diverse actors including pro-poor activists, *dalit* organizations and local government institutions in helping local marginal groups gain access to welfare services. This discussion also reveals the challenges to marginal groups to keep their

demands in the realm of rights to context-specific spaces as government agencies provide blanket welfare-themed responses.

#### **4.4.1. Policies and politics of street economies**

According to the National Policy on Urban Street Vendors (2009: 2):

This Policy recognizes that street vendors constitute an integral and legitimate part of the urban retail trade and distribution system for daily necessities of the general public. As the street vendors assist the Government in combating unemployment and poverty, it is the duty of the State to protect the right of these micro-entrepreneurs to earn an honest living. Accordingly, the Policy aims to ensure that this important occupational group of the urban population finds due recognition at national, state and local levels for its contribution to the society.

A sub clause in the Policy (2009:3) adds:

It is desirable that all City/Town Master Plans make specific provisions for creating new vending markets at the time of finalization/revision of Master Plans, Zonal Plans and Local Area Plans. The space reserved in such plans should be commensurate with the current number of vendors and their rate of growth on perspective basis (say 10-20 years) based on rate of growth over a preceding 5-year period.

The Vision Document (2007: 28-9) for the current comprehensive development plan for Bangalore (CDP 2015) reflects the language of the policy in stating that:

The Master Plan will draw from the National Policy for Urban Street Vendors and focus on the key objectives of legal status for vendors, facilities for vendors and creating hawking zones, introducing regulations for hawking, treating hawkers as an integral and legitimate part of the urban distribution system, promoting self-compliance amongst street vendors, promoting organizations of street vendors to facilitate their empowerment, establishing participatory mechanisms for orderly conduct of urban vending activities, introducing measures for promoting a better future for child vendors, and promoting social security and access to credit for street vendors.

Source: Vol. I, Vision Document, Bangalore Master Plan 2015

Accounts of scholars and activists suggest that official policies have not been consistently or effectively implemented on the ground. According to a trustee of the pro-

poor organization CIVIC, despite High Court orders to provide designated hawking zones, BBMP did not provide enough hawking zones and did not make the licensing process easy for the hawkers. As unlicensed hawkers spilled over to non-hawking zones, they were susceptible to extortion and harassment from policemen and municipal authorities. The trustee described the consequences of official ambiguities and careless allotment of work space to hawkers as follows:

When [BBMP] declare[s] one street as a hawking zone, then [BBMP] should declare the rest of the streets as non-hawking zones. They did not do that... So, what happened was, because [BBMP] did not declare it either a hawking zone or a non-hawking zone, the policeman continued to extort a bribe from them. He kept telling them, "You are still illegal. If you want to hawk, you must go to the hawking zone." Even the BBMP officials went on extorting bribes from them ... So the problem never got solved. So even now, if you go on Shivajinagar Road, every day one man comes and collects *hafta* from every vendor. Though the road is a public space, these [hawkers] are still illegal on that ... And what [BBMP] did was to declare certain roads as hawking zones where no customers would come. So, the people who are vending around Majestic area – they were taken and put somewhere where no customers would ever go. So the vendors said, "We don't want to go there. We want to remain where we are."

The CIVIC trustee's account recalls Anjaria's (2006: 2145) finding in his study of Mumbai hawkers that "the police and the BMC officials, at various moments, currently use the threat of an area becoming a non-hawking zone as an excuse to increase demolitions or demands for *hafta*." Public space in this case, was a site of subversions not only for the marginal hawker, but also for local law enforcers and administrators who benefitted from the undefined boundaries of the public street. Under such conditions, Anjaria (2006:2146) notes that "the experiences of hawkers in Mumbai, as elsewhere in India, have taught them not to fear a regulatory state, but a predatory state, a state that constantly demands bribes and threatens demolitions – against which a licence or other formal recognition provide security."

The KR Road weavers' struggles show that though they resorted to *dalit* politics to fend the predatory state, they could find protection from regulatory state by seeking inclusion within governmental processes. The KR Road weavers sought inclusion in the city by seeking official recognition of the sidewalk as a slum so that they would be considered slum dwellers.

#### **4.4.2. Strategizing the language of slums**

Once the Metro come and the road comes, we have no place to sit and do our work. We are unable to figure out where we will sit and make a living after the Metro work starts. They say they will give an alternate location, but they have not given us anything yet. Once they lay the tar, there will be no place to live. If we approach the Metro, they counter us with the question, "What documents do you have? What proof of residence on the sidewalk do you have?"

This account of a weaver highlights the hurdles that street vendors face in establishing their right to ply trade in public spaces of Indian cities. Though the weavers could claim a general right to the sidewalk as a public space, they did not have an exclusive right to occupy the sidewalk as an economic space. But that is exactly what the weavers set out to do. When Metro officials challenged them to produce proof of residence, the weavers applied for ration cards to prove their tenure on the sidewalk. A respondent from the community described their efforts to establish proof of residence as follows:

We had our hutments on the sidewalk. We put numbers on those hutments and added that to the address. Three-four months after we submitted our applications for the ration cards, two people from the Corporation came to survey our houses [as proof of residence] and confirm with us that these were indeed our homes. They came from the Corporation office. At that time, we still had our hutments and we could show them those. So we identified our houses, "This is our house. This is where we live." They told us to submit pictures at the Corporation office at the Asoka Pillar near Sajjanrao Circle. So we went and did that. Many of us did not apply for the cards, and so they do not have cards. Now, the Metro people ask us, "You don't have houses and numbers, then how did you get the cards?" So they are questioning the validity of our cards.

Could the weavers' actions be interpreted as a subversion of official provisions for indigent groups or as appropriation of economic space that official policies promise and yet deny to marginal groups? The weavers' struggles occur in a backdrop of development in Indian cities when the commons are "rapidly diminishing due to erasure, enclosure, disrepair, rezoning, and court proscriptions..." (Baviskar & Gidwani, 2011, p.43). In the absence of consistent governmental policies to legitimize marginal groups, they are pushed to use different strategies to gain visibility, as the following words of a pro-poor activist indicate:

So there are various ways [to fight for inclusion in official records] from Supreme Court to individual strategies. The most widely used strategy is to give the number of these electricity poles [as the person's address]. See, electricity poles are numbered and there is a record of every electricity pole. So, if you are staying close to the pole, you give the number of the pole and say, "This is [the number of the pole next to my house]". That is an official statutory entity. So the pole has more value than people. That was done... The next level of course, would be [to fight for] the land rights and that of course, would be toughest. So what we did was, we adopted a certain internal strategy where we stopped calling those locations as "street locations" and the community as "urban homeless", but called them slum dwellers and slums.

Unable to maintain their work place on the sidewalk, after procuring ration cards, the KR Road weavers turned their efforts towards demanding housing from BMRCL. As BMRCL's internal communication in the previous section shows, the Metro agency passed the charge of engaging with the weavers to BBMP and the Slum Board. According to official regulations, only residents of registered slums were eligible for government welfare housing. The weavers' next strategy was to call themselves the Medharahatti Slum (Bamboo Weavers' Slum) to petition the Slum Board to declare their stretch of sidewalk as a registered slum.<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>94</sup> The declaration of registration of a slum comes from the District Commissioner's Office. The application is put forth through collective representation from the petitioners and their local leader. The petitioner have

An Assistant Engineer from the Slum Board said that being municipal land and a public right-of-way, the KR Road sidewalk could not be declared as a slum.

Consequently, the weavers could not be considered as slum dwellers. Only slum dwellers displaced from registered slums were eligible for housing under the Metro slum resettlement policy.

The Metro housing was built on land owned by the Ministry of Defence in Peenya. There was further stipulation that only the homeowner could occupy the resettlement unit for the first twenty years and could not rent out the house during that period. This official stipulation was to prevent the resettled slum dwellers from taking possession of their new homes, only to rent them to tenants and returning to their old localities. Indeed, this was a real possibility because the slum dwellers had been forced to abandon lives and livelihoods built over generations of residing in the same location in the city. A slum activist highlighted a fundamental mismatch in slum dwellers' needs and official planning processes with this example of a recent slum resettlement project in Bangalore:<sup>95</sup>

---

to be residents of the slum for ten to fifteen years in order to qualify. Once the tenure of the petitioners is confirmed, a government official visits the slum to ascertain that it really exists. Then the Slum Board allots housing to the slum dwellers wherever low-income government housing is available in the city. The Slum Board gives each resident a *hakku patra* (title deed) to the house whereby they have ownership of the house, but not to the land on which the house stands. The state retains the land ownership. The state can relocate the residents elsewhere if the houses needed repairs or the land was required for some other governmental purpose. Thus even if slum dwellers got public housing, they were not assured of security of location in the city. So the occupants of public housing live in a state of dependence on state actors in what Roy (2004: 150) terms as "the territorialized uncertainty of informality." The withholding of land title remains a contentious issue between poor rights groups and state actors. It also reinforces governmental perceptions of public land as empty space rather than space that is, as Gyanprakash (2008:2) terms as "thick with specific experiences, practices, imaginations, and memories"

<sup>95</sup> In the slum activist's words (2010), "Mainly for the poor – they want more space within the city. Wherever they are living, they want that space to be given to them, you know? To be legalized. In situ is what they want. But the problem now is government is saying, "Okay we will build houses for you under the JNNURM – the national mission". But they are saying, "We will build it under public-private partnership." That means 50% of the land will be given to the private builder and the on the remaining 50%, he will build multi storied housing for the poor."... The Dharavi model ... Even in Dharavi, the private builders have not given the houses to the original slum dwellers. Many cases are there where they



In Bangalore there is a slum called Hosabaalunagar (New Life Colony). In this slum the government proposed a pact under JNNURM. Then they sent the proposal to Delhi and got the money. Now the slum people are saying they don't want the project because they do not want the G+2 (ground floor plus two floors) project because they do not prefer that form of housing. Now the Slum Board people are coercing them to accept the project. So, after very long discussions and struggles, those people came to Slum Board and did *dharna*. And they wrote to R Ramanathan saying that the Slum Board is forcing them to take the project and that they don't want it.<sup>96</sup> Finally the Housing Secretary called a meeting and I went and spoke with him. I said, "Ok, we will ask people to agree to the project, but on the condition that we will make the co-operative society. You have to put land and the money in the co-operative society. And we will build the housing in whatever way we want. So we put this proposal to the Housing Secretary. And he said, "No, we cannot agree to this." People want the land and money to build the houses the way they want, but the government does not allow that. So these government officials talk about people's participation but when it actually comes to enacting it, they do not want to enact it.

The KR Road sidewalk was not declared a slum, but BMRCL still decided to give the weavers housing on the city outskirts. A social worker who works with displaced communities in the *peté* area said that BMRCL finally decided to give housing to the weavers' community without asking for proof of residence on the sidewalk. She said:

In January we got a letter from [the] Metro company that said that under JNNURM we will reimburse the amount for the housing that has been chosen by the bamboo weavers. But if we go to the Slum Board, they keep putting us off saying, "Come tomorrow" or "Bring the final list of beneficiaries from Metro again" ... Metro asked for proof of residence. Some of these people produced ration cards and voter ids. But a [Metro official named] Thangaraja already passed an order that sanctions them housing and he said that, "Irrespective of whether these people have proof of residence, give them housing". So not having proof of residence is not a problem in the case of the KR Road weavers.

BMRCL's waiving of verification from the weavers speaks of an official willingness to compromise to avoid project delays due to contestations from displaced groups.

---

have given it to their friends and relatives. So the demand here in Bangalore is, "We don't want public-private partnership. You just give us the land. We will build our own houses" .... "You just declare that this land belongs to us... They want to build their own houses. They have no faith in anybody else building their house for them."

<sup>96</sup> Ramesh Ramanathan is the co-founder of Janaagraha and National Technical Advisor to Government of India for the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission.

BMRCL found willing allies in local corporators, MLAs and slum dwellers in leadership positions who convinced their constituents to accept the agency's offer of housing. In the case of KR Road and other demolished slums, BMRCL's urgency to resolve the displaced communities' demands matched an urgency to proceed with the Metro project.<sup>xvi</sup> BMRCL officials hoped, rather than being certain, that the weavers would move to the resettlement housing and find work around their new homes. But the weavers' past actions suggest that they were unlikely to fulfil BMRCL's wishes. According to several respondents (including the bamboo merchant, lawyer, activists, and BBMP officials), local politicians gave the weavers plots under government welfare schemes at least twice in the past, but each time the weavers returned to KR Road. The bamboo merchant said:

I helped them acquire sites in Koramangala some 30 years back – this was government land owned by BDA. They gave them the land in the SC/ST scheme. They were given those sites in free at that time ... They sold them off. Even if they are given sites again, they will sell them again ... They've "developed" well and have no hardships as such. They even have their own houses for 30-40 years now. They have houses in Chikkanna Gardens, Yelahanka and Kengeri. They are not that impoverished ... All they want is to remain in that place because they have good "sale" in that location. They are insisting that they should still be allowed to work there after the Metro comes. The government is willing to give them "apartments" in Laggere. They do not want to go there ... In Chikkanna Gardens they have "upstairs houses" (double storied houses) ... They go away from the sidewalk in the nights. They put plastic covers on their wares and go to their houses. No one stays there... Some of them are home-owners while others are tenants.

The merchant's account corroborated with other respondents' thoughts about the weavers. The weavers themselves were unwilling to discuss the details of their current housing situation. Irrespective of whether they moved there or not, the weavers and their supporters want the resettlement housing as it was property or investment that would help them incrementally consolidate their foothold in the city.

Though they wanted the resettlement housing, the weavers' reluctance to move there was not unfounded. The experience of other displaced slum dwellers who had moved to Peenya explained this reluctance of displaced lower income communities to move away from their old neighborhoods. Most of the displaced slum dwellers from the other two demolished slums, moved to Peenya (though a few families refused to vacate the premises of the demolished slums). BMRCL gave the occupants "*hakku patras*" (ownership title to the house) but not land titles.<sup>97</sup> This is a common practice in government dispensation of housing to economically weaker sections in Indian cities –to "futureproof", to make existing land available for new uses, to devalorize current uses and users and to make way for a gentrified future" (Roy, 2005, p.84).<sup>98</sup> As the leader of the relocated community said, by withholding land ownership, governing agencies could relocate communities at will while the latter remained vulnerable to relocation. Since the residents did not have any legal claim to the land itself, they would not be able to contest displacement. The implications of the state policy was that relocated communities did not have a right to land within the framework of government welfare schemes.

---

<sup>97</sup> Hall (1996:254) writes about John FC Turner's findings regarding self-help housing, "And government action would be essential to provide land as close as possible to possibilities of employment, to provide advance infrastructure, and to legalize the framework when the settlement is ready."

<sup>98</sup> "The concept of informal vesting may seem to be an oxymoron. Vesting indicates the legal expropriation of land by the state in the public interest or confiscation of land in excess of land ceilings set by agrarian reforms and the urban land ceiling act. Informality signifies extralegal, and possibly illegal, mechanisms of regulation. But what makes vesting such a powerful instrument in Calcutta is precisely this convergence of legality and extra-legality in the same process. It is the informal vested status of the land that allowed sharecroppers, supported by the Left Front, to establish de facto use rights; it is this informal vested status that 10 years later made it possible for the Left Front to reclaim this land for the resettlement of central city squatters; and that yet 10 years later allowed the Left Front to displace both squatters and any remaining sharecroppers to make way for peri-urban townships, Special Economic Zones, and other forms of development. It is this territorialized flexibility that allows the state to 'futureproof', to make existing land available for new uses, to devalorize current uses and users and to make way for a gentrified future; in short, to plan. It is naïve to designate such processes as extra-legal, for they do not exist outside the law. Rather as practices of the state they are elements of an ensemble of sovereign power and the management of territory. This is informality from above, rather than informality as a subaltern revolution from below" (Roy, 2009, p.84).

The leader also talked about the hardships that relocated slum dwellers faced due to longer daily bus commutes to their old workplaces. Some of the women were able to find work as domestic workers in Peenya, but men who worked in semi-skilled jobs such as painting and carpentry, had difficulty finding work in the new locality. BMRCL officials had fulfilled their word of providing resettlement housing but they could not recreate the lives and livelihoods of the displaced slum dwellers in Peenya.<sup>99</sup>

As the Peenya case shows, relocation may grant temporary relief to indigent communities but it does not guarantee them security of tenure. At best, the Peenya resettlement housing could benefit homeless members of the weavers' community who were willing to give up their current profession (a few respondents in the weavers' community said they wanted to give up their profession if they could find another source of livelihood). For members who already had houses in the city, the Peenya housing would be a second house, and perhaps a source of income if they rented or sold it. Most significant to the current discussion, however, is the efficacy of government policies in compensating displaced indigent communities and the impact on social and spatial justice. As the following discussion suggests, the mismatched supply and demand for welfare created gaps that private actors such as the *dalit* and nongovernmental actors occupied and politicized.

#### **4.4.3. The politics of public space and public housing**

Why did BMRCL offer housing to the weavers? Despite the weavers' assertions that they lived on the sidewalk before their eviction, other respondents said that the weavers

---

<sup>99</sup> Hall (196: 255) reports about Janice Perlman's study of the Rio Favelas, "In fact, the removal of one such inner-city *Rio Favela*, in the early 1970s, had caused great hardship as people were relocated in peripheral housing projects, far from work and lacking all sense of community."

were on the sidewalk only from dawn to dusk. BBMP officials also endorsed this, though like the neighbors who wanted the weavers to vacate the sidewalk, they had their own agenda in proving that the weavers already had homes. For their part, the weavers insisted that they had all rented houses in various locations of the city only after the Metro demolition took place.

The confusion regarding the weavers' current housing situation is compounded by lack of official data and misinformation from the weavers themselves. Their reluctance to talk about their housing status was not limited to me as an outsider. The social worker working with the weavers' children said that they were unwilling to show her their documents that endorsed their tenure on the sidewalk. When I raised this issue of the weavers' secrecy with the *dalit* leader Venkataswamy and two pro-poor activists, their responses were similar. They felt the weavers' current housing status had no bearing on the fact that BMRCL owed them compensation for their violent eviction. Hence it was not relevant whether they needed resettlement housing or actually lived in their roadside dwellings.

One activist asked, "If a rich person has more than one house, do we question them about it?" A lawyer-activist framed it in the language of the weavers' economic and human rights saying, "They were denied their livelihood at that point in time. They were forced to live on the street at that point in time" (Rosario, 2010). The *dalit* leader put it in more pragmatic terms, "See, every businessman is getting land from BBMP. Why can't these people get [land]?" (Venkataswamy, 2010).

These quotes reveal a common view by local activists and scholars that state actors reward urban elites with economic subsidies and turn a blind eye to their encroachments

in the city, while penalizing poor groups for lesser transgressions.<sup>100</sup> What was up for question was not the illegalities and informalities of governance processes, but the selective nature in which governing agencies regulated urban spatial practices. More significantly, the quotes highlight the fact that official agencies did not recognize the weavers as self-employed entrepreneurs who deserved compensation just like their more formal counterparts. BMRCL offered housing (possibly duplicating government subsidies to the weavers in the process) without addressing the weavers' demand for workplaces on the sidewalk. In doing so, I propose that BMRCL and BBMP's response reflects a policy of appeasement more than an effort to provide meaningful compensation to the displaced communities.

If duplication of subsidies was not an issue for beneficiaries and benefactors, the entire housing resettlement process gave opportunities for private actors to engage in corrupt practices.<sup>xvii</sup> The social worker said that representatives of affected groups make personal gains from the misfortunes of project-affected communities. In the Metro demolitions, the social worker narrated the confusion created due to SSD workers' interference in the process of claiming damages in the Kalasipalya slum in the *peté* area:

The Kalasipalya people are really in bad shape. The [KR Road] bamboo people at least have rented houses, those people have no shelter. They have been evicted. There were sixteen households there. In the name of representing them, the SSD people demanded forty houses ... Yesterday when the Chief Engineer (CE) came to survey the place, he asked me, "Don't you people have any sense in asking for forty houses? Does this [demolished] area look like it could have accommodated forty houses?" So I [the social worker] said, "Sir, there were sixteen houses

---

<sup>100</sup> Within the city we also see the fact that public spaces such as parks, etc are being "maintained" by corporate houses and access to parks denied to certain sections of society. It is common practice for vehicle owners to "encroach" on and park their cars / motorcycles on the roads through the night and day... There are other forms of illegalities including the violation of building bye-laws and zonal land-use regulations especially in the upper and middle class localities like Koramangala and Indiranagar (ALF Report, 2003, p.17-8).

there.” The CE agreed to sanction sixteen houses. Later my colleague was scolding me for speaking the truth because this would anger the SSD people.

The social worker’s account also highlights prevalent corruption among *dalit* leaders who exploit their constituents for personal gains, thereby eroding the trust of government officials and perhaps reducing the credibility of *dalit* groups’ demands. An SSD worker representing the weavers was also extorting money from the latter claiming that it was bribe money to expedite matters in government offices. Returning to the KR Road case, what did the resettlement housing mean for the weavers? The lawyer-activist summed up as follows:

This group of people – they were there – was there any question about that? None. They were beaten. There is no dispute about that. Police were used to displace them from there. There is no dispute about that. It is on the basis of that the Metro has given an undertaking to the Principal Secretary of UDD.<sup>101</sup> There is a meeting called in his office. These people are going to be rehabilitated. They are going to be provided houses. Will they leave the houses and come back to the streets? Maybe. And good [if they do]. If they want to, let them come. Let them come back to the streets ... The best you can do is [to] get them some kind of security – a house somewhere which they can probably give out on rent and come and live over here. And do their business over here ... Even if they ever go, they will come back there. We will definitely support them in coming back there.

While BMRCL officials and local agencies were in conversations about housing, the weavers returned to the sidewalk and resumed their work there. When I saw the sidewalk in December 2011, the weavers had resumed work under makeshift shelters of bamboo and tarpaulin on the narrow sidewalk (Pictures 4.25-28). BMRCL officials have vowed to not allow the weavers to continue on the sidewalk since it was a public right-of-way. But the weavers are also steadfast in their demand for their livelihood on the sidewalk. As Venkataswamy and others said, no matter where and how many times that government

---

<sup>101</sup> Department of Urban Development, Government of Karnataka

agencies give the weavers housing, they would sell those houses and return to the sidewalk. More recently I saw the sidewalk in April 2014, and the weavers had rebuilt their shacks near the temple (Pictures 4.29-32).



Picture 4.25. The weavers reclaim the smaller rebuilt sidewalk



Picture 4.26. Domestic objects interspersed with bamboo ware



Picture 4.27. Work goes on as usual on the sidewalk



Picture 4.28. The weavers rebuilt their temporary shacks on the sidewalk

BMRCL's response to the weavers' demands did not signify a complete victory for them, as they did not get workplace on the sidewalk. But it echoes Weinstein's (2009) observation that pressures of development nudge state actors to engage proactively with the project affected communities. Weinstein (2009) posits that in such cases, state-initiated participatory process creates openings for democratic possibilities for the urban poor. The KR Road case shows that the very exigencies of development that centralize



planning processes to avoid local resistance, have also forced planning processes to engage with local demands for justice. This research finds that subaltern claims to the city are not emancipatory struggles but contingent on official policies of appeasement.



4.29. KR Road in April 2014. The SSD van stands like a sentinel to the sidewalk with the Metro station looming in the background



4.30. The weavers rebuilt their shacks near the temple. The Metro construction is still going on



4.31 & 4.32. Unfazed by the Metro work, the weavers continue to work and live on the KR Road sidewalk

#### 4.5. Conclusion

The KR Road sidewalk case examines the contestations of a subaltern community for a public sidewalk. The case engages with the question of the impact of official planning and governance on the ability of marginal groups to maintain their foothold in Indian cities. The bamboo weaving community was tied to the KR Road sidewalk by trade and

tenure. The weavers did not have a legal right to the sidewalk and they were occupying the space for private activities. But they claimed a right to the public sidewalk as a space of public activity based on historic use and significance of location for their economic survival. The KR Road sidewalk case reiterates the significance of public space as a contextual, location-specific place for urban marginal groups. In a backdrop of official planning processes that circumvent public opinion to expedite developmental work, the case shows that state actors are unable to avoid local protests against displacement. BMRCL's response in providing housing where the weavers asked for workspace indicates a politics of appeasement rather than an effort to recognize the self-employed community's economic rights. Finally the KR Road case highlights the role of *dalit* politics in shaping urban space in processes that are enacted as caste politics.

BMRCL and the weavers employed different interpretations of public space circumscribed within the broad definition of public space as government land to serve the public interest. The weavers' claims to the sidewalk reflect pre-colonial notions of the commons that conflict with modern planning conceptualizations of public space. The weavers' efforts to situate the sidewalk in the official vocabulary of slums in order to access state welfare housing, reflects their recognition of public space as municipal land. The KR Road weavers' contestations for the sidewalk were contestations for rights to housing and subsistence, or basic citizenship rights to the city. Thus, the public sidewalk was a symbolic and material representation of the weavers' claims to the city.

In fighting for their place on the sidewalk, the weavers were also asserting their economic rights to the city. For BMRCL, the sidewalk was public property and part of the Metro alignment. For the occupants and users of private properties abutting the

sidewalk, it was a pedestrian right-of-way that the weavers had appropriated. The KR Road sidewalk was municipal property, but different actors were making conflicting claims. Though it is public property, the sidewalk was “not just the objects or possessions or capital in isolation, but a set of relationships between the owner of some thing and everyone else’s claims to that same thing” (Krueckeberg, 1995, p.307).<sup>102</sup>

The weavers maintained their illegal tenure on the sidewalk for decades based on mutually beneficially relationships with lower-level BBMP workers and the *dalit* leader. The politics of the sidewalk underwent a change when the Metro project came to KR Road, introducing a new actor —BMRCL—and its claims to the sidewalk. Despite national policies recognizing street economies as productive and integral aspects of urban public life, BMRCL and other government agencies did not consider the weavers’ demands for workspace as legitimate claims. Furthermore, official clearances and the organization structure of BMRCL was intended to insulate the agency from local opposition to the Metro project. Neither the *dalit* leader’s intimidation tactics nor the weavers’ historic and use value-based claims could resist BMRCL’s takeover of the sidewalk.

As the KR Road sidewalk case exemplifies, government bodies do not respond to subaltern claims to public space because they are not legal claims. Instead, indigent populations occupy public spaces such as parks and sidewalks because they are “owned by some general institution like the government or the city municipality, which did not exercise fierce vigilance over its properties as individual owners did and that allowed,

---

<sup>102</sup> Borrowed from Roy’s (2005) evocation of Krueckeberg’s definition of property in her paper “Urban Informality: Towards an Epistemology in Planning” (JAPA Publication).

through default, indifference, and a strangely lazy generosity, its owned things to be despoiled or used by people without other means” (Kaviraj, 1997, p.105).<sup>103</sup>

If official responses to indigent groups’ occupation of public spaces in Indian cities occur for the reasons that Kaviraj (1997) suggests, the KR Road case also shows that other mutually beneficial monetary arrangements also contribute to their longevity in the same locations. As other scholars have also noted, “... a certain arbitrariness attends the state’s interactions with those outside the law...” (Rajagopal, 2001, p.109).<sup>104</sup> This arbitrary governmental approach, I argue, keeps vendors in a state of uncertainty where the result could go either in their favor or against them.

The KR Road sidewalk struggles happened not because of the weavers’ illegal use of the sidewalk changed but because BMRCL wanted the space for a different public

---

<sup>103</sup> Referring to the thousands of refugees and destitutes that occupied the parks, railway land and other public spaces in Kolkota following independence in the 1940s, Kaviraj (1997:104-5) writes, “For the poor, homeless, and other destitute people “public” came to mean that which is not private, spaces from which they could not be excluded by somebody’s right to property. But this logic is also interlaced with the conventional idea of the baire. Precisely because there is conception of the civic that bears a strong equation with the public, the idea of publicity in its altered Bengali version can mean merely an empty, valueless negative of the private. It comprises assets that are owned by some general institution like the government or the city municipality, which did not exercise fierce vigilance over its properties as individual owners did and that allowed, through default, indifference, and a strangely lazy generosity, its owned things to be despoiled or used by people without other means. The public is a matter not of collective pride but of desperate uses that can range from free riding to vandalising. Undoubtedly, behind this there was also a dawning sense of the responsibility of the state for its citizens: a curious mixture of paternalism, the obligation of the powerful to care for the destitute, and democracy that is after all the state’s responsibility to provide minimal shelter to its citizens.”

<sup>104</sup> In his paper on the street vendor in Mumbai, Rajagopal (2001: 108-9) links the growing threat to itinerant vendors to developmental policies thus, “It can be argued that the pheriwala is one such extraordinary class of citizen-subjects that the developmentalist (and now liberalizing) state in India produces as a vulnerable category of persons. The protection of pheriwalas as workers engaged in the informal economy (with the *Olga Tellis v. BMC* case in 1985) was also precisely the moment when their legal classification as “hawkers” rendered them subject to all manner of regulation.<sup>61</sup> The renewed interest in controlling city space as a corollary to new regimes of accumulation and the enforcement of a new commodity aesthetics must be located against this historical process...Where Chatterjee’s argument encounters difficulties is in its assumption that the informal realm of state negotiation retains its populace within an ethical discourse, even if legal rights are denied to them. A certain arbitrariness attends the state’s interactions with those outside the law, exemplified in violence such as that against pheriwalas. And when the law seeks to pronounce on their condition, a neoliberal climate dispels the informal guarantees that safeguarded hawkers’ lives under an earlier dispensation.”

purpose. The case highlights the question of what state actors owe displaced self-employed marginal groups whose claims lay in the realm of use value and economic dependence. BMRCL officials used the BSUP (Basic Services to the Urban Poor) component of JNNURM (for slum dwellers) to offer rehabilitation housing to the weavers. It is noteworthy that the BSUP (2009: 4) mission statement lists “Creation of fresh employment opportunities” among its list of inadmissible components, indicating that government agencies are not obliged to economically rehabilitate displaced communities.<sup>105</sup> This is problematic because in displacing marginal communities from their residences, official projects very often displace them from their workplaces and sources of income too.

Furthermore, BSUP’s (2009: 2) mission document states that “Care will be taken to see that the urban poor are provided housing near their place of occupation.” The KR Road weavers did not qualify for houses near their place of occupation since they claimed to live on the sidewalk in illegal housing. However, in the cases of the other slums affected by the Metro project, the slum dwellers were relocated far from their places of occupation. This signifies that despite the use of inclusive language for the urban poor in JNNURM, there is still no effort to link the shelter and subsistence needs of self-employed indigent groups to location in official policies. In the absence of official engagement with the locational significance of public spaces for street economies, the results of post-reforms planning for the urban poor did not materially change the nature of slum resettlement programs in Indian cities. Nor did the Metro project entirely

---

<sup>105</sup> Other inadmissible components in BSUP (2009:4) are projects pertaining to, “power”, “telecom” and “wage employment programme & staff component”.

transform KR Road sidewalk. The weavers eventually returned and rebuilt their shacks on the sidewalk.

Though they did not invoke the 2009 National Policy on Urban Street Vendors, the weavers' demand for workspace on the sidewalk was a demand for BBMP to provide legal hawking zones in public spaces in the city. In her research on the politics of location for street vendors in Bangalore, Raman (2010: 284) notes:

De-linking street traders from traditional political and social avenues for securing places alongside changes in planning processes may further constrain their ability to negotiate to occupy places in the city. The significance of street traders' strategies should be understood in this light, particularly their connections and influence in everyday and electoral politics. There is a need to look again at planning practices and to devise ways of devolving planning to the local level. This is not about creating a new mechanism at the local government level or Parastatals, but widening the political spaces of street traders.

The KR Road weavers' long tenure on the sidewalk was possible not just due to the location and public nature of the space, but also because of their eventual entry into local *dalit* politics. Rather than framing their demands in the language of the National Policy on Urban Street Vendors (that the uneducated weaver community may not have been aware of such a policy is very likely too), the weavers turned to *dalit* politics. This could be because grassroots *dalit* struggles could push for speedier and more immediate resolution than official policies of rehabilitation and relocation. Despite the existence of official policies, government bodies still respond selectively or arbitrarily to subaltern claims to space. Viewed thus, BMRCL's framing of the weavers' claims in the language of legality rather than informality (much like their work which is legal but informal) presents as a deliberate effort to keep the latter out of planned spaces.

The dissonance between the weavers' demands and BMRCL's response created an opening for caste politics to enter formal spatial planning processes. With BMRCL

initially trying to avoid compensation, the weavers turned to the *dalit* leader to support their claims. The bamboo weavers acted as political society, which relies on patronage politics and connections with lower circles of government to maintain a tenuous foothold in the city (Chatterjee, 2004). The activities of political society are circumscribed in vote banks and dependence on the welfare state's capricious attentions to marginal groups.

Despite constitutional recognition of fundamental rights to livelihood and shelter alongside official policies recognising the value of street economies, state and local authorities do not accord marginal self-employed groups stability or security of location and tenure. As a result, the promise of policies and master planning to recognise and dignify the presence of street economies through spatial planning remain unrealised. For instance, the National Policy on Urban Street Vendors "recognizes that street vendors constitute an integral and legitimate part of the urban retail trade and distribution system for daily necessities of the general public."<sup>106</sup> However the same Policy also details provisions for physically evicting street vendors if they are causing "genuine public obstruction of a street, side walk etc."<sup>107</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> Excerpt from the 2009 National Policy on Urban Street Vendors, "This Policy recognizes that street vendors constitute an integral and legitimate part of the urban retail trade and distribution system for daily necessities of the general public. As the street vendors assist the Government in combating unemployment and poverty, it is the duty of the State to protect the right of these micro-entrepreneurs to earn an honest living. Accordingly, the Policy aims to ensure that this important occupational group of the urban population finds due recognition at national, state and local levels for its contribution to the society" (Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation, 2009, Par. 1.7).

<sup>107</sup> Under the heading of "5. Eviction, Relocation and Confiscation" 5.1 If authorities come to the conclusion in any given instance that genuine public obstruction of a street, side walk etc. is being caused by street vending, there should be a mechanism of due notice to the street vendors. The vendors should be informed/warned by way of notice as the first step before starting the clearing up or relocation process. In the second step, if the space is not cleared within the notified time, a fine should be imposed. If the space is not cleared even after the notice and imposition of fine, physical eviction may be resorted to. In the case of vending in a 'No-vending Zone', a notice of at least a few hours should be given to a street vendor in order to enable him or her clear the space occupied. In case of relocation, adequate compensation or reservation in allotment of new vending site should be provided to the registered vendors" (Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation, 2009).

The project of city building necessitates displacement of street economies due to “genuine public obstruction of a street, sidewalk, etc.” Within current frameworks of governance and planning, there is little security that such “micro-entrepreneurs” have against displacement, furthering public interest. In being displaced from the sidewalk the self-employed weavers were not just losing their tenuous economic stability. They were also being displaced from a public space that gave them the publicity and visibility otherwise denied to them by formal planning processes.

The weavers’ struggles to procure ration cards and get the sidewalk declared as a slum reveal state actors’ ambivalence in addressing their demands based on claims of use value and location. Instead BMRCL routed the weavers through local agencies such as BBMP and Slum Board to find redressal in welfare housing. BMRCL or BBMP did not recognize the weavers’ economic rights. However BMRCL was unable to entirely ignore the weavers’ demands for compensation. BMRCL’s response recalls Weinstein’s (2009) observation that exigencies of development are a driving force for state actors to appease displaced marginal groups as a means to expedite development processes.

Scholars has characterized struggles of informal economies and the urban indigent as struggles for a *right to the city* (Mitchell, 2003; Harvey, 2008; Crossa, 2009; Anjaria, 2009).<sup>108</sup> In the Indian literature on urban politics, the term has been used more loosely to

---

<sup>108</sup> Referring to the contestations of middle-class activists and street hawkers for sidewalks in Mumbai, Anjaria (2009:404) writes, “By focusing on the manner in which civic activists make their political claims, and the specific political subjectivity of which they are a part, I have shown how a constitutive part of this conflict over the use of public space is a conflict over the normative understanding of citizenship itself. With this in mind, I suggest our understanding of conflicts over the “right to the city” (Mitchell, 2003) such as this might benefit from an expanded analytic lens that does not only focus on the question of who is excluded (which is often quite clear), to include a focus on the particular kind of political imagination that produces these exclusions. Whereas scholars, especially since the early 1990s, have produced important work on the exclusions inherent in urban development policies around the world, the definition of citizenship itself at times is assumed to be universal, and thereby any restriction on it is seen as an aberration. As we see in this context, the question of what citizenship means is precisely what is being



refer to struggles for public space, irrespective of the income group. Equating struggles for public space in Mumbai with struggles for a *right to the city* and hence, to citizenship, Anjaria (2009: 404) calls for “an expanded analytic lens that does not only focus on the question of who is excluded (which is often quite clear), to include a focus on the particular kind of political imagination that produces these exclusions.” In the KR Road weavers’ case, the political imagination engages with the weavers as an indigent *dalit* group making use value claims rather than as productive members of the city’s workforce. Arguably the current framework of planning policies does not provide openings that enable marginal communities to make claims in any other form than as an indigent *dalit* community.

---

debated. It seems, then, that urban scholars might benefit from a bracketing of our own understanding of citizenship to see what exactly is being contested in struggles over urban livelihood.”

## Chapter Five

### Hasiru Usiru: The Tree as a Metaphor for the City

#### 5.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the mobilizations of Hasiru Usiru, a Bangalore-based middle-class environmental network protesting the felling of street trees to accommodate public work projects in the city. Hasiru Usiru is an informal coalition of individuals and non-governmental organizations formed in 2005 around common concerns for the urban environment. The network grew from a spontaneous street protest into a collective voice demanding inclusion in planning policies regarding public spaces in Bangalore. This research finds that Hasiru Usiru represents middle-class activism where “environmental issues reflect and are often emblematic of wider social and political debates” (Mawdsley, 2004, p.79). The street tree acts as a metaphor for public life in the city as Hasiru Usiru’s protests against tree felling symbolize protests against official planning policies on Bangalore’s green heritage, environment and public culture. Furthermore the network’s mobilizations demonstrate that bourgeois claims to urban life adopt contentious routes when state agencies do not respond to “a bourgeois realm of orderly, contained, ‘civil’ behavior” (Wood, 2012, p.163). In sum, the Hasiru Usiru case shows that outcomes of urban bourgeois imaginaries that oppose official planning policies are uneven and contingent on local spatial politics in Bangalore.

This research examines the Hasiru Usiru case in the backdrop of scholarship that characterizes middle-class activism in Indian cities as “bourgeois environmentalism” where “upper-class concerns around aesthetics, leisure, safety, and health have come significantly to shape the disposition of urban spaces” (Baviskar, 2003, p.90). Bourgeois environmentalism reflects a convergence in official goals and middle-class aspirations for efficient and aesthetic Indian cities (Fernandes, 2004; Nair, 2005; Zérah, 2007; Baud & Nainan, 2008; Kamath & Vijayabaskar, 2009; Anjaria, 2009; Harriss, 2010; Ghertner, 2012). Citizen campaigns for clean cities have been “staunchly supported by an activist judiciary claiming to defend the rights of citizens to a healthy environment in which everyone abides by the law” (Chatterjee, 2004, p.131). Furthermore, scholars find that middle-class drives for city beautification reflect an anti-poor bias viewing marginal groups as environmental and aesthetic polluters of the city (Rajagopal, 2001; Baviskar, 2003; Fernandes, 2004; Anjaria, 2009; Ghertner, 2012).

Current literature highlights the role of “middle-class biases and influences – for example, - the desire for beautification, particular notions of hygiene, and fantasies of control of physical space - in shaping the new urban imaginary” (Kumar, 2012, p.136). This literature describes middle-class activism where citizens make claims to the city based on private property ownership and citizenship rights (Chatterjee, 2004). The “bourgeois” and “upper-class” urbanite is distinguishable “by dress, deportment, and language: the padhe-likhe (educated) and the propertied, white-collar professionals, and those engaged in business: the owners of material and symbolic capital” (Baviskar, 2003, p.97). In this literature, the middle-class consumer-citizen supplants the indigent worker

as the new 'common man' representing "an innocent victim of an ineffective government on the one hand and greedy, lawless unions on the other" (Fernandes, 2004, p.2426).

Coming together as registered RWAs, federations of RWAs and non-governmental organizations, middle-class residents have found entry into governance and planning processes in official forums of interaction with state actors. Hasiru Usiru is an unregistered network of individuals and community organizations campaigning to protect Bangalore's commons against top down planning projects. Structurally the network does not resemble with other middle-class organizations or resident welfare associations. Many Hasiru Usiru members resemble Baviskar's upper class residents and Fernandes's consumer-citizen, yet the network's politics differs from the exclusionary middle-class activism described in previous research. Similarly, the network does not fit in the popular conflation of the Indian middle-class with civil society "as the closed association of modern elite groups, sequestered from the wider popular life of the communities, walled up within enclaves of civic freedom and rational law" (Chatterjee, 2004, p.4).<sup>109</sup> Where does Hasiru Usiru fit in current conceptualizations of Indian middle-class associational life? What do the network's politics contribute to scholarship on middle-class environmental activism in Indian cities?

The view of the Indian middle-class as elitist actors engaging with state actors as civil society has dominated recent scholarly readings of their activism vis-à-vis the urban environment. Yet there exist other forms of middle-class activism in the city emerging from different motivations and aspirations in urban life.<sup>110</sup> This research follows

---

<sup>109</sup> In general parlance and in the Indian media

<sup>110</sup> Attributing one of the reasons for growing environmentalism among the urban middle-class to self-interest, Mawdesly (2004:92) elaborates, "... there is evidence of growing concern about the environment, particularly in relation to health and urban space, which to a large extent would credibly drive the self-

scholarship calling for “a need to develop situated understandings of what constitutes ‘the environment’ amongst different middle-class groups” (Mawdesly, 2004, p.79).

Countering discourses of middle-class dominance in influencing urban governance, some studies have expressed skepticism regarding the extent to which bourgeois imaginaries influence official planning policies. Wood (2012: 171) questions the receptiveness and response of government agencies to middle-class residents’ demands, stating that “Meetings with political figures and government officials are an important means of making demands upon the state, but these do not always result in a positive outcome either.” Wood (2012:186) argues that, in order to expedite sluggish governmental responses, “civil society in Varanasi, and perhaps elsewhere in urban India, does not permit contentious, disorderly action, it privileges it.”<sup>111</sup> In a milieu of post-reforms mandating greater accountability of local institutions towards citizens, what do state actors’ responses to Hasiru Usiru reveal about inclusive governance practices in Indian cities?

This chapter begins with a discussion of Hasiru Usiru’s origins and composition, finding that members campaign for a reconciliation between Bangalore’s green legacy and ongoing developmental processes. Hasiru Usiru’s activism differs from bourgeois environmentalism where middle-class visions of clean and green Indian cities “have combined with commercial capital and the state to deny the poor their rights to the environment” (Baviskar, 2003, p.95). Hasiru Usiru’s contentious engagement with public

---

interest explanation. It is, therefore, an issue that requires more focused theorizing, in terms of how it plays out in different cases, and with what consequences.”

<sup>111</sup> As evidenced by the less common street protests by RWAs for better services in their neighborhoods.

officials in articulating concerns for the urban greens, shows civil society's willingness to engage in contentious politics to expedite governmental responses (Wood, 2012).

Despite judicial recognition of the network as a legitimate collective voice, Hasiru Usiru's activists could not curb the tree felling, suggesting that "citizens' groups do not necessarily comprise an inexorable force sweeping the city" (Anjaria, 2009, p.403). Instead state actors used counterclaims of public interest and developmental policies to delegitimize Hasiru Usiru's demands. In sum, the Hasiru Usiru case exemplifies and illustrates the politics of bourgeois urban imaginaries that visualize an inclusionary city form. In sum, the network's activism demonstrates that not all bourgeois imaginaries find inclusion in official visions of the city.

## **5.2. Hasiru Usiru: Origins and politics**

Bangalore derives its reputation as a Garden City from its tree-lined streets where large rain trees meet midway to form canopies shading entire streets (Pictures 5.1-4). Many street trees are several decades old, some of them being as old as the layouts that they grew in. Srinivasaraju (2008: 137) describes the impact of development on Bangalore's trees as follows:

After traffic islands, we have to reckon with the huge ancient trees that made Bangalore famous for its salubrious climate and gave it a garden city status. According to SG Neginhal, former Forest Service officer and author of a definitive book called *City Trees and Urban Planting*, nearly 400-500 year old banyan, mohwa, tamarind and ashwath trees on highways that connect the city were pulled down to broaden the roads for traffic. Also, a good number of the million trees that were planted between 1982 and 1987 inside the city under the Green Belt Project have been felled for wider roads.

Over the years, the city grew and so did the city's traffic. Street trees have been casualties each time BBMP, the local municipal body, undertakes a road widening

project. In some cases, roads were widened around uncut trees (Pictures 5.5 & 5.6). But in most cases, BBMP workers felled trees to create road space. The municipal authorities auctioned timber from the felled trees to private bidders. The event that triggered local protests and the eventual formation of Hasiru Usiru was part of BBMP's project to widen ninety-one thoroughfares across the city.

Hasiru Usiru, “a network of concerned members of the public and various organizations, was initiated to explore creative means to conserve and protect the heritage trees and public spaces of Bangalore garden city from threat of unplanned development.”<sup>112</sup> The term Hasiru Usiru means “Green is Breath” in Kannada, the official language of Karnataka State. The group initially took the name Hasire Usiru (Greenery is Life) but it was later changed to Hasiru Usiru. The Hasiru Usiru network grew out of an incident that occurred on a thoroughfare called Residency Road in April 2005. Located in the city center, Residency Road is a busy street where many public institutions including a school, libraries, office buildings and commercial establishments are located. Like other major thoroughfares in Bangalore, large trees line both sides of the thoroughfare. On 14 April 2005, a passerby saw municipal workers cutting trees on Residency Road on the BBMP Commissioner's order.

The tree felling was part of a municipal road widening project to reduce traffic congestion due to excessive traffic and on-street parking. As news of the tree felling spread by word of mouth, concerned individuals gathered on Residency Road to stop the BBMP workers from cutting more trees.

---

<sup>112</sup> From Hasiru Usiru's public interest litigation against tree felling, 2007

A Hasiru Usiru member (2010) described the events leading up the protest and the protest itself as follows:

Actually (the protest) came into being when Mr.Jyotiramalingam was the BBMP Commissioner. That must have four years ago – 2005 or so. That time this Jyotiramalingam sent a proposal to cut 700 trees on specified number of roads... He wrote to the Forest Department and said that, “Since Urban Forestry has been transferred to the local bodies as a function under the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment, I have the power to cut any tree I want any time I want. And so I want exemption from your Tree Act”..., then we got together to stop this whole road widening business. We came together as a loose network of individuals and organizations concerned about this road widening and tree felling...So we started hugging the trees on Residency Road. We held hands and circled the trees.



Picture 5.1. A tree-lined street in the Matikere locality



Picture 5.2. Trees on a divider between a service road and main road in Shantinagar locality, Cantonment



Picture 5.3. Tree-lined street in Jayanagar locality, one of the first planned layouts to be built in Bangalore in post-Independence India



Picture 5.4 Trees on street in Chamarajpet locality, one of the first planned extensions built during colonial rule



This quote unveils key aspects of BBMP's interpretation of official laws to justify the tree felling as a project of public interest. First, the BBMP Commissioner invoked the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA that gave urban local bodies the powers to "function as institutions of self-governance" to justify the tree felling (JNNURM, 2011). Second the Commissioner was using the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA to undermine the authority of the Karnataka Forest Department, a state government body, to regulate and manage public trees in the city. As per the 1976 Karnataka Forest Protection Act, BBMP can undertake any tree felling activity only with the permission of a State Forest Department's Tree Officer.<sup>113</sup> Third, the Commissioner invoked the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA to assume regulatory power but he ignored the Act's recommendations of setting up mechanisms for transparency and accountability in public works projects. If this neglect in publicizing the road widening project was symptomatic of official planning culture in Indian cities, it also signals BBMP's intent to minimize public involvement and thus avoid the messiness of democratic participation. A Hasiru Usiru member voiced a common argument that I also heard from government officials regarding the latter's reluctance to elicit public opinion:

We (Hasiru Usiru) are asking for a properly participatory process for development. That is what we are asking for more than anything else... Even when we talk about the implementation of the Karnataka Town and Country Act, and we say we have to have public consultations, they (government officials) say, "Public consultations are difficult. They are too chaotic. We can't manage. Who will come? They will say only some things and they will not make sense. We can't manage public consultations in India. It is too complex." That's the sort of general reaction.

---

<sup>113</sup> "With effect on and from the appointed day, notwithstanding any custom, usage, contract or law for the time being in force, no person shall fell any tree or cause any tree to be felled in any land whether in his ownership or occupancy or otherwise, except with the previous permission of the Tree Officer" (Government of Karnataka, n.d.).



Picture 5.5. Street trees remain in their original positions though the road has been widened and sidewalk narrowed in Basavannagudi locality, one of the earliest planned extensions in Bangalore developed during colonial rule



Picture 5.6. A fruit vendor parks his cart beneath a shady street tree in Bangalore

In the Residency Road case, the tree felling did attract uninvited public opinion. That day of April 2005 the protestors formed protective circles and climbed trees to prevent further tree felling on Residency Road. The protesters found out that the tree felling was part of a BBMP initiative to widen ninety-one roads to ease traffic congestion across the city (Pictures 5.7-10). BBMP had identified nearly 700 street trees along prominent streets to fell in the process. The road widening project would encroach on public property such as sidewalks as well as private property beyond the public right-of-way on some streets. BBMP planned to compensate affected private property owners with Transferrable Development Rights (TDR) in other parts of the city. Using TDR, displaced property owners could build an equivalent or bigger built-up area wherever the government allotted land in the city.

There was obviously no compensation for pedestrians, street economies and other users of public streets. The tree felling on Residency Road was one of the routine public works projects that take place in Bangalore's streets, parks and civic amenity sites with

little public attention. Who were the protestors staking claim to public trees on a public street and why were they resisting a public works project?

To understand the formation of Hasiru Usiru, it is necessary to understand the profiles of protestors gathered on Residency Road in April 2009. According to a flyer that Hasiru Usiru members printed in early 2005:

In the last couple of months, citizens from many backgrounds (including old-time Bangaloreans, tree-lovers, students, professionals, NGOs, etc.) have come together under the banner of *Hasiru Usiru* to protect Bangalore's trees. These citizens have pressed for solutions that avoid indiscriminate cutting of trees, and have been asking important questions about the city's future -- with a hope to recreate Bangalore as city which is livable and pleasant for all its residents, from all walks of life.<sup>114</sup>

As the flyer states, Hasiru Usiru consists of a diverse set of individuals and groups that are concerned about the city's greenery and public spaces. I quote a few Hasiru Usiru members below to illustrate different points of attachment and conceptualizations of public space for Bangalore's verdant environs. A long-term resident described her connection with the city's greens as follows:

Now, when we shifted to Jayanagar [50 years ago] ... it was just an empty site. They had cleared the whole thing; it was bulldozed; sites were marked and we [constructed this house]. I remember - every evening when we used to come back from school, my mother used to give us big buckets of water. We had a big tank in the front. So that would be filled up by our well. After coming back home [and] after having our tea, we had to take buckets of water, cross this park, and go water all the trees and come back. Only after that we could go out and play. The government had appointed [a gardener] but how many people were there to do it? Maybe one man for so many trees. He would come in a small van with a little hosepipe and water [the trees] and go. That is definitely not sufficient ... This is not the only road – this is the only major road I am talking about. Now all those trees have grown into humungous beautiful trees and they have all been chopped out ... This is not the only road. [On] every side road, every small road – people used to water the plants in front of their house.

---

<sup>114</sup> Hasiru Usiru. 2005. "Call for Ideas and Solutions: How do we save the trees and manage traffic?"

This respondent's account is rooted in the origins of the planned city. The street tree was one of the building blocks of her neighborhood. The trees grew with the neighborhood. The Jayanagar resident and her neighbors developed a sense of belonging and ownership over the trees as common property or "land or resources to which all members of the community have unrestricted access" (Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1992, p.6). The street tree stood on municipal property but the Jayanagar resident's claim to the trees came from the care that she had given them. If the street tree instilled civic values in some neighborhood residents, the next response underlines the quality of publicness that the street represented:

Basic point about Hasiru Usiru is not about putting a tree somewhere. The more emphatic point is once the space is gone from the public; once the public space is gone, it is irrevocable. And tree is one way of maintaining it. They (government agencies) might skip on to say, "We'll put a tree here; a tree there." The Nanda Theatre [protest against tree felling for the Metro project] is very important from this perspective. Two kilometers of green stretch which is 300-400 meters wide in Bangalore. If it goes, it will never come back again ... You cannot bring that public space back.

This respondent was emphasizing the significance of street trees as markers for public space. The loss of the tree also marks the loss of public space. Here, the tree is not a replaceable green space that can be replanted in any part of the city, but it also denotes a "place" with a location-specific context. This argument is especially significant considering prevalent official policy that promises to replace each chopped tree with two saplings in another location. What use would a resident of a neighborhood that lost its park to a road improvement project find in an urban forest created on the city outskirts?<sup>xviii</sup> If this quote emphasizes the importance of location for public spaces, the next respondent's words contextualize trees and streets as everyday public spaces with multiple uses:

We [in Hasiru Usiru] were unhappy with the fact that nobody was seeing this as a wider debate than the protection of trees. We said, “Yes, trees protect streets and street spaces which shelter street vendors, cyclists, pedestrians. They also shelter properties. But this is also about public spaces. We want the street to be seen as a public space.

This quote is evocative of the street as an open-minded space “designed for a variety of uses, including unforeseen and unforeseeable uses, and used by citizens who do different things and are prepared to tolerate, even take an interest in, things they don’t do” (Walzer, 1986, p.470). As transportation modifications undermine the street’s social and political functions, the ensuing transformation also “encourages a privatizing of social relations” (Holston, 1991, p.162). Alongside its multiple purposes, the street serves an environmental function too. The next quote reflects the environmental concerns that spurred some Bangaloreans to join Hasiru Usiru:

The way I look at it is ... whatever destruction is being caused in Bangalore is because of transport today ... When you make new localities, you might cut down some trees. [But] it is not the wholesale destruction that you see happening for the roads. For the roads what they are doing is adding concrete and tar. Removing trees by itself is horrible. It is going to increase the temperature and reduce oxygen. You not only remove [the trees] but in their place you put concrete and tar. So that’s a double problem.

The “wholesale” destruction and replacement of urban greenery by street space indicate that BBMP prioritized transportation modifications with less concern for the loss of environmental degradation and loss of street life. BBMP was making transportation improvements to serve the public interest of efficient traffic. But street trees and sidewalks also served the public interest by providing shade, facilitating pedestrian safety and accommodating street economies. How did the municipal agency prioritize one public interest over another? The following quote captures a common perception among

Hasiru Usiru members regarding official justifications in decisions concerning public space and public projects:

The thinking is that by widening the road or building flyovers or underpasses, they (government planning agencies) think that these are important infrastructure issues and these things signify development. For them infrastructure is all concrete and steel. What they are not realizing is that trees are also a very important part of infrastructure. If we no longer have trees in a city, it is not a livable city ... There will be instances where you will need to remove trees but nothing like you blatantly chop 12,000 trees to widen some roads in the city.

Through their accounts, various voices of Hasiru Usiru reflect different experiences and expectations of public space and also the expectations of government as provider of public goods and services.<sup>115</sup> While the first respondent's words reflect a nostalgic account of trees in shaping public life in her neighborhood, the next two accounts define the street tree as a marker and symbol of public life and culture in the city. The last two accounts implicate governmental policies that neglect the environmental implications of tree felling on urban life. These quotes demonstrate that the street tree represents different aspects of public space and life for members of the same network.<sup>116</sup> In contrast to scholarly accounts of bourgeois environmentalism reflecting state-supported exclusionary claims to public space, Hasiru Usiru members' responses reiterate the fact that "there is not one single interpretation of the bourgeois imaginary" (Arabindoo, 2011, p.381).<sup>117</sup>

---

<sup>115</sup> Abu-Lughod (as quoted in Douglass and Friedmann, 1998) articulates the paradox of modern society where "the modern state is necessary and desirable to protect democratic freedom and equality, but counter-forces must also exist to prevent abuses stemming from state power (p.230).

<sup>116</sup> In his paper studying struggles for the commons in Hyderabad Maringanti (2011:68) sketches a similar scenario about middle-class activism for local lakes, "Against this backdrop, middle-class activist networks (Forum for Better Hyderabad, Forum for Sustainable Hyderabad, Hyderabad Greens, Save Our Urban Lakes, to name a few) in the city in the past two decades have largely relied on litigation and lobbying with government agencies to protect water bodies against what they perceive as the main problems: "encroachments and pollution". Such groups are often moved by a nostalgia for remembered social geographies of Hyderabad, or by an aesthetic that is often tinged by spirituality and resentment against the rapid changes or by a desire for a more orderly life."

<sup>117</sup> "Contemporary re-imagination of public spaces by the Indian state may be marked by clear, bourgeois essentials aimed at attracting transnational actors, but the resulting vision is not an unequivocal one and often fails to reach the level of pure realization. While this can be explained simplistically as the outcome

The different concerns or themes that emerge from the Hasiru Usiru members' responses refer to issues of stewardship, nostalgia, public life and environmental concerns. Key terms in the quotes such as "localities," "public" and "livable" converge on an idea of the city as a social entity whose physical form responds to diverse social needs (Mumford, 1937). This language is reflected in the network's official language too. The following excerpt from a summary of ESG and Hasiru Usiru's Writ Petition to the Karnataka High Court (2008: 9) presents the network's official framing of the ill effects of tree felling in Bangalore:

This Writ Petition arrays a range of legal concerns relating to the ongoing road widening programme in Bangalore and exposes that such actions are opposed to settled legal norms relating to management and conservation of urban greenery. In addition it is submitted that the road widening programmes are being advanced without any due public consultation even when a variety of rights of the public and certain traditional and customary rights are adversely affected. The petition presents a variety of evidence in support of its averments that the ongoing road widening programme is based on faulty designs, that such a programme will not serve in de congesting (sic) traffic as is being claimed, that such widening will increase significant risks to pedestrians and other road users, and that the special rights and privileges of street vendors would be adversely affected. The Petition submits that a major casualty of such poorly conceived road widening programme are thousands of trees in Bangalore, which constitute the irreplaceable heritage of this city. The Petitioners substantiate these averments by stating that the road widening schemes *per se* are illegal as they have not been evolved in conformity with the Karnataka Town and Country Planning Act, in particular, and various other related legislations and policies defining the purpose and development of roads in urban areas.<sup>118</sup>

---

of contestation and negotiation, more important and less acknowledged is the fact that there is not one single interpretation of the bourgeois imaginary, thereby creating a problem of fit with even some bourgeois members of the society. Secondly, underwriting this failure to create a universal one size-fits-all template is the more fundamentally troubled understanding of public spaces in a country like India, one that stretches back to the colonial time. In this context, any simplistic assumption about a reconstructed public space, bourgeois or otherwise, is rendered useless" (Arabindoo, 2011, p.381).

<sup>118</sup> Source: List of Dates/Synopsis. In the High Court of Karnataka at Bangalore W.P. No. / 2008 UNDER WRIT ORIGINAL JURISDICTION Between: Environment Support Group and others; ...Petitioners And State of Karnataka and others; ...Respondents.

The Writ Petition's language indicates that at least some voices in Hasiru Usiru visualized the city streets as venues of multiple uses and diverse spatial practices. The politics of the network's founder members played a significant role in developing the network as an inclusive platform for city residents. Hasiru Usiru members converged spontaneously on the Residency Road issue, but the network drew its initial momentum under the leadership of established middle-class nongovernmental organizations in Bangalore. Prominent among the nongovernmental organizations were Environmental Support Group (ESG), Citizen's Voluntary Initiative for the City (CIVIC) and Alternate Law Forum (ALF).



Picture 5.7. Tree stump on Nanda Theatre Road, Jayanagar



Picture 5.8. Tree felling in preparation for road widening, Sheshadripuram



Picture 5.9. Tree felling at Tagore Circle to make space for constructing an underpass



Picture 5.10. A freshly laid stretch of road for which the adjacent sidewalk was narrowed, Malleswaram



ESG is a voluntary organization born in 1998 that aims to “pro-actively address issues and concerns collaborating across sectors and disciplines keeping the interests of local project affected communities and voiceless ecosystems in primary focus” (ESG, n.d).

CIVIC is a trust that started in 1992 which focuses on “realizing social equity in growth of Bengaluru through the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act” (CIVIC, n.d.): Started in 2000 by a group of lawyers, ALF describes itself as “a space that integrates alternative lawyering with critical research, alternative dispute resolution, pedagogic interventions and more generally maintaining sustained legal interventions in various social issues” (ALF, n.d).

ESG played a pivotal role in guiding Hasiru Usiru’s initial campaigns and acted as the network’s official face in filing PILs in courts of law. The ESG-Hasiru Usiru coalition highlights a symbiotic connection where unregistered and registered nongovernmental bodies draw on one another’s organizational structures while engaging with government actors. An unregistered coalition, Hasiru Usiru relies on ESG for representation in official forums. For its part, ESG draws on the network’s diverse membership for greater representation during public protests and meetings with public officials.<sup>119</sup>

---

<sup>119</sup> A Bangalore-based researcher who studies local civil society organizations described the symbiotic relationship unregistered and registered nongovernmental organization develop to optimize interactions with government bodies(2010): “Generally what happens is when you are dealing with state [or] any democratic department [or] process, there are limitations for registered organizations to go to a level of arguing with them or debating with them or dialoguing with them ... An organization is registered under State Registrar of Societies under Societies Act or Trust Act. And that particular Registrar comes under the Revenue Department. And the Revenue Department is part of government. You have to file your annuities with Societies Registrar. You have to file your audit with the Income Tax [Department]. To maintain that legal entity if you are formally a group, you have to fulfill certain routine obligations ... And whatever broadness the [organization has], it is the baby of those 6-7 members or those 4-5 trustees. [So] there is no larger public involvement in any registered organization. If collectively people have to own the process, it has to be in a collective space. So, in that sense, many of these platforms will be very loose networks where individuals and NGOs are involved, and some host the process.”

### 5.3. The Road widening PIL and court ruling

Hasiru Usiru members said that despite official mandates of public notification of government projects, BBMP did not publicize the road widening project. The protestors said that BBMP avoided public involvement in the road widening project because it would provoke public resistance. BBMP for its part, was using the idea of public interest to override public resistance against a project to ameliorate traffic congestion. Since BBMP did not publicize the road widening project, a Hasiru Usiru member recalled how they got information about the project: “You knew somebody [in BBMP]. They would lift it, photocopy it, and give it to you.”

The member’s account reveals a facet of middle-class activism that is willing to push the bounds of lawful conduct and civil behavior when confronted with a non-cooperative government.<sup>120</sup> BBMP’s negligence in information-sharing was part of the general lack of accountability that characterizes official planning in Indian cities. That city residents had to use unofficial methods to procure public information highlights the limitations of official “invited spaces” of state-society engagement.<sup>121</sup> Ostensibly BBMP’s taciturnity was intended to minimize public resistance to the project. However the agency’s actions also drew on official definitions of public space as municipal property where government agencies decided the best public use. As the Residency Road protests suggest, the conflict over street trees was more than that BBMP transforming municipal property. It became a

---

<sup>120</sup> This was before the Indian government passed the Right to Information (RTI) Act in the year 2006. Since the RTI Act was passed, city residents have had greater access to government officials and information, though the application process itself can sometimes be long drawn and tedious. Secondly, the responses of the government officials tend to be brief and cryptic to the point of being of no practical use.

<sup>121</sup> Baud and Nainan (2008:483) describe the term “invited spaces” as “...new arenas, in which local governments request citizens to work with them in determining local needs and in providing basic services.”

conflict over who had a right to street trees that symbolized public space and public culture in Bangalore for some of its middle-class residents.

Soon after the Residency Road demonstrations, the protestors stormed the BBMP premises demanding a meeting with the BBMP Commissioner. A Hasiru Usiru member (2009) described the meeting with the Commissioner:

We decided to hold a *dharna* (protest) inside the office of the BBMP Commissioner. We had this long list of Tree Helpline members [from] neighborhoods.<sup>122</sup> So we activated all of them and told them, “Look, we all should act together, because today if it is this street, tomorrow it is another street.” ... We came to know that they had this plan of making 91 roads. So ESG filed a public interest litigation. But before that we’d gone to meet Jyotiramalingam. [He] was adamant [and said], “I’ll widen the road, come what may.” So we had a protest there. He did not want to come to meet us. We said, “You don’t meet us [but] we will sit here and wait. We are not going.”... So we sat, and finally he had to come because we were not leaving the BBMP Campus ... After that they banned protests. In that week, they moved a special order saying that no protest within one kilometer of BBMP. *Paurakaarmikas* protested later that week.<sup>123</sup> They were arrested.

The respondent described the BBMP protest as a party-like atmosphere with nearly two hundred people consisting of white-collared professionals, nongovernmental organizations, local celebrities, and even children occupying the BBMP premises for several hours. The protestors’ approach to engaging with the BBMP Commissioner reinforces Wood’s (2012) observation that when government agencies are non-cooperative or slow to respond, civil society is willing to engage in contentious practices to gain the latter’s attention. The protestors laid siege to the BBMP office since that was the only way to catch the agency’s attention.<sup>124</sup> The Commissioner’s eventual (albeit

---

<sup>122</sup> ESG had started a Tree Helpline in 2003

<sup>123</sup> The BBMP Solid Waste Management Department employees

<sup>124</sup> In this context, Wood (2012:175) notes a similar phenomenon in her examination of middle-class protests in Varanasi against state actors where “under certain circumstances some groups may be more likely to protest when they have more, not less, access to state institutions, or when they believe there is a greater chance that authorities will be responsive to their efforts.”

temporary) capitulation to the protestors' demands of inclusion in the road-widening planning process suggests BBMP's unpreparedness for uncivil conduct from urban bourgeois society. Instead of opening up, the agency's response was to build additional distance between the public and its representatives.

Once they realized that the tree felling was part of a bigger plan to make transportation improvements for the entire city, the protestors stepped up their efforts to stop the tree felling. In preparation for the road widening project, the Karnataka Chief Minister had created a Task Force led by the Chief Secretary of State to coordinate traffic management efforts in Bangalore. Learning about the connection between the tree felling and BBMP's transportation plans, Hasiru Usiru members approached government officials seeking inclusion in the traffic management planning processes.

Hasiru Usiru members recall a hectic period of interactions in public workshops and presentations with numerous government officials, bureaucrats and representatives of the Karnataka State legislature. In these forums, an engineer and an architect from Hasiru Usiru presented alternate transportation proposals that promoted public transit and mitigated the need for road widening, and thus minimized tree felling. It is noteworthy here that nongovernmental bodies such as Hasiru Usiru and Praja, and elite-class RWAs that can afford technical consultants, such as DECORA (Defence Colony) and Koramangala Initiative (Koramangala), were producing technical documents and presentations to challenge the rationale of official development projects.<sup>125</sup> Hasiru Usiru's use of scientific knowledge to counter official plans not only sought to present

---

<sup>125</sup> Praja is an online civic group stated by an IT professional as a forum for discussing techno-managerial solutions to solve Bangalore's infrastructure problems

alternative visions of transportation improvements but also to legitimize their claims as educated professionals that could speak the language of the technocrats.

The network members also petitioned the Karnataka Chief Minister requesting that “citizens be invited to participate in meetings of the Task Force on traffic management and be given an opportunity to get involved in creating long term transport solutions to the increasing traffic problems of Bangalore.” Bureaucrats and other public officials attended the workshops and publicly acknowledged Hasiru Usiru’s concerns and suggestions. The meetings ended with public officials stating that they agreed in principle with Hasiru Usiru’s concerns but they had no choice but to address immediate pressures on the city’s transportation system (Chamaraj, 2009). And the tree felling continued unabated.

Eventually ESG and Hasiru Usiru filed a PIL against BBMP and the Forest Department in late April 2005. The litigation claimed that the BBMP Commissioner had violated the Karnataka Tree Preservation Act of 1976 to implement the road widening. The Karnataka Tree Preservation Act mandates that felling of public trees can take place only with the permission of a Tree Officer appointed by the State Forest Department to supervise the upkeep of trees in Bangalore.<sup>126</sup>

As discussed earlier, Hasiru Usiru, being an unregistered body, could not officially petition as a collective body in the court of law. Hence ESG listed the network as a co-petitioner in its PIL requesting that BBMP and the Forest Department adhere to the Karnataka Tree Preservation Act. The PIL said the tree felling was unlawful because due

---

<sup>126</sup> “With effect on and from the appointed day, notwithstanding any custom, usage, contract or law for the time being in force, no person shall fell any tree or cause any tree to be felled in any land whether in his ownership or occupancy or otherwise, except with the previous permission of the Tree Officer.” (THE KARNATAKA PRESERVATION OF TREES ACT, 1976)

procedures were not being followed, and that it was harmful to the public interest in terms of social, economic and environmental impacts. Hasiru Usiru members recount that the High Court judge asked the name of ESG's co-petitioners and that was when the network's members came up with the name "Hasire Usiru".<sup>127</sup> In response to the PIL, the Karnataka High Court ruled in December 2005 that:

... with regard to the cutting of the trees within the jurisdiction of the Bangalore City, a meeting was held under the Chairmanship of the Chief Secretary and, in furtherance of the said meeting, it has been directed that with regard to the trees falling within the jurisdiction of the Bangalore Mahanagar Palike (including those on roads), it has been decided that permission has to be obtained under the Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act and permission will have to be given on top priority and that further with respect to every instance, the Bangalore Mahanagar Palike is to send details to the concerned Tree Officer in every case and the Tree Officer has to take a considered in a fair manner after exercising due caution. The contents of the said letter would further indicate that, before granting permission to cut the trees, an opportunity would be given to the representatives of 'Hasire Usiru', wherever possible. The learned counsel for the petitioner informs us that the petitioner is a part of that group called 'Hasire Usiru' ...<sup>xix</sup>

Though the phrasing is not very specific, the court's ruling "that an opportunity would be given to the representatives of 'Hasire Usiru', wherever possible" appeared to vindicate Hasiru Usiru's demand for inclusion in decisions regarding tree felling in the city. The network members saw the Court ruling as a landmark event. Hasiru Usiru was an outlier in a public sphere dotted with registered nongovernmental organizations, trusts, RWAs and federations of RWAs. Despite the network's unofficial status, the Court recognized Hasiru Usiru as a legitimate collective voice. According to network members, the Court's recognition raised Hasiru Usiru's visibility within and outside official circles.

The court verdict gave Hasiru Usiru legitimacy and an opportunity to weigh in on BBMP's future decisions regarding tree felling in Bangalore. In ruling that BBMP follow

---

<sup>127</sup> Initially named Hasire Usiru, the network's name was changed to Hasiru Usiru later.

the Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act and get a Tree Officer's approval for cutting trees, the court was reminding government agencies to follow the law. What is less obvious is the court's direction to government agencies to include Hasiru Usiru, an unregistered group in consultations wherever possible. Did the court verdict recognize (as some Hasiru Usiru members claim) the network's claims that it represented a broader public interest? Or did the court's recognition of Hasiru Usiru stem from an inability to ignore bourgeois claims to the urban environment?

The court verdict on Hasiru Usiru's petition is consistent with existing scholarship that finds judicial courts and governmental agencies responsive to middle-class concerns pertaining to urban and environmental aesthetics (Baviskar, 2003; Nair, 2005). However, this literature refers mostly to cases in which there is a convergence in governmental and middle-class visions for the city. Hasiru Usiru's contestations were against government policies of development. Furthermore, the manner in which the court's verdict materialized on the ground questions the ability of bourgeois visions to influence governmental policy.

After the judgment, the Forest Department appointed a Tree Officer in each sub-divisional branch office of BBMP to supervise tree felling cases across the city. Thus BBMP set up a process to create transparency and accountability in the road widening project. Hasiru Usiru members say that in many instances the BBMP Tree Officer notified them about upcoming or ongoing tree felling cases. However, the network members had little success in actually preventing the tree felling.<sup>128</sup>

---

<sup>128</sup> "Last year, ESG obtained a directive in the High Court to the effect that the BBMP shall not proceed with their tree felling plans without involving the city-based green group Hasiru Usiru, which conducts its affairs on the Internet as an e-group. On 24 August last year, the Deputy Conservator of Forests in the BBMP Limits, Shekhar, (also the Tree Officer for Bangalore under the Karnataka Preservation of Trees

Hasiru Usiru members suggest that BBMP's undertaking the road widening project did not serve the public interest, and instead supported private vehicle owners. First, Hasiru Usiru members claimed that BBMP was widening roads leading to the city's new international airport to improve traffic efficiency for elite car-owning commuters to the airport. Second, they claimed that BBMP was not paying attention to pedestrian safety or street economies on widened streets. For their part, BBMP officials argued that displacement and spatial transformations were inevitable in large public works projects where the interests of a few residents were secondary to the greater public interest.

According to a Hasiru Usiru member (2010), the network was unable to prevent tree felling because BBMP evokes public interest to overcome protests, since a citywide public interest trumps the narrow (though collective) interest of an environmental group. BBMP workers claimed that they were only chopping rotting trees that were dangerous for life and property. As the member's words indicate, BBMP made claims to public interest that superseded bourgeois concerns for the environment:

[The court ruling said that] in addition to that Forest Department, Hasiru Usiru should be consulted. So, it is like the Forest Department [should be consulted] for the nature of the tree and whatever its purpose is and then the people [should be consulted]. It was so powerful. [But] that didn't stop anybody [from chopping trees] because there was a clause saying, "except in an emergency" [in BBMP's

---

Act), called a meeting to discuss ways and means with the citizens. At the meeting, both the government officials and the citizens' groups expressed agreement over the issues at hand, but disagreed over the ways to resolve them.... Kathyayini Chamaraj, on behalf of CIVIC/Hasiru Usiru, and Leo Saldanha of ESG both questioned the very assumption that tree felling along with usurping of pedestrian and cycling space was the only answer to the problem of congested roads. Though Shekhar ultimately said that he could only convey the citizens' opinions to his superiors, he did agree for a stay on the felling of trees along Seshadri Road and Race Course Road. The NGOs had then gone away with a sense of some commitment on the part of the government officers....However, the felling of trees on Bellary road continued in spite of this, and about 30 trees have so far been lost on that road. Bellary road is one of the access roads for the International Airport, and obviously, pressure to get the road ready at the earliest must be immense. However, citizens are concerned that this urgency should not lead to a short-sighted approach where the road widening is undertaken heedless of other concerns" Source: <http://oorvani.in/articles/print/62-environment-trees-infrastructure-roads-and-transport-green-today-gone-tomorrow-trees-or-traffic> (Retrieved on April 1, 2009).



rules for chopping trees]. And everything (he means “every instance of tree felling) has been used as an emergency case where they keep cutting the trees.

The court’s words were framed in very loose terms recommending that “an opportunity would be given to the representatives of ‘Hasiru Usiru’, wherever possible.” The court symbolically gave Hasiru Usiru a voice in a matter that BBMP framed in terms of public interest. But on the ground, BBMP used loopholes such as the emergency clause to continue with the tree felling project. Here the “emergency” clause was a proxy for the term “public interest’ that BBMP used to validate transformations and takeovers of public space. Arguably there was little that any city resident could say to counter BBMP’s claims of safeguarding lives\_or properties of other residents by tree felling.

The Tree Officer’s presence in BBMP did not stop the tree felling, but it exposed the internal politics in public institutions that hinder public functionaries in their daily work. A Hasiru Usiru member (2009) recounted a Tree Officer’s response to queries regarding continued tree felling despite the judicial order:

Hasiru Usiru had this big meeting in December 2007 in Senate Hall. And we invited each and every member of the BMLTA.<sup>129</sup> We sent our memorandum to everybody. We invited the BBMP Commissioner. Again he did not come and he sent the road widening engineers [instead]. At that time, the Deputy Conservator of Forests, he came. Then again we made our presentations ... Then the Deputy Conservator of Forests - he came to speak and he almost wept on the stage and he said, “See, I am helpless. Everyday BBMP officials are putting pressure on me to sign [permissions to cut trees]”... He said that in public. He said, “From the bottom you (Hasiru Usiru) are kicking me and from the top the officials are kicking me ... And every day they have been putting pressure on me to give permissions. And if I don’t give permission, I get kicked every day. And [the] BBMP Commissioner is putting pressure on me to sign papers.” So he cut such a sorry figure.

The Tree Officer’s account provides a glimpse of the pressures under which public officials conduct their everyday work. It also reveals, as in the case of the court ruling in

---

<sup>129</sup> Bangalore Metropolitan Land Transport Authority

Hasiru Usiru's favor and the failure of network to curb tree felling, that there is a difference between official orders and what transpires on the ground. Despite having with the authority to make decisions regarding city trees, the Conservator actually had little autonomy to oppose the BBMP Commissioner's authority.

Thus Hasiru Usiru had little success in discouraging BBMP officials from cutting trees down. While other middle-class associations such as RWAs use connections with political parties or local politicians to meet their demands, Hasiru Usiru steers clear of politicians and political parties. The network members interact with local politicians only to discuss protests against upcoming project in their wards or if some politician voluntarily joins their protests. A key member of Hasiru Usiru described the network's approach to electoral politics thus:

... We have been political, but not aligned to a political party. Our work is political, but it is not political party-based ... I think our work is quite political - even when we are pushing on issues of governance, saying there is a section of people being left out, certain section of people who are being impacted by these projects, and who is this benefitting and where is the money coming from? I think we are political in our work when we are raising these questions and bringing these out. [But] it's not being associated with a political party.

For their part, local elected representatives have shown mixed responses to Hasiru Usiru. In some cases, a few politicians, either out of genuine concern for the urban commons or political opportunism, joined Hasiru Usiru in protests against tree felling in high profile locations such as the historic Lal Bagh Botanic Garden. In other cases, responses from politicians representing residential neighborhoods ranged from indifferent to hostile. Several Hasiru Usiru members mentioned their Nanda Theatre Road protest against the Metro project, where the local MLA behaved aggressively towards the protestors. A local politician had a plausible explanation for politicians' ambivalence

towards Hasiru Usiru. Comparing Hasiru Usiru's approach to activism with that of Janaagraha (a prominent middle-class nongovernmental organization working on governance issues in Bangalore), the politician observed that:<sup>130</sup>

[Janaagraha's] limitation is that they are targeting the apolitical mass – the educated middle-class and others, who have essentially seceded from the system. [These are] people who don't vote; get their jobs done through other means.... [For example if] you want a driver's license, you pay somebody. You don't have to go through the system. I am also a politician. So from my point of view as a politician these are all groups that make a lot of noise but are worthless when it comes to getting the vote out... So we have a very uneasy relationship, right? We want to listen to them, we want to get ideas from them that [we] can also own, but we don't necessarily see them as politically potent. But some others like Hasiru Usiru, ESG, etc. – they are very active. They contribute to discussions and debates, but they also come across as perpetual dissenters and that they are not constructive. That is not hundred percent true, but you know what I mean, right? They are more prone to dissent rather than constructive engagement.

The politician's comparison of Janaagraha's collaborative approach and Hasiru

Usiru's confrontational politics recalls the distinction between the consumer-citizen and citizen with rights.<sup>131</sup> Could there be other explanations for the Nanda Road MLA's aggression other than as an intimidation tactic? Perhaps some of the aggression stems from political discomfiture regarding how to engage with the bourgeois resident as political protestor (similar to the BBMP Commissioner's temporary capitulation to the Residency Road protestors' demands). If Hasiru Usiru members are viewed as dissenters in their interactions with public functionaries, they also contribute to this portrayal through their own selections and omissions of whom they engage with in the public forum.

---

<sup>130</sup> Founded in 2001 by Ramesh Ramanathan and Swati Ramanathan, Janaagraha started as a movement to enable citizen participation in public governance. (Janaagraha Homepage, n.d).

<sup>131</sup> Borrowed from Baud and Nainan (2008:485) who write in their study of state-society engagement in Mumbai that, "Our position is that decentralization accompanied by new forms of local representation can produce "invited spaces" that allow for collective action and engagement with government. However, it remains to be seen whether these spaces offer the possibility to citizens of making their views heard only as "consumers of services", or whether they provide the chance to be recognized as citizens with rights."

Hasiru Usiru seeks inclusion in processes of government and governance using official channels such as judicial activism and organizing workshops involving local residents, government officials and elected representatives. The network avoids aligning with political parties or religious organizations to avoid getting involved in their politics and agendas. They also avoid interacting in public or private forums with members of ABIDE, a committee of elite citizens that former Chief Minister Dr.B.S.Yedyurappa appointed in 2008 as an advisory body in planning Bangalore.<sup>132</sup> Under the leadership of a Member of Parliament (MP), Rajiv Chandrasekhar, ABIDE (Agenda for Bengaluru Infrastructure and Development Task Force) has created a policy document for Bangalore titled “Plan Bengaluru 2020.”<sup>133</sup> This document is not a substitute for the official comprehensive development plan, but it exemplifies recent state-approved private initiatives to contribute to planning and governance in Indian cities (Vittal, 2010). Hasiru Usiru members view ABIDE as an extra-constitutional committee that has no right to drive planning policy in Bangalore because it does not represent a collective public interest.<sup>134</sup> An ABIDE member (2010) provided a different perspective on the issue of his legitimacy in making decisions with citywide impact thus:

That’s what you want citizens to have. The ear of the government. You can’t have it both ways. You can’t say [that] on the one hand citizens should have the ear of

---

<sup>132</sup> Agenda for Bangalore Infrastructure and Development Task Force

<sup>133</sup> Unlike Members of Legislative Assembly, MPs are nominated public officials. Rajeev Chandrasekhar was an entrepreneur before he was nominated for the MP position.

<sup>134</sup> Ghosh (2005) writes about the formation of BATF thus, “The entry of the private sector into policy arenas in India aligns with the central government’s ongoing urban reform programme, promoted along with national economic reforms of the early 1990s. Now in a second generation of policy and programme initiatives, the ministry for urban development claims, “For Indian cities to become growth-oriented and productive, it is essential to achieve a world class urban system. This in turn depends on attaining efficiency and equity in the delivery and financing of urban infrastructure.”<sup>2</sup> These policies encourage the state and local government regimes to focus on financial efficiency and reducing subsidies while supporting infrastructure development for the controlled growth of urban areas. Consequently privately promoted projects deemed self-financing receive fast-track approvals and government support.”

the government but citizens who do have the ear of the government should be looked at with suspicion [by people who do not have a say in official matters].

The ABIDe member's response reflects a common argument for participatory governance put forth by organizations and committees of powerful people in industry and bureaucracies. In taking an oppositional stand against ABIDe and eschewing partnerships with political parties, Hasiru Usiru underlines its own ideology and legitimacy as a collective public voice engaging in democratic dialogue with the government.<sup>xx</sup> This presents a paradoxical situation where, to be included in participatory governance, Hasiru Usiru, a group with its origins in dissent, has to work alongside bodies like ABIDe that bypass public dissent. Observers of Hasiru Usiru have argued that, by not engaging with ABIDe, network members lose opportunities to debate with individuals with a "voice" in local planning and governance.

Despite various constraints to widening its base and scope of activity, Hasiru Usiru has provided a credible middle-class counter voice against government policies that subordinate environmental concerns to development. Hasiru Usiru's interactions with judicial and administrative bodies show that the network faces considerable challenges in influencing government actions on the ground. The next section examines Hasiru Usiru's place in the arena of middle-class activism in Bangalore. Drawing on opinions from within and outside the network, the next section finds that Hasiru Usiru remains a small but assertive voice of dissent in a milieu of official planning that ostensibly favor middle-class residents as consumers of services rather than as citizens with rights.

#### **5.4. Hasiru Usiru and middle-class activism for public space**

The preceding sections discussed Hasiru Usiru's ideology and interactions with state actors. This section examines accounts of members, observers and collaborators of Hasiru Usiru to understand how other social groups perceive the network's politics. Their responses show that in providing a discursive and material platform of interaction for social actors within and outside the network, Hasiru Usiru has reinforced the role of Bangalore's "middle-class citizen as political protestor" (Kumar, 2012, p.138).

Hasiru Usiru evolved at a time when Bangalore's public sphere was already populated with many civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations and trusts working on governance and public services provision. A detailed discussion of Bangalore's various civil society organizations is beyond the scope of this chapter. Vis-à-vis contestations for public spaces, however, there is at least one recorded antecedent that recalls Hasiru Usiru's method of protests in Nair's (2005) book "The Promise of The Metropolis: Bangalore's Twentieth Century." There was a public protest in 1998 against the Karnataka government's proposal to reduce 32 acres of park space from the historic Cubbon Park, since that area was built up with public offices. A large number of women and children were among the protestors. Nair (2005: 294) describes the Cubbon Park protests as follows:

For six full weeks in September and October 1998, the Victoria statue became the rallying point for middle-class citizens seeking to protect Cubbon Park from the slow process of attrition that had reduced its original size. For the first time in the city's history, there were daily gatherings of women, children, and men at this important road junction, silently expressing anger over the decision of the state government to 'denotify' parts of the park. In a series of pamphlets, a women's organization called Sanmathi urged the citizens of Bangalore to save Cubbon Park by sending letters of protest to the government. Soon the campaign snowballed to include a variety of actions that were organized on relays but centred on the statue of Victoria 'so that', as one pamphlet put it, she can be reminded that prestigious

place is under threat.’ They included handholding on the perimeter of the park, *urulu seves*, silent marches, silent demonstrations by women and children with placards in their hands, and the like.<sup>135</sup>

The court upheld the government’s denotification as valid. The protestors’ efforts were unsuccessful but “the visually pleasing and dignified protest attracted public and media attention to rapidly vanishing norms of liberal-democratic discourse, compared with the traffic-disrupting, slogan-shouting counterparts of civil society” (Nair, 2005, p.296). Hasiru Usiru’s public protests resonate with Nair’s account of the “visually pleasing and dignified protest” for Cubbon Park (Pictures 5.12-15). However the storming of the BBMP office in April 2009 following the Residency Road incident also indicates that the network also used disruptive tactics generally associated with “traffic-disrupting, slogan-shouting counterparts.”

There are traces of the 1998 Cubbon Park protests in the 2005 Residency Road protests. But unlike the Cubbon Park protests that ended in six weeks, the Residency Road protests grew into a more sustained collective forum whose approach to “environmental issues reflect and are often emblematic of wider social and political debates” (Mawdsley 2004, p.79).<sup>136</sup> A Hasiru Usiru member (2010) explained the

---

<sup>135</sup> A Hindu religious ritual. The members of Sanmathi are also members of Hasiru Usiru. It is also noteworthy that Hasiru Usiru members performed a “*shraddha*” (Hindu funeral) ceremony for felled trees on 24 May 2009 (Deponi. 2009). An observer of Hasiru Usiru said this about the network, “(Hasiru Usiru) is very Brahmin, very middle-class...I don’t think it is a conscious thing. That I don’t want to say. Certainly not. But the little bit of the Kannada Brahmin population that is in Bangalore, would be in Basavannagudi, Jayanagar. Some of them are moving out. And they are scattered all over (the country and abroad). I would suspect that it is not very conscious but these are people who have school friends, who’ve got ties, and by word of mouth they get together. When they protested on the Metro thing, they did the “*shraddha* ceremony”. That is a very Brahminical thing. They got angry with me for saying so. I described it. I did not pass any judgment on it.”

<sup>136</sup> Attributing one of the reasons for growing environmentalism among the urban middle-class to self-interest, Mawdesly (2004:92) elaborates, “... there is evidence of growing concern about the environment, particularly in relation to health and urban space, which to a large extent would credibly drive the self-interest explanation. It is, therefore, an issue that requires more focused theorizing, in terms of how it plays out in different cases, and with what consequences.”

network's agenda in raising awareness about planning issues with city-wide consequences:

[Hasiru Usiru] is trying to produce a discourse around what development should be [and] what are trees. That's a very important role to play ... Another thing even we tried right at the beginning was that it's not enough just to go every night to try and save a tree. That's like a Bandaid treatment. The problem is traffic. So how does one start to talk about traffic? They are trying to understand the politics of traffic itself. That is something that came into question by the group and that is something that continued from there on. There was a very big meeting on traffic organized by Hasiru Usiru, looking at the question of road widening. About how road widening itself is going to impact [traffic]. How it is going to result in more trees getting cut and how that itself is not a feasible way of traffic management. So, obviously these questions became interlinked. It is not just a very local thing where I say, "I like my tree and I am saving my tree." There were these larger questions that came to be posed. That I think is very necessary at this point in time; and this group is doing it to a large extent.



Picture 5.11: Preparation for a public protest in front of Queen Victoria's statue in Cubbon Park, 2010

Many respondents agreed that Hasiru Usiru had made them aware of linkages between transportation, environment and land use. Hasiru Usiru members see themselves as



catalysts of middle-class activism in the city as the network lends support to project-affected communities by organizing public protests. As noted earlier, the network consists of white collared professionals, literary figures, homemakers, government retirees and college students. A member (2009) described the network's impact on regular citizens not accustomed to taking their fights against government to the streets thus:

Any form of resistance – it is very important for a democracy... The fact that you have people standing against what they think at that point in time is an arbitrary use of power, is a very important process in a democracy... I think every protest builds in democratizing society. And Hasiru Usiru has done that. It has democratized what was known as a laidback, disinterested section of society – the middle-class. They don't care about anything ... My point is this - in an otherwise insipid kind of a political situation, you have a bunch of people who are trying to do as much as they can ... Hasiru Usiru made a very big difference. Otherwise boys and girls who wouldn't even bother about any political activity now come out on the streets and protest. [People] who probably yesterday [saw] anyone protesting on the street and had a giggle on their face, now want to hold a banner and walk on the streets. How can one take away from that?

Neighborhood associations that are not members of Hasiru Usiru partner with the network to protest tree felling in their localities.<sup>137</sup> In other cases, non-member community organizations tie up with Hasiru Usiru to gain publicity for their own causes. The following account of a respondent who collaborates with BBMP to redesign parks for children with special needs illustrates this point:

Our people also associate with Hasiru Usiru because they do see it in some sense non-representative of a particular voice. It is seen as a broad based kind of forum. So people would associate with it for certain broad based agendas. Not publicity, but [for] greater reach, if it is through this rather than if we were doing it alone.

---

<sup>137</sup> A Hasiru Usiru member described Hasiru Usiru's impact on communities thus, "And one good thing is that Hasiru Usiru has gotten that kind of mind space for a lot of people. Whether it is a resident's welfare association or anything else, they would probably – atleast if they were even a little bit concerned, interested or impacted, they'll first think of calling ESG and Hasiru Usiru or one of them. And then you know, try to draw on their knowledge and expertise, and things like that. So, even if 5-10 people went to the actual protest, they would still feel that somebody supported them." (2010)

So I think people associate with Hasiru Usiru for the kind of things which take their own campaigns or their own work also forward.

As these accounts indicate, Hasiru Usiru gained the good will of communities and organizations that see a match or synergy between their agendas and the network. There are other instances, though, where Hasiru Usiru's activism has struck a discordant note with neighborhood residents who saw road widening as the only way to improve traffic problems in the city. A respondent described an incident where Hasiru Usiru members assembled to protest the proposed Metro alignment along the verdant Nanda Road in the middle-class neighborhood of Jayanagar. In an article in the online journal "Citizen Matters" a citizen-journalist described the events of the protest as follows (Iyer, 2009):

The morning of Saturday, 9th May, saw a motley crowd of hundreds assemble along RV Road (popularly called Nanda Road) in Jayanagar. Two events were being held simultaneously. The first had been called by Jayanagar MLA Vijaykumar, who at the behest of Citizen's Action Forum and some Jayanagar Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs), had invited N Sivasailam, Managing Director (MD), Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd. (BMRCL), to talk to residents about the impact of Namma Metro on trees along Nanda Road.

The second, a protest meeting had been called by the coalition Hasiru Usiru (HU), media collective Maraa, women's organisation Sanmathi and the Lakshman Rao Park Walkers Association.

While the protesters were against the tree felling and at being denied a say on something that is going to affect their lives so drastically, the general sentiment of the RWA members seemed to be that the Metro is needed to improve the traffic situation.

The presence of two groups with divergent viewpoints explained the unusual sight of banners proclaiming "We support Namma Metro," hanging next to banners about saving trees and exhorting Metro to go underground...

... As Vijayakumar together with Sivasailam and his band of Metro engineers walked into the site of the future Jayanagar Metro station near 30th Cross, they were bombarded with questions by people concerned about their parks. "Why can't the Metro go via KR Road?" thundered one. "How many trees are going to go here?" questioned another. A heated war of words ensued between those wanting to hear out Metro officials' plans and those wanting answers immediately, until finally, questioners from HU (Hasiru Usiru) and like-minded organisations were shouted down and literally shunted out.

This account illustrates the divisions within civil society where different groups have different ideas of development and work at cross purposes to push their agendas. The Jayanagar residents viewed the Hasiru Usiru protestors as outsiders who had no right to seek a voice on issues related to Jayanagar. This is reminiscent of what Arabindoo (2011: 381) says regarding bourgeois contestations of official transformations of the iconic Marina beach in Chennai where, “more important and less acknowledged is the fact that there is not one single interpretation of the bourgeois imaginary, thereby creating a problem of fit with even some bourgeois members of the society.”

One respondent (2010) also said that the neighborhood residents and local politician hired *goondas* (Indian term for “armed goons”) to intimidate the Hasiru Usiru protestors:

People versus *goondas*. They will get rough; push you around and say, “What are you doing?” Of course, most of them are not from that area. They are hired hands. So, it takes a different mental and physical frame of mind; person and mind set to deal with this kind of thing, right? So certain segments of the group gave up [protesting].

This brief account of uncivil behavior highlights some of the challenges posed to individuals that are willing to step out into public space and public life. If Hasiru Usiru’s peaceful protests are intended to expand the arena of democratic participation, then as Mitchell (2003) suggests, spaces of democracy also have the potential to become spaces of anarchy. Negotiating the latter, as the respondent says above, tests the willingness of middle-class residents to remain committed to their cause.

Rather than facing aggression from opposing interests, some members have turned to safer spaces of engagement, such as a web-based platform like a Yahoo group list serve. Hasiru Usiru members with an activist bent have argued that the wavering interest in public protest and a preference for web-based communication go against the very origins

of a network that was built on protest. The web-based communication also becomes unintentionally exclusionary of individuals and communities that are not computer-literate or do not have easy access to computers. Some members argue that wireless phone messages have been equally, if not more, effective in spreading information among active network members. Also, as the active Hasiru Usiru email list serve shows, internet activism can play a significant role in giving voice and building dialogue within a middle-class group with divergent viewpoints. The Hasiru Usiru email conversations do emerge as “expressions of both difference and consensus, and they represent partial steps towards an open public sphere in troubling times” (Zukin, 2010, p.27).<sup>xxi</sup>



Picture 5.12



Picture 5.13



Picture 5.14



Picture 5.15

Pictures 5.12-15. Hasiru Usiru members participate with other groups in a demonstration outside Cubbon Park to protest a governmental plan requiring photo identification cards to enter the park (2010). The state government finally scrapped the plan.

Being an informal and porous network with no structure or fulltime members, Hasiru Usiru faces considerable challenges in mustering resources and manpower to function on a regular basis. The Yahoogroups list serve continues to be a well-used forum for members to share information and plan for forthcoming campaigns. Hasiru Usiru's online convenor said that the network has more than 600 online members (though a member joked that "20 people, with the moral support of the other 600 people have made a big impact" in terms of taking their work to the streets).<sup>138</sup> Some of the network members are making efforts to reach out to other middle-class communities and civic organizations affected by the road widening. A member described the network's efforts to include other affected groups thus:

[The road widening] affects the traders on Avenue Road (a 450 year-old two-lane commercial street in Old Bangalore that has been marked for widening). So these are your constituents. For us these are the guys we can rope in and say, "Why don't you go and fight?" All this road widening nonsense about high-speed traffic and signal free corridors, all this is affecting the elderly, the children, the physically handicapped. So we tell all these people, "Come, join up." They all have their own organizations. [For] example the handicapped [do]. So we say, "Why don't you make a noise and strengthen this thing? Why don't you fight? We will give you all the technical inputs."

Unlike other instances of bourgeois environmentalism vis-à-vis marginal groups, Hasiru Usiru does not overtly exclude marginal groups whose need for public space is

---

<sup>138</sup> "(Hasiru Usiru) had a huge impact. But again, it is just 15 or 20 people making the noise. The number of members is something 600 but you will never find the 600 active anywhere at all except on email. They will shoot off emails up and down, but finally it is 20-odd people on the ground. That's fine. It seems to have worked. These 20 people, with the moral support of the other 600 people ☺, have made a big impact. The government knows there is a body like this that has a big voice. In the press, (we emerged as) a big body which is very vocal. I know lot of things have been postponed. ESG and HU jointly filed a PIL in the High Court for the road widening thing and that dragged on for a very long time. All this is essentially illegal. The tree cutting is illegal and the road widening is all illegal. So those things came out in the court. And the judge says, "Yeah, I know it is illegal but in the larger interest of the city and the general public, I will allow this. He says it is illegal and he says I will allow it. So, these things came out." (Hasiru Usiru member, 2010)

linked to issues of subsistence and shelter rather than environmental concerns.<sup>139</sup> The network uses the language in National Policy on Urban Street Vendors to describe concerns for the negative impact of road widening on street economies.<sup>140</sup> Recognizing that the urban poor's needs for public space are different but that the loss of sidewalks and shade-giving trees also affects their livelihoods, Hasiru Usiru members invite slum activists and project-affected marginal groups to participate in their workshops and campaigns. The network's environmental focus evokes little interest or participation from marginal groups concerned with shelter and subsistence needs. This research identifies at least three challenges that Hasiru Usiru faces in finding common ground with displaced marginal groups in representing their concerns in public forums.

First, the street tree is a class-neutral public amenity that different classes of society can access freely. This research reiterates that it is not the publicness of the street tree but the varying claims of different groups that shape campaigns against tree felling. Hasiru Usiru's primary focus is to oppose tree felling. Though representatives of organized groups of street vendors and slum dwellers attended and presented their issues at Hasiru Usiru events, they did not share the middle-class members' concerns for the urban environment. Displaced groups of urban poor, on the other hand, are more concerned about getting compensation from government or in finding alternate places of shelter and work than with the preservation of trees.

---

<sup>139</sup> In her study comparing activism across economic classes in Varanasi, Wood (2012:166) recommends using a Tocquevillian idea of associational life that "allows for a more neutral application for the concept of civil society to a variety of political and social contexts and does not require an a priori exclusion of the uneducated, non property-owning working classes."

<sup>140</sup> "The Petitioners also pointed out that these schemes would adversely impact life and livelihoods of thousands of residents, street vendors and businesses, a fact that has not at all been considered by Respondent – 6." (Source: List of Dates/Synopsis. In the High Court of Karnataka at Bangalore W.P. No. / 2008 UNDER WRIT ORIGINAL JURISDICTION Between: Environment Support Group and others; ...Petitioners And State of Karnataka and others; ...Respondents).

Second, in many cases they are individual vendors illegally hawking on sidewalks with no locus standi in official forums of engagement with state actors. Thus state actors could treat the claims of the network's middle-class members and indigent groups differently depending the legality of their spatial practices and claims to public space.

Third, the network's activism shifted from on-street protests to online information-sharing and discussions among English-speaking, internet-savvy members. This is another barrier of communication between the two economic groups. Thus, despite having a pro-poor approach, Hasiru Usiru has made little substantive progress thus far in sharing a common platform with economically diverse groups.

In his research on local campaigns to save Hyderabad's lakes, Maringanti (2011: 69) writes:

Our discussion of waterbodies in Hyderabad shows that the degradation of waterbodies is not dependent on whether formal ownership rests with the state or with private individuals. It has also shown that neither inclusive growth nor insurgent urbanism approaches to the right to the city can address the question of the commons. Any attempt to build a new framework then would have to recognise that commons are not natural objects existing a priori. The waterbodies of Hyderabad are produced over millennia by people who came together through shared meanings and practices of use and appropriation.

Here Maringanti is arguing for a comprehensive approach to understanding the history and context before articulating multiple claims to the urban commons. Hasiru Usiru has carved out a small but distinct niche in Bangalore's public sphere as an inclusive form of environmental activism that invites multiple voices to articulate and agitate to preserve Bangalore's commons. But as this research suggests, the network has not been able to consolidate the strength or diversity that members have the willingness to accommodate.

## 5.5. Conclusion

This chapter examines the activism of an environmental network for Bangalore's green spaces in the backdrop of scholarly accounts of middle-class dominance in influencing planning policy in Indian cities. Hasiru Usiru provides an important discursive forum for a subset of Bangalore's middle-class to formulate alternate visions for planning and governance in the city. Through their contestations for the urban greens, network members seek inclusion in planning and governance vis-à-vis public goods and services. Hasiru Usiru's vision for the city resonate with bourgeois imaginaries of a clean, green and healthy environment but unlike bourgeois environmentalism, the network is not hostile towards the urban poor. Instead Hasiru Usiru's members have varied conceptualizations of urban public space as spaces of culture and public life that accommodate a variety of uses.

The Hasiru Usiru case shows that bourgeois urban imaginaries have the support of judicial and official policies of inclusion of local communities in participatory planning. To this extent, BBMP's actions and the court's decision reflected the spirit of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA that calls for inclusionary governance practices. However, the BBMP Commissioner also used the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA to defend the tree-felling on Residency Road, where local bodies were "not only been empowered to function as institutions of self-government, they are now entrusted with the responsibilities of implementing the various Central or state government-sponsored schemes of community development" (Mohapatra, 2013, p.805). So here was a case where middle-class demands for official accountability conflicted with BBMP's claims to authorized autonomy to take planning decisions in the public interest. Under the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, both Hasiru Usiru and BBMP were



making legitimate claims to public space that could not find resolution in official participatory forums or courts of law.

The Hasiru Usiru case suggests that post-reforms governance policies strengthened the voices of middle-class actors and local governing bodies, but did not substantively change BBMP's decision to continue the tree-felling. Thus on the ground, middle-class urban visions have little control or influence in an arena of local spatial politics that encompasses multiple social and political actors with conflicting agendas. This arena, as this research demonstrates, is less governed by reforms-oriented policies mandating greater accountability of local bodies to citizens, and instead has to be negotiated through contestations and political activism.

Similarly Hasiru Usiru's activism shows that middle-class groups are willing to engage in public protests and demonstrations (behavior attributed to political society) if state actors are non-responsive to their demands in more civil forums. In her research comparing white collared workers and artisanal communities in Varanasi, Wood (2012:163) writes, "Civil society in India – or at least in some Indian cities – may be more inclusive than the historical Western concepts allow, and more contentious than some scholars have recognized."

The presence of varying bourgeois imaginaries is significant because it raises questions about the different ways in which these imaginaries engage with state actors. For instance, Hasiru Usiru's conflict with the Jayanagar RWA members highlights conflicts between bourgeois claims that challenge state actions as opposed to bourgeois imaginaries that align with state developmental visions. Jayanagar's residents who saw merit in the Metro project opposed Hasiru Usiru's protests against tree felling along the

Nanda Theatre Road. The ensuing contestations show that bourgeois visions that oppose official developmental policies are unlikely to find fruition against competing agendas and politics.

The Hasiru Usiru case highlights the challenges of consolidating battles of different economic groups for public space against governing bodies. The network's ideology and activism diverges from bourgeois environmentalism in implicating governing agencies rather than the urban poor for the destruction of the urban commons. The network attempts to include and represent displaced marginal communities by framing concerns for the urban commons as broader societal concerns that affect different publics in the city in different ways. However this research finds that the network has limited outreach vis-à-vis indigent groups in their campaigns.

As in the KR Road sidewalk case (where BMRCL offered resettlement housing to the unauthorized weavers community), the Hasiru Usiru case demonstrates a willingness of state actors to engage with network members protesting the tree felling. In the Hasiru Usiru case, BBMP had the authority to act in the public interest by undertaking a road widening project to ameliorate traffic congestion. The network had no official status and yet the High Court recognized its concerns. BBMP had to follow the court ruling that recommended seeking Hasiru Usiru's opinion before felling trees. The court ruling reflects a general official receptiveness to bourgeois voices that ensconce their contestations in the language of urban policy, laws and planning. However that BBMP continued the tree felling despite Hasiru Usiru's continued protests also indicates that other forces dictate planning decisions and that "citizens' groups do not necessarily comprise an inexorable force sweeping the city" (Anjaria, 2009, p.403).

While official policies create openings for local participation such as RTI and participatory governance, state actors are simultaneously engaging in processes of development that displace and disrupt local culture and space. As the ensuing transformations affect middle-class neighborhoods, residents are raising their voices against state actions. The Hasiru Usiru case demonstrates the existence of alternate bourgeois imaginaries of Indian cities that contest official spatial planning and seek to widen arenas of democratic participation as political actors in public spaces.

## Chapter Six

### **Park Politics and Elite Activism: A Case Study of Anti Encroachment Mobilizations**

#### **6.1. Introduction**

This chapter examines the politics of a contested civic amenity site in Bangalore to understand the dynamics of elite activism in spatial politics in Indian cities. Drawing on interviews with multiple actors, media reports and Bangalore's master plan, this chapter examines elite-class mobilizations against authorized and unauthorized encroachments on a neighborhood public space. This research finds that the Post Office (PO) Ground case challenges and contributes to current understanding of elite groups' influence in shaping space and planning policy in Indian cities. I argue that the master plan conceptually privileges but does not protect elite-class visions of green and orderly cities in India. In a planning milieu where displacement has become a pre-condition for development, elite mobilizations for public space emerge as reactions to the master plan's unfulfilled promises. The PO Ground case also shows that outcomes of elite contestations for public space emerge not behind closed doors of power, but in local arenas of spatial, electoral and caste politics in Bangalore.

The PO Ground is a civic amenity site consisting of three acres of open space in an upscale suburban neighbourhood in 3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala Ward. Located in a quiet residential layout consisting of palatial bungalows and tree-shaded streets, PO Ground

was used as a public playground by local and non-local residents beginning in the 1970s. As Koramangala rapidly grew as a residential cum business district, a series of “formal diversion processes” and unauthorised encroachments in the 1990s threatened to irreversibly change PO Ground (Ravindran, 2007, p.137). The parastatal planning agency BDA leased portions of PO Ground to private parties to build incompatible but officially permitted land uses including a marriage hall, public school and eye hospital.<sup>141</sup> In this period, two local residents used personal connections with the BBMP Commissioner to occupy part of PO Ground and run a private cricket academy. A small group of residents in 3<sup>rd</sup> Block challenged BDA’s land use conversions in court, charging the planning agency with violating master plan stipulations for open space provision and thereby harming the public interest. The protracted legal battle ended with the court ruling in the residents’ favor, with one plot on the Ground remaining dedicated to a *dalit* Trust. The rest of PO Ground was restored to the public realm, and the residents took control of it with the support of a local MLA who was also instrumental in reshaping it as a playground cum park.<sup>142</sup> In a parallel development, the residents formed the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block RWA to regulate future development in their neighborhood.

The struggles for PO Ground developed around the language of public interest and rights to public space. Middle-class campaigns for clean and green cities resonate with demands for what Lefebvre (1968) terms as a *right to nature*, an elitist demand for ordered spaces created by official planning processes. Lefebvre (1996) critiques the *right*

---

<sup>141</sup> The Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) is a parastatal planning agency in charge of spatial planning in Bangalore. Staffed with bureaucrats and planners, BDA acquires land and develops layouts and infrastructure projects following guidelines based on the Karnataka Town and Country Planning (KTPC) Act, 1961.

<sup>142</sup> Member of Legislative Assembly. The MLA Mr. R. Reddy belonged to the rival political party (the Congress Party) to that of the ruling government (the Bharatiya Janata Party), and it was important for him to earn the good will of the Koramangala residents to establish a hold over that area.

*to nature* as being exclusionary and disruptive to the idea of city as *oeuvre*, “a collective artwork of all the inhabitants and users of a city” (Boer & de Vries, 2009, p.1322). In opposition to the *right to nature*, the *right to the city* “is a call and demand for inhabitants” to appropriate and shape urban space to reflect their daily spatial practices. Viewed thus, do the 3rd Block residents’ actions reflect an elite capture of planning processes to address their *right to nature* and open space? Or do their actions reflect struggles for a *right to the city* wherein they fought displacement from a public space that had use value for them?

Describing it as a collective right, Harvey (2008: 23) states, “The *right to the city* is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city.”<sup>xxiii</sup> Here the term “change” suggests that in claiming rights to urban space, city residents transform into active political agents collectively working to “reshape the processes of urbanization” (Harvey, 2008, p.23). Harvey (2008) calls on disenfranchised urban groups to empower themselves by challenging exclusionary urbanization processes. In their fifteen year-long fight for PO Ground, the elite 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents transformed from consumer-citizens demanding neighbourhood lung space to an organized residents’ association steeped in territorial politics.<sup>143</sup> What does the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents’ transformation suggest about elite groups’ hold over local processes of urbanization, and what are the implications of such transformations for local spatial and electoral politics?

---

<sup>143</sup> Fernandes (2004:2426) uses this term in her paper, “The Politics of Forgetting: Class Politics, State Power and the Restructuring of Urban Space in India.” She describes the middle-class consumer citizen thus: “This figure represents an innocent victim of an ineffective government on the one hand and greedy, lawless unions on the other. Both unions and the government in this representation embody the corruption and incompetence of the political system.”

While the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents occupy a privileged place in Bangalore in terms of access to power and resources, the PO Ground contestations can be located in the vast terrain of middle-class activism for public space in post-liberalization Indian cities. Studies of urban India have highlighted a sustained convergence of middle-class visions and state actions to actualize sanitized and privatized visions of public space as a legitimate goal of city planning (Baviskar, 2003; Sharan, 2002; Fernandes, 2004; Chatterjee, 2004; Arabindoo, 2005; Nair, 2005; Zérah, 2007; Anjaria, 2009; Harriss, 2010). Other research finds that “citizens’ groups do not necessarily comprise an inexorable force sweeping the city” (Anjaria, 2009, p.403). In their study of Bangalore RWAs, Kamath and Vijayabaskar (2009: 368) find that different groups under the umbrella term “Indian middle-class” actually have “multiple locations, interests, and varied access to power” and therefore varied influence on urban space and policy. Thus what Arabindoo (2005: 3) terms the “process of embourgeoisement” of Indian cities is constantly interrupted as different actors make conflicting claims to limited public resources. In inquiring into the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents’ motivations and actions in staking claim to PO Ground, we must consider the varied middle-class access in participatory planning and influence on planning processes in Indian cities.<sup>144</sup>

This chapter proceeds as follows. The next section discusses official definitions of public space and the politics of civic amenity sites, detailing the role of formal planning processes in catalyzing elite-class activism against encroachments on neighborhood public spaces. The third section details the spatial practices and contestations of PO Ground to illuminate the motivations of various actors in claiming their right to the civic

---

<sup>144</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents’ struggles for PO Ground took place in the 1990s, after the implementation of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA and before JNNURM mandated public participation in master planning.

amenity site. The fourth and final section draws inferences from this case about the motivations of elite activism and its impact on space and governance in Bangalore.

The PO Ground case challenges contemporary scholarship on Indian cities that assert an official privileging of urban elites as consumer-citizens over marginalized groups. The case suggests that government agencies are less responsive to the demands of elite residents when their interests clash with official developmental agendas. Against a backdrop of state-directed development by displacement, the PO Ground case shows that, notwithstanding privileged access to power and resources, elite residents are engaging in local electoral politics to reclaim material and discursive spaces in the city.

## **6.2. The politics of civic amenity sites in Bangalore**

This section examines the broader politics of civic amenity sites in Bangalore to establish a conceptual background for the politics of PO Ground. The section explores narratives of local struggles over civic amenity sites to develop a framework to understand official and bottom-up conceptualizations of public space in Bangalore. Contrary to collaborative methods recommended in the master plan, the relations of middle-class residents with local planning agencies and politicians range from cooperative to confrontational. Middle-class contestations for public space in Bangalore manifest as acts of territorialism, but I argue that they also reflect a culture of anxiety reacting to official planning processes that authorize encroachment on master planned land. As the discussion in the next section demonstrates, the BDA's definition of civic amenity sites plays a significant role in sparking contestations over such sites.



### **6.2.1. Definitions and meanings of public space in the Bangalore master plan**

While developing mixed-use layouts, the BDA allocates land in each layout for developing civic amenities that include a range of public facilities catering to the needs of local and non-local residents. Frequently local and non-local residents use vacant civic amenity sites as de facto playgrounds and congregational spaces until the BDA develops or leases them to private parties for development into schools, hospitals, marriage halls or medical facilities. In the interim, the sites may or may not be fenced or maintained. So they remain bare tracts of land overgrown in places with shrubs and bushes. If the temporary encroachments of civic amenity sites suggest a paucity of public playgrounds in Bangalore, they also highlight the role of unregulated public space as spontaneous tableaux of urban life or sites of “significant collective social drama” (Mumford, 1937, p.60).

Planning regulations dictate that civic amenity sites and open spaces constitute at least 25% of the space allocated for public facilities in all BDA approved layouts in Bangalore. BDA allots at least 15% of land for open spaces including parks and playgrounds, and 10% of land for civic amenity sites in each layout. The 2015 Bangalore Revised Master Plan (RMP 2015) places civic amenities and open spaces under the broad category of “Public and Semi-public Spaces.” The 1976 BDA Act describes a civic amenity as “a site earmarked for a civic amenity in a layout formed by the authority or a site earmarked for a civic amenity in a private layout, approved and relinquished to it by the authority” (BDA 2012). As per The Karnataka Parks, Play-Fields and Open Spaces (Preservation and Regulation) Act, 1985 (Karnataka High Court, 2005):

‘Open Space’ means any land on which there are no buildings or of which not more than one twentieth part is covered with buildings and the whole or the

remainder of which is used or meant for purposes of recreations, air or light or set apart for civic amenity purposes.

Once the layout is developed, BDA relinquishes all but the 10% of land allotted for civic amenity sites to Bangalore's municipal authority BBMP for maintenance and taxation. BDA retains regulatory control over civic amenity sites in all BDA-approved layouts, whether they are government or private projects. Executive engineers prepare a list of available civic amenity sites within BDA limits two to four times every year. BDA collects annuity charges from the lessees of the civic amenity sites. A closed committee consisting of senior officials from BDA and BBMP steers the process of allocating land uses and leasing the sites. When asked about the role of public participation in determining the purpose of civic amenity sites, a senior BDA official said with a laugh, "No, that is an unending process. We never tried to do that job. Another headache. No need to go to the public. Hundred people will create hundred problems."

Nor is there room for indirect public participation through elected representatives. The BBMP Commissioner sits on the committee for planning civic amenity sites, but the Municipal Council members, who are elected representatives, do not. BDA places advertisements in newspapers inviting tender applications from public and private parties interested in developing civic amenities, which are defined as follows (Karnataka High Court, 2002):

- (i) a market, a post office, a telephone exchange, a bank, a fair price shop, a milk booth, a school, a dispensary, a hospital, a pathological laboratory, a maternity home, a child care center, a library, a gymnasium, a bus stand or a bus depot;
- (ii) a recreation center run by the government or the corporation;
- (iii) a center for educational, social or cultural activities established by the central government or the state government or by a body established by the central government or the state government;
- (iv) A center for educational, religious, social or cultural activities or for philanthropic service run by a cooperative society registered under the Karnataka Cooperative Societies Act, 1959

(Karnataka Act 11 of 1959) or a society registered under the Karnataka Societies Registration Act, 1960 (Karnataka Act 17 of 1960) or by a trust created wholly for charitable, educational or religious purposes;(v) a police station, an area office or a service station of the corporation or the Bangalore water supply and sewerage board or the Karnataka electricity board; and (vi) such other amenity as the government may, by notification, specify."

As the above definitions reveal, civic amenity sites and open spaces cover a vast range of public or semi-public facilities and in some locations are interchangeable in function. Subject to the planning authority's approval, a civic amenity site can be developed as a playground or park and vice versa. By law, the intended use of a civic amenity site cannot be changed once the Committee assigns a certain land use to the site. For instance, land designated for a playground cannot be used for a police station or vice versa. Official conceptualizations of civic amenity sites and open spaces suggest that master-planned public spaces face at least four challenges to fulfilling their function as sites of public life.

First, if broad definitions of civic amenity sites and open spaces enable the customization of public facilities to the needs of different layouts, they also facilitate ad hoc development. In a complete contradiction of the master plan's stated goal of rational planning, planning laws authorize BDA to allot incompatible land uses in neighborhoods. For instance, PO Ground is located in a quiet residential neighborhood. Yet the proposed land uses on the site included an eye hospital, wedding hall, management institute and school, all of which were legitimate uses of civic amenity sites, as per BDA definitions. What was up for question is whether BDA had considered the compatibility of uses and the impact of increased traffic and noise levels on the surrounding low density housing. The BDA officials I spoke to asserted that they were authorized to make land use conversions on civic amenity sites, but none of them indicated that the proposed amenities were in response to changing public needs. There was no public consultation or

notification to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents about the proposed changes. According to a 3<sup>rd</sup> Block resident, BDA was making the changes on PO Ground:

... because they have the authority. They represent the government and with the push of a pen they are able to do these things ... in our case with the wave of a brush, where green, [the color code in the master plan] which is “parks and open spaces,” becomes red, which is commercial or residential.<sup>145</sup>

Second, BDA’s control over civic amenity sites was problematic because it takes ten percent of land allotted for public space in every BDA layout away from public scrutiny. As a parastatal agency, BDA is directly accountable to the state government and has limited interactions with city residents and their elected representatives. BDA’s hold over civic amenity sites creates opportunities for mismanagement and appropriations. The Karnataka Comptroller and Auditor General, a government agency that conducts auditing and accounting of public facilities, published a report recording BDA’s mismanagement of civic amenity sites where (Navya, 2013):

Out of the total 1234 CA sites, lease was not renewed for 71 sites for many years. Sixty of these are occupied by private organisations; among these are organisations that have not renewed lease even 32 years after its expiry. BDA is supposed to take back the land in case of non-renewal, but this was not done. BDA's loss in this case, is Rs 43 cr[ore] ... BDA lost another Rs 192 cr[ore] by not allotting CA sites at all. The oldest of these sites is in HAL 3rd stage layout, formed in 1975. Some 9 lakh sq m[eters] land is remaining unused in the city this way. Not allotting the sites also led to lack of civic amenities in these areas. The highest number of unallotted sites are in west division. About 1.45 lakh sq m land (spread across 29 CA sites) are

---

<sup>145</sup> Perry (2010:96) provides a telling account of the lack of public accountability from the planning authority while making significant transformations from one master plan to the next, “Of particular interest in the context of the National Games Complex case is section 24, which states that any existing Comprehensive Development Plans must be followed. This would normally prevent the building of the National Games housing project in Koramangala, as the area concerned was classified under the 1984 Comprehensive Development Plan as ‘park’ and ‘open spaces’. When the Development Plan was revised in 1994, the land continued to be so classified and the plan proceeded through the proper stages of consultation and publicity, until suddenly the land was transferred to the ‘residential category’, just before final state government approval was given to the new plan. No notification was given to the public of the change. The petitioners in this case claim this rendered the procedure for the conversion of the category illegal. If this is the case then any permission for building in the area would be in contravention of the Comprehensive Development Plan and therefore illegal under the Karnataka Town and Country Planning Act.”

stuck in court cases, but BDA did not even have details about how long the cases had been going on.

Commenting on BDA's policy of leasing civic amenity sites to private developers, a Koramangala resident who is active in civic affairs said, "We don't know whether they are coming or going. Because they are really a real estate company, you know."<sup>146</sup> In calling BDA a real estate company, the resident suggested that the opacity and lack of accountability in BDA's management of municipal land reflected the work culture of a private business, rather than that of a public institution. This opinion is substantiated in the numerous land transfers initiated by state politicians in the name of assigning civic amenity sites for public use (I discuss this in detail in the next section). As I found during my fieldwork, all respondents familiar with BDA's work culture concurred with this portrayal of the agency as a "real estate lobby" in thrall to local developers and politicians. A retired Chief Secretary of Karnataka State described BDA's management of open spaces in planned layouts in Bangalore as follows:

The civic amenities and the public spaces were never anybody's concern, because as I mentioned, success was judged in terms of the number of sites distributed and not in terms of the quality of life. This has been a major problem and as a result of commercial interests, encroachments, pressure from land mafia, the compulsion to make money for elections – all these have resulted in many civic amenities sites also being given away.

The latter account suggests ways in which forces within the state work with and against the master plan in shaping the urban commons. A planner who worked on the Bangalore 2015 RMP offered the following insights into BDA planners' and state functionaries' perceptions of publicness and the master plan itself:

---

<sup>146</sup> A recent story in a Bangalore newspaper reports that "Its (BDA's) involvement in denotification scandals and allotment of sites to relatives of VVIPs has only added to the woes of Bangalore Development Authority (BDA)" (Moudgal, 2011).

There isn't a word called "public space" at all in the whole [master plan] document. There is no public at all. It is a document which is devoid of all public .... It is not a deliberate strategy. It just comes in from the 1960s – we are following the British Town and Country Planning Act. We've copycatted the same thing. We've just gone ahead with it. Life seems to be going fine. Why make changes? It's going on. Things are happening. People are making best use of change of colors and zoning to their own benefit. They are using it for the public good. These are all the kinds of things that are happening and you don't really see that as a thorn. And nobody is bothered about it because if you see at the top level of the government, they are saying, "What is this master plan you are preparing? ..... Who's asking you to create this document?" The BDA guys defend it saying, "No, no, sir. This is under KTPC Act sir. We are doing this document." [The politicians say], "Hey, you better do other documents. Why are you wasting time?"

This quote reveals serious problems in the planning agency's approach to developing the master plan as the official vision for the city. It calls into question the purpose and efficacy of the planning agency's dependence on fifty-year-old guidelines to plan the ever-changing, ever-evolving city. It reveals an internal conflict and lack of conviction within the planning agency regarding the purpose of the master plan as a functional road map to city development. This uncertainty is, arguably, compounded by the many other ways that the city develops outside the logic of the master plan, whether through the implementation of state-approved public-private partnerships or through illegal layouts.

Third, while civic amenity sites and open spaces are mandatory in BDA-planned layouts, there is no similar mandate for public spaces in unplanned localities, such as unauthorized revenue layouts and urban villages. Therefore at the city scale, the distribution of planned public spaces follows the locational distribution of predominantly middle-class BDA layouts. This skewed distribution may well result in a spillover of users from other localities as nonlocal residents use open spaces in BDA layouts. It also results in socially diverse groups sharing the same public space and creating turf wars wherein layout residents claim territorial rights to their neighborhood spaces. This is

particularly problematic given that planned public spaces are available only in planned BDA layouts. Yet, as the following account of a respondent who grew up in one of Bangalore's lower-income areas shows, planned public spaces provide essential spaces of conviviality for the urban poor too:

If you look at places like Koramangala, etc. or if you look at Rajajinagar – each of these areas have pockets of urban poor – very, very poor people. And for a lot of these boys - especially boys or even couples – they would come to these parks. And this is the place they could sit and play... I don't know if you see it now, but in our area in Viveknagar, Ejipura, there used to be this park called ABC Park. In the nights, actually we'd see young boys going and do weightlifting over there, doing push-ups. After finishing their work, [they] come back late in the night [at] 10 o'clock. So the ways these places were used were for very, very different purposes – from love to body-building to playing games to everything. I think to a large extent, that you don't want such kind of activities taking place, you know.... For instance say, in Koramangala, if somebody went to – there is a park outside Bethany's School where we used to play previously. Suddenly one day they said, "No, no, no, you can't come and play over here." Then you see that all these uncles and aunties are coming and walking around. Probably they also need this space. I am not saying they don't. But for them, people like us – not me – but lot of people from the lower-class backgrounds – they become an eyesore. Like you are not sure of what they are going to do. They could be thieves. You are trying to ensure that the space becomes a particular form so [a] particular kind of people can access it. And then if anyone else wants to access it, they behave in a particular fashion. Probably RWAs had a ... major role to play ... in how nice clean parks, clean roads [are built]. That kind of a thing.

This quote demonstrates the significance of public parks and playgrounds for lower-income groups and highlights the inequitable distribution of public space across the city. It also offers a plausible explanation for why some middle-class RWAs actively petition the planning authorities to reshape open spaces as gated parks. Vacant civic amenity sites present attractive play areas for nonlocal visitors because, unlike BBMP regulated parks, the civic amenity sites are open, unregulated and easy to access. As the preceding account suggests, local residents do not always feel comfortable with non-local residents using their neighborhood commons. Though they cannot legally keep people out of BBMP

property, vigilant residents use BBMP signage and other means to dictate terms of use to “outsiders.” The following words of a 3<sup>rd</sup> Block RWA member suggest that residents take their role of stewardship into the realm of overt control:

No, park is not for outside people. Playground can be used by anybody.... You cannot restrict people coming from outside also since it is BBMP area. We cannot ask specific people also not to play there. But of course, slowly we are trying to educate the fellows who are playing there to follow the rules. The dos and don'ts... So they are not forced to do it... If we see someone doing something untoward, we tell them not to.

For instance, during a visit to the historic M.N.Krishna Rao Park, a sprawling green space in the affluent Basavannagudi neighborhood, I saw an elderly gentleman scolding a young child for cycling on the walking trail during a time slot that the local RWA had allotted to walkers (Picture 6.1). The wide path could easily accommodate both the young bicyclist and walker. But the latter, an active RWA member, was disciplining the child in order to prevent possible accidents where reckless cyclists could crash into elderly walkers. In another case, the affluent Defence Colony neighborhood boasts two big parks on the same street. One is a municipal park for the exclusive use of senior citizens, and the other is a municipal park for the exclusive use of children.<sup>147</sup> All BBMP-managed parks have signs detailing the rules of conduct, but both of the parks in Defence Colony have additional signboards listing additional rules and regulations (Picture 6.2). Ostensibly, the rules and regulations ensure that elderly residents and young children have safe spaces to exercise and play in. However, the absence of parks providing similar recreational opportunities for other groups calls into question the fairness of reserving park space for only certain populations.

---

<sup>147</sup> I am using the Indian (British) spelling of “Defense” here.





Picture 6.1. Krishna Rao Park, Basavannagudi



Picture 6.2. Signboard in Defence Colony Park

Finally, master plan regulations reveal a bias towards RWAs, which typically represent the urban middle-class, thereby creating conditions for exclusionary spatial practices. This bias is exemplified in the 2015 Bangalore Revised Master plan’s guidelines (2007: 43), which say that open spaces and playgrounds:

... shall be relinquished to the Authority (free of cost and free of encumbrance) and if required, the authority may hand over the area for maintenance to the resident’s welfare association. If the land is not maintained up to the satisfaction of the authority, it shall be resumed back by the authority.<sup>148</sup>

According to a BBMP Horticulture Inspector in charge of the PO Ground Park, local residents “give guidance to the BBMP along with the corporator and MLA of the area” in deciding how to develop local civic amenity sites and open spaces. Collaborative practices between RWAs and governing agencies from the standpoint of participatory governance and middle-class residents’ right to open spaces can be undemocratic for at least two reasons. First, collaborations between RWAs and the government give little consideration to non-local users’ rights of access to public parks and playgrounds across

<sup>148</sup> Zoning of Landuse and Regulations (2007). Revised Master Plan 2015 BANGALORE 2007 Vol III.

the city. Second, such collaborations normatively allow RWAs to decide rules of access to public spaces whose appeal and functionality extend beyond the geographic boundaries of any particular layout. As one respondent put it:

There is a lot of activity around and lot of lobbying. By the RWAs; by the residents. Which is good at one level. But RWAs are typifying a particular class, which is not good. Everywhere you see it ... which at one level is okay because they are also the community. But what to say, it's a part of the community. It doesn't represent the entire community.

As the narrative shows so far, the overt privileging of RWAs in Indian cities has had mixed results in meeting middle-class visions of public space or making planning agencies adhere to the master plan's promises. If anything BDA's management of civic amenity sites has provoked greater vigilance from local residents, especially in neighborhoods where public spaces are vibrant sites of public life and diverse uses.

This section discussed governmental formulation and management of public spaces in Bangalore. The master plan is the official document identifying locations and types of public space and by association, public interest in spatial terms. Planning policies entrust BDA and BBMP with the stewardship of public space, which they are supposed to protect and maintain for the enjoyment of the city's publics. This section demonstrates that the diversity of uses and users of constantly challenge the realization of normative conceptualizations of the city's parks, playgrounds, streets and sidewalks. More significantly this section demonstrates the gap between the master plan and how institutional politics shape public space on the ground. Finally this discussion shows that public spaces agencies have limited ability to maintain public space in the face of internal and external hurdles that range from institutional inefficiency to corrupt practices.

### **6.2.2. Civic amenity sites as contested spaces**

If official conceptions shape public space in ways that do not follow the master plan, on-the-ground spatial practices defy the master plan in other significant ways. This subsection draws on media reports and field interviews with RWA members and government officials among other respondents to present a ground-level account of struggles for civic amenity sites. Based on the data, this research argues that elite-class activism vis-à-vis neighborhood public spaces reflects a culture of anxiety generated in the gaps and lapses in official governance. Thus elite-class activism emerges primarily from this anxiety to preserve public spaces in the public realm, be it from state actors or private encroachers.

As in the case of PO Ground, several years could elapse from the time that BDA leases the civic amenity site for development to the time that it is actually developed. While it is vacant, signs declaring the civic amenity site's proposed use are the only sign of BDA control over the space. Thus undeveloped civic amenity sites present easy targets for many forms of appropriations. Some sites become informal playgrounds and sites of conviviality for diverse groups, while others become squatter settlements and yet others quietly disappear into the realm of private property. Local media regularly report stories about misappropriations of civic amenity sites involving local leaders, state politicians, real estate developers and the BDA (Rao, 2011; DHNS, 2011; TNN, 2011; Lakshmikantha, 2012). The following story involving the former Chief Minister of Karnataka illustrates the degree to which malpractices related to public space permeate the governance system (Gowda, 2011):

Scam-scarred Karnataka Chief Minister B. S. Yeddyurappa is found to have allotted a high-value civic amenity (CA) plot in Bangalore to the People's

Education Society (PES), an educational group managed by BJP legislator and educationist M. R. Doreswamy Naidu, for a mere Rs.35 lakh as against the prevailing market price of Rs.15 crore. Naidu is also the trustee of Yeddyurappa's family concern, Prerana Educational Trust, which manages several educational institutions in the Shimoga district... The Karnataka High Court on July 6 issued notices to Yeddyurappa, Naidu, the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA), and two others in connection with the allotment... PES is among the prominent groups that contributed generously to Prerana Educational Trust last year. PES' donation was questioned by the Opposition in the state assembly. Opposition leader Siddaramaiah had alleged that the donations/contributions from the PES were 'kickbacks' for favours received from the government.

In another case, the following excerpt from an online city journal describes official irregularities so common in Bangalore, where BDA's practices vis-à-vis public spaces regularly violate the master plan (Navya, 2011):

The Vidyapeeta ITI layout in Kathriguppe relinquished four parks to BDA as per layout plan sanction regulations. But instead of handing over these parks to BBMP for maintenance, BDA granted two parks to private parties; none of the four sites are parks now. The layout residents have been fighting for proper use of these sites since 1995... In HAL 2nd stage, BDA leased out a CA site of 21,900 sq ft to Indiranagar Social Welfare Trust in 1991. The lease was for 30 years on annual rent of Rs 2, on the condition that the Trust would build educational institutions or small scale industries in the site for the poor. But the site was used only for disposing garbage. A citizens' association in the area petitioned BDA saying that it should give the land to BWSSB to build water supply infrastructure and a park. In 2007 the association alerted BDA about ongoing negotiations to build a commercial complex in the site. BDA took no action. At a conservative estimate the site would cost about Rs 10 cr[ore] now.

As this story illustrates, often residents end up fighting for what they were promised when they purchased land in BDA layouts. A respondent highlights the role of state actors and agencies in spurring private residents to take matters into their own hands, which results in the privatization of public spaces:

Even if the layout is given for maintenance to BBMP, the ownership of CA sites vests with Bangalore Development Authority. Unfortunately they themselves [BDA] did not have the proper records with them. For example, Padmanabhanagar had 18 vacant civic amenity sites... We have a local federation called Abhyudaya. We actually took all the sanctioned plans that form Padmanabhanagar Ward. From the plan we found out that there are 18 CA sites

and we identified those sites out of which about five had been encroached upon by politicians. Nexus between the politician and bureaucrat. Combined they were trying to build up illegal structures and all that. We got most of them demolished. Only one place we have not been successful. Otherwise the four other encroachments were demolished. And now they have been fenced and kept as public parks. We have taken care to see that these are now going to be used for really required civic amenities, not for some private games.

In other areas, public spaces become sites of class politics between middle-class residents and lower-income groups that encroach on vacant public sites. In a layout where squatters occupied the neighborhood civic amenity site, an RWA member describes the emergent issues when two diverse groups clash over public land as follows:

We have lost our park and playground. The whole layout has no park and playground. So we were telling BDA, “Can you make the civic amenities site into a park and playground?” But now with all these tin sheds there, it becomes a conflict between the upper class people wanting a park and playground versus the slum dwellers saying, “We also want a right to stay. We have been living here now for years.” It’s become a conflict now. So this is how conflicts are created by the politicians and vested interests making a racket out of these public spaces... And the slum dwellers do get the protection of the local representatives – because they (the politicians) are getting a rent cut or whatever from them.

This account shows how fights for urban commons turn into use value-based claims as residents’ rights to open space clash with slum dwellers’ rights to shelter. In such cases, middle-class groups that tend to steer clear of electoral politics do not easily gain the support of BBMP or politicians engaging in vote bank politics. This may explain why instead of dealing with local public officials and politicians, “elite RWAs preferred to use their access to the topmost officials in the city” (Kamath & Vijayabaskar, 2009, p.373).

An RWA member describes her association’s interactions with BBMP and BDA regarding encroached civic amenity sites in their neighborhood as follows:

All kinds of underhand dealing. BDA first said, “BBMP has sold those sites. We don’t know anything about it.” And BBMP shows us sale deeds from BDA saying that, “No, we didn’t sell it. BDA has sold it.” And we have been filing application after application under Right to Information [Act]. And always some partial

information is given to us. And we are running from pillar to post – from BDA to BBMP, and BBMP to BDA. Just being shunted. And we had an appeal also--with the BDA Commissioner. And he said that, “Okay, I will make all the documents showing that it was regularized --the sale was regularized. I will send you all the copies.” He never sent it to us. He says, “Yes, it was a CA site. One of them was a CA site but inadvertently somebody sold it. BBMP or somebody sold it, and there is a mansion there. A private residence.” So we questioned it at some point. But when we questioned it, the owners went to the Chief Minister; they use their influence. And the Chief Minister instructed the Urban Development Department to issue a notification asking BDA to regularize the sale... Political pressure is used to regularize all their illegal sales. And all these playgrounds and parks and civic amenities sites just vanish; and a whole lot of money changes hands. And you are left with a layout which has no quality of life.

The various narratives in this subsection highlights the role of politicians, real estate developers and bureaucrats in shaping master planned public spaces. Significantly, middle-class activism against arbitrary governance practices and official malpractices, reveals the limited hold that middle-class residents have on public spaces. The ability of middle-class groups to control planned public spaces emerges as less of a government-protected privilege and more a function of connections with powerful public officials. This is to say government bodies are responsive to middle-class demands, not through routine planning processes but as a result of political or bureaucratic pressure within government agencies. This finding, I argue, challenges the academic position of middle-class residents as privileged consumer-citizen and adds new dimensions to middle-class mobilizations for public facilities. It suggests that government bodies are not necessarily receptive to the demands of civil society when there is a conflict of interests, whereby middle-class residents bring pressure on governmental bodies by other means.

This research finds that propose that elite or middle-class struggles for public space are potentially transformative processes in at least two significant ways. First, in the process of claiming rights of access and control to their public spaces in their own

neighborhoods, residents learn about the master plan and governance processes. Second, by participating in collective action and engaging with government agencies, middle-class actors evolve as vocal political agents. If, as Harvey (2008: 23) suggests, city inhabitants transform themselves by asserting their right “to reshape the processes of urbanization”, then this research finds that elite and middle-class residents transform from passive consumers to active participants in city-building. This entry of middle-class residents into public life with demands of spatial justice, also calls for a recalibration of the *right to the city* concept as a slogan for marginal groups fighting displacement due to official planning policy.

Planned public spaces such as civic amenity sites, parks and playgrounds are located in BDA layouts mainly middle-class and elite families reside. The privileging of middle-class residents in park planning suggests that master-planning guidelines are scripted to privilege residents in the vicinity of the space, though many non-locals also use the parks and playgrounds. Finally, authorized and unauthorized encroachments emerging from negligence and mismanagement by public agencies, have the potential to catalyze neighborhood activism for local public spaces.

If the broad definition of civic amenity sites gives planning agencies flexibility in developing the sites per the neighborhood’s needs, the same flexibility also allows for legal and illegal public land grabs in Bangalore. Local fights for civic amenity sites suggest that neighborhood territorialism and NIMBY-ism are reactions to the master plan’s unfulfilled promises. Arguably, middle-class activism for public spaces has resulted in greater involvement of a generally apathetic section of urban society in the local spatial politics. To understand how middle-class mobilizations look and how they

affect local spatial politics and, thereby, democratic planning, this chapter examines the PO Ground story in the next section.

### **6.3. The PO Ground politics**

This section begins with a description of PO Ground and of its various uses and users. The next subsection provides a detailed account of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents' legal contestations of the Ground against BDA, offering insights into how different conceptualizations of public space contributed to the politics of the civic amenity site. The third subsection discusses the story of PO Ground after the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents won their court case against BDA. Though the residents restored PO Ground to the public realm, they still had limited access to the Ground because an unauthorized cricket academy had occupied half the site. Unable to make BBMP evict the cricket academy, the residents forged ties with a local politician, taking his help to evict the encroachers. The next subsection discusses the dynamics of alliances between elite residents and elected representatives in Bangalore. The final subsection summarizes the findings of the PO Ground story.

#### **6.3.1. Life on PO Ground, 3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala**

The PO Ground is located in a quiet neighborhood with narrow tree-lined streets and large bungalows in 3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala (Figure 6.1). More than two-thirds of the 3-acre rectangular site is open land; the built-out portion contains a post office, low-rise apartment building for postal workers and government stall selling fresh produce. A small Hindu shrine occupies one corner, and a fenced plot that BDA long ago allocated for a vernacular language school occupies the diagonally opposite corner of the site.



There are two small tea stalls on a sidewalk on one side of the Ground. According to a local watchman who has worked there for 17 years, there were other small businesses along that sidewalk that closed after a murder occurred there some years ago.

In addition to the tea stalls, one sees the occasional ice cream or soda vendor doing brisk business on the playground, which is teeming with players of different ages on most days. The Ground has been used as a playground since the 1970s. Users of PO Ground include local residents, children from surrounding lower-income neighborhoods, and young men from different parts of the city.<sup>149</sup> Many of the non-local users come to PO Ground because they do not have playgrounds in their own neighborhoods or because it is large enough to accommodate group sports. Other users include students from a nearby junior college who spend time between or during classes either playing cricket or relaxing on benches around the Ground. Casual visitors rest on the benches beneath trees dotting the Ground's inner periphery.

Today the PO Ground is divided into roughly two equal portions (Figure 6.2). One is an open play area that also has two concrete bleachers, a basketball court and a fenced-off plot that BDA allocated to a private entity called M/S Ananda Trust years ago. The other half was developed into a gated and landscaped park in early 2009. The park and the playground present a study in contrasts, as they serve quite discrete purposes. The gated park consists of landscaped gardens, walking path, playlot, gazebo-like structure and small recreational room for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents. The park is available for public use

---

<sup>149</sup> A long-term resident who grew up next to PO Ground and has played there since he was a child described the users of the Ground thus: "I have seen three types of people come and play there. Fridays – there are techies - they come in the mornings or afternoons. Saturday – kids from Reddy school and other schools come. The Reddy school used to have a ground, when I was a student, but now the school has expanded and built many structures, so they have no open space anymore. On Sundays, the kids from surrounding areas such as the Police Grounds come." (3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala resident, 2010)

for four hours in the morning and four in the evening, whereas the playground area is open all day long. The contrast is the starkest on weekends when multiple teams of players play cricket or football on the playground even as the locked park lies vacant.

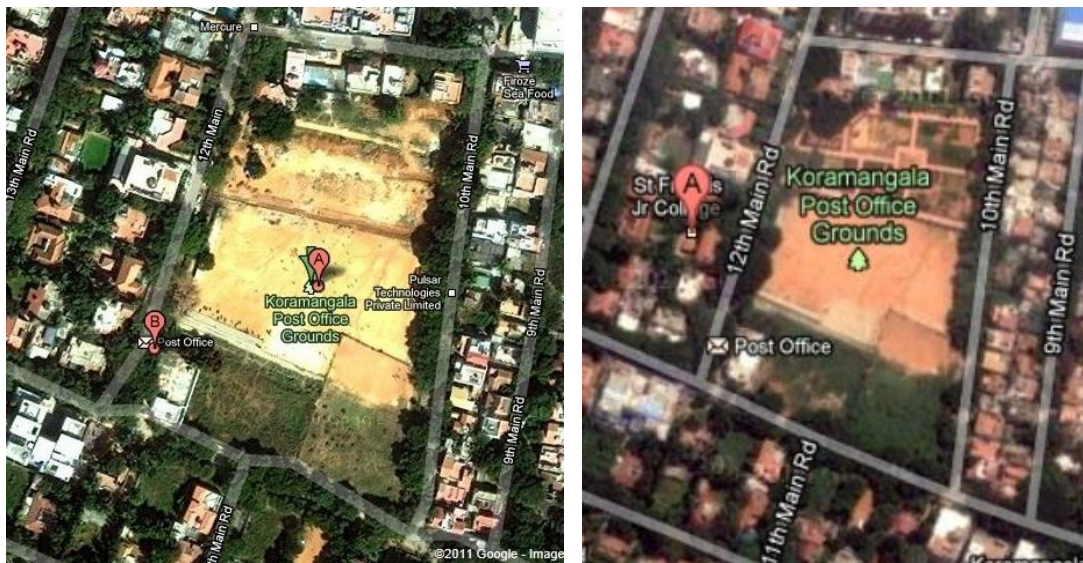


Figure 6.1. PO Ground  
Source of map: Google Maps

There is also considerable difference in the users of the park and playground. Very young children and older people from in and around the neighborhood play, walk or meet socialize in the park. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents converted a small room meant for the park's caretaker into a recreational room with a small library (Pictures 6.18 & 6.19). RWA members and the local MLA meet in the park every Saturday to discuss neighborhood maintenance issues. The playground users comprise a greater proportion of non-local children and adults, all male, from diverse economic and social backgrounds. A resident

who lives in an adjacent block of Koramangala and frequents PO Ground with his sons describes the dynamics of the playground as follows:

Half of the park they converted into a walking path. Thankfully the rest of it is still large enough for everybody to play. We still manage. It is more crowded obviously. We all share. There'll be about 10 games going on at the same time in the evening – on a Saturday or a Sunday. Eight of them are cricket, two football. Something will be going on. Some kids will be biking. It's a ... good representation of what happens in India – we all co-exist, share, help and tolerate. You know for example, I'll be playing with only my two kids in such a ground, but when the ball goes somewhere, what do we say? [He directed this question to his two sons, who had joined in the conversation.] “Ball, ball, ball” and somebody will throw the ball. It's fine. And somebody else's ball comes. So we all kind of share the ground. It is nice. So it's a good thing. Most of the time, poorer kids are playing there. Rich kids are probably playing with their video games, PSPs, and what is that? WIIs. But still, some kids come and we all play. Then there is a big walking path which I do think is successful because it is large and being used.



Before After  
Figure 6.2. PO Ground before and after park (Source: Google Maps)

This account is consistent with respondents' accounts and my own field observations that the PO Ground functions as a public space that diverse groups enjoy with considerable freedom and harmony. The Ground today is the result of two decades of contestations and negotiations that a handful of 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents initiated in the early 1990s. The next section discusses legal contestations for PO Ground wherein local

residents and BDA deployed different notions of public interest in making claims to the civic amenity site.



Picture 6.3. Vending on PO Ground



Picture 6.4: Multiple teams playing cricket

### 6.3.2. BDA allocations and the court case

Sometime in 1991, Mr. Heble, a retired Air Chief Marshall and resident of 3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala who lives opposite PO Ground, and his neighbors noticed some unusual activity on the Ground. BDA staff were demarcating plots on the site. Surprised and concerned with BDA's activity, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents began investigating the legality of BDA's actions. Mr. Heble describes the residents' reaction thus:

Now this area was marked with concrete slabs which showed that it was a playground for public use. But in the corners they put four boards saying "Civic Amenities Site." Now, here there is confusion about the definition of CA Site. When we started enquiring, we found out that the BDA had drawn two lines and divided it into three sites... Before that it was a vast area which was under BDA control. Now though the entire Third Block had been handed over to the Corporation, BDA said that "This is our property and we are going to build on it." So we (3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents) started doing a little research and said, "How can you build here?" When we bought these sites, we were told that this is going to be open land. How can they start allotting it for building purposes? ... So when we did a little bit of research on the whole thing - we got a copy of the CDP and went through it, we found that on the plan issued by the BBMP and approved by the urban development authority [BDA], it was shown as a site for a college. And they were allotting it as a hospital and a school. We went and met various bureaucrats, asking them, "How are you allotting this site? We were told that it is

an open land. And now you are giving to a school?" [The bureaucrats' response was], "No, this is a civic amenities site and it can be covered."



Picture 6.5. BBMP Signboard on the border of PO Ground



Picture 6.6. Civic Amenity Site Signboard on PO Ground



Picture 6.7: Sign in PO Ground park



Picture 6.8: BBMP sign in Kannada in PO Ground

When they found that BDA was splitting the site and leasing it to private allottees, Mr. Heble and a small group of residents from Koramangala filed a public-interest lawsuit against BDA and the allottees in 1992. The petition contested the proposed changes, reading as follows:

The petitioners have contended that, the open space situated in the IIIrd Block, Koramangala, bounded on the East by: 10th Main West by: 12th Main, South by: 3rd Cross, which is identified as C.A. Site No. 39 is a C.A. site earmarked for a public playground; the BDA besides designating the said site as a playground has assured the petitioners and members of the public by erecting the concrete panels on all the four sides on the plot as the plot reserved for play ground; The said

open site No. 39 is being used as playground as specified in the C.D.P.; The BDA without having any regard, either to the provisions of the BDA Act or to the public interest divided the said site into three parts and proposed to allot the CA site No. 39/A for a School and CA Site No. 39/C for an hospital by Notification dated November 21, 1990, and invited the applications from the eligible persons. It is further stated that CA Site No. 39/A is allotted in favor of the 3rd respondent for running a Kannada Medium School and CA Site N0.39/C is allotted in favor of the 4th respondent to establish an eye hospital. It is the contention of the petitioners that Site No. 39 is a playground and in the CDP it is shown as the place reserved for College; the BDA has recognised the said site as a playground by installing concrete panels; The BDA has no right to divert the said site for any purpose other than the one for which it is reserved; The BDA having due regard to the necessity of a public playground in the locality should reserve this area for the public playground as in any locality and public playground is much more than an amenity and, the allotment in favor of respondents 3 and 4 is violative of the scheme and Section 38A of the BDA Act.

As the petition states, the Koramangala residents cited public interest in demanding that PO Ground be restored as a public playground. In seeking the Ground's reconversion, the residents used the following arguments:

- The civic amenity site had been used as a public playground for more than 20 years;
- BDA and BBMP had put up a few signboards that declared the site as playground and other signboards that termed it as a civic amenity site, leading the residents to believe that PO Ground would always remain a playground and lung space;
- There had been a systematic erosion of open spaces and playgrounds in Koramangala in violation of the master plan, and the conversion of PO Ground would further deplete already inadequate lung space, thereby interfering with the residents' quality of life;<sup>xxiii</sup>
- BDA was illegally converting a master planned land use to another land use.<sup>xxiv</sup>

The petitioners argued in court that they had not been consulted regarding suitable land uses for their neighborhood civic amenity site. BDA countered the petitioners' arguments thus:

6. The respondents have denied the contentions of the petitioners. They contend that the site in question is not reserved nor earmarked for playground; the area is designated as semi-public in the Comprehensive Development Plan; It is only a civic amenity site not expressly reserved for playground; The writing on the concrete panels that it is a public playground is not by the BDA but by someone else interested, in order to make it appear that it is reserved for playground; The mere inscription on the concrete panels, for which the BDA is not responsible, would not render the site reserved for playground unless it is specifically reserved either in the scheme or in the layout plan or by any subsequent resolution. It is contended by respondent No. 3 Ananda Education Trust that, the BDA has every right to allot the site reserved for a college for running schools as the objectives of both is to promote and propagate education and educational activities. It is further contended that the petitioners have filed this petition to prevent the 3rd respondent from starting a school even though they have no right and they could not have any objections; That, the petitioners have filed these petitions, not in good faith but to harass them; That they did not have any objections when a nearby CA Site was allotted for the construction of a temple. If the public interest is not suffered by allotment of a civic amenity site for a temple, it is contended by respondent No. 3 that, it is not open for the petitioners to contend that the public interest would be affected if another civic amenity site is allotted for educational activities.<sup>150</sup>

While the residents claimed that the proposed development would harm public interest by affecting their quality of life, BDA officials argued that they were not harming public interest because they were following the master plan. BDA claimed that the PO Ground was a civic amenity site; hence, they could construct any kind of civic amenity there. Yet BDA did not explain how a school, marriage hall and eye hospital fit in the heart of a residential layout, or how they fit with each other. One resident summarized the incompatibility of BDA's proposed land uses as follows:

Look at their [BDA's] thought process. They are talking about a *Kalyana Mantapa* (marriage hall) and next to a school? How can you have a house of learning next to a *Mantapa* ...?

Midway through the legal battles, a resident of 3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala who is a lawyer took over as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents' legal counselor. This lawyer filed a petition arguing

---

<sup>150</sup> Karnataka High Court. 1997. S.G. Heble And Ors. vs Bangalore Development Authority ... on 29 August, 1997. <http://indiankanoon.org/doc/619937/> (Retrieved on 6 June 2012)

that BDA had not met the master plan's provision of open space (parks and playgrounds) in Koramangala and therefore should not convert any more open space to civic amenities.

The court summarized the claims of Mr. Heble and his neighbors as follows:

Whether the Bangalore Development Authority, hereinafter called "the B.D.A." is barred from making the allotment of a C.A. Site specified for a specific purpose, for such purpose, if such CA site is being used by the general public for any purpose other than the one for which it is specified and, whether the B.D.A. is barred from making the allotment of open spaces reserved under the erstwhile C.I.T.B. Act and specified for a specific purpose, for such purpose, in view of Section 16 of the Bangalore Development Authority Act, 1976, hereinafter called the "BDA Act"? (sic) are the questions in controversy in these petitions.<sup>151</sup>

The BDA was operating within the legal planning framework in allotting a *Kalyana Mantapa*, eye hospital, school and college on PO Ground, since these institutions represented public or semipublic land uses. In assessing Mr. Heble's petition, the court used other criteria to evaluate BDA's land use allotments, questioning whether BDA had fulfilled its promises of 15% open space in Koramangala. In 1997, the court ruled in favor of the petitioners and restored most of PO Ground for public use, declaring that BDA's "allotment has deprived the residents of the Koramangala Layout of their right to playgrounds and for ventilation and fresh air."<sup>152</sup> But a condition accompanied the judgment. The judge assured the petitioners of a favorable ruling, provided they refrained from demanding the reconversion of land allocated to the vernacular language school M/S Ananda Trust. Mr. Heble described the out-of-court negotiations as follows:

So in the 2001 judgment they [the High Court cancelled the Deepayan Trust allotment. But for some reason, I believe the judges told the five lawyers (they were called in the chamber), "Don't argue about the school because it is under

---

<sup>151</sup> Karnataka High Court. 1997. S.G. Heble And Ors. vs Bangalore Development Authority ... on 29 August, 1997. <http://indiankanoon.org/doc/619937/> (Retrieved on 6 June 2012)

<sup>152</sup> Karnataka High Court. 1997. S.G. Heble And Ors. vs Bangalore Development Authority ... on 29 August, 1997. <http://indiankanoon.org/doc/619937/> (Retrieved on 6 June 2012)



Ambedkar Trust.”<sup>153</sup> Kannada medium school in the middle of a modern residential area. None of our children will go there... So we said all right because he [the judge] said, “If you agree to that, okay. Otherwise I will give you a judgment [where] you will have to go [to the] Supreme Court and it will cost you a lot of money.” So that’s the sort of arm twisting. So we said, “All right, discretion is the better part. Let’s at least have this and then realign the thing because they had given one strip like this – it would have bifurcated that side into two. So they’ve realigned the playground and given us a contiguous area.

Another resident separately corroborated the judge’s reluctance to engage in a politically volatile situation in the Ananda Trust case:

That piece – Ananda Trust - apparently when this judgment was given that this [PO Ground] should be left open, the judge apparently said that belongs to some SC/ST organization [and he said] “We can’t get involved. As long as you guys agree to leave that alone, I will pass a judgment on this land in your favor.” To which people agreed. That’s why it is lying like that.



Picture 6.9 & 6.10. Land allocated to M/S Ananda Trust for the vernacular language school, which is still under litigation

---

<sup>153</sup> An elaborate discussion on dalit politics is beyond the scope of this chapter. I discuss *dalit* politics in the fourth chapter that studies the struggles of the KR Road bamboo weavers. The late Dr.B.R.Ambedkar who was Independent India’s first law minister and author of the country’s Constitution, was and remains an iconic figure in *dalit* activism and politics in India. Born as a Hindu, he converted to Buddhism as a rejection of oppressive Hindu casteism. It is very common for *dalit* organizations to adopt Dr.Ambedkar’s name in their titles – to indicate their religious and political orientation. The traditional Indian caste system placed *dalits* in the lowermost position in the social rung and prevented them from enjoying the social and economic life to the other higher ranking castes. The Indian Constitution provides protection and privileges to *dalit* groups in the form of reservations in order to bring them on par with traditionally privileged castes in the country. If the Constitution provides blanket protection to *dalit* groups on paper, irrespective of the financial or occupational distinctions within the *dalit* communities, planning policies have been less mindful of the economic rights of lower income *dalit* communities.

My fieldwork shows that both private and public entities are reluctant to antagonize organized minority groups, and they avoid becoming embroiled in caste politics, an integral aspect of Indian electoral politics. The M/S Ananda Trust incident provides a glimpse of the backroom politics that influences ostensibly rational decisions made in public courtrooms and planning offices. It also highlights how BDA's non-transparent management of civic amenity sites creates opportunities for official manipulations of land and communities.

Mr. Heble and his neighbors' assertion that a vernacular language school has no place in a cosmopolitan suburb reflect elitist and exclusionary claims that contradict their official contentions of protecting PO Ground for the public interest.<sup>154</sup> Still, BDA's failure to provide a sound rationale and publicize the changes to PO Ground raises the question of whose interest the agency is serving. Though BDA's stated purpose was to develop a master plan to serve the public interest, the agency's functioning revealed a subordination to private and political interests. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents' and Ananda Trust's claims to the plot on PO Ground were claims reflecting a narrow public interest but the SC/ST organization's claims were unassailable as they could rely on vote bank politics and allegations of casteism against courts and governing agencies.

The other issue is the efficacy of a parastatal agency with limited engagement with local governance in Bangalore controlling over 10% of public land. That some residents

---

<sup>154</sup> Another resident (2010) said this about the proposed school: "And just imagine – in a city like Bangalore, how many people are going to an Indian medium school? Like the Kannada medium School or a Hindi medium School? Very few. Most of the parents are sending to the posh schools, OK? Only these people coming from the outside – these labor class and all, they only prefer to go to the local medium school."

view BDA's control over civic amenity sites as an impediment to democratic management of public land is reflected in this Koramangala resident's words:

Now ... the ruling party who so ever it is, takes charge of the government and are mainly concerned with making quick bucks, somehow or the other. The main way of making it is real estate. So they have got all their eyes on all real estate. For example, this particular ground, I understand, everybody was trying to capture part of it. This plot, this plot, this plot. (He pointed towards parts of PO Ground). They wanted to make plots... All the ministers, people connected to the ministers, by bringing some fake [documents]. Like one plot you can see at the corner there, it is still not under our control... [The plot is] not under BBMP control because it has been given by the authorities to some association to run a Kannada medium school which will never come into existence... It is existing only in paper, nothing else.

These claims of one individual and cannot be corroborated by hard data, but from various accounts I heard during my fieldwork, the scenario described above is a common story across the city. This recent media report endorses the entrenchment of political interests in local planning processes in another case of SC/ST politics (Navya, 2013):

... BDA has helped select groups benefit, to the tune of crores of rupees. This is the same BDA which makes the general public wait for decades for a site. Those who illegally benefited include religious and educational trusts to media houses... One glaring example is that of Siddharth Vihara Trust, whose Founder-Chairman is Mallikarjun Kharge, Union Minister for Labour and Employment. The Trust was leased prime land - a 8125 sq m CA site in Banashankari 6th stage - to start an educational institution... The trust had to pay Rs 2.03 cr as lease amount (for a 30-year-lease), but it asked for concession on grounds that it was managed by SC/ST members. BDA Commissioner at the time, Bharat Lal Meena, agreed, and halved the payment... Actually concession could have been given only if the Trust works exclusively for SC/ST community, and not because it is managed by SC/ST members. Besides, the concession was given to the Trust even before government brought in this provision. BDA lost over Rs 1 cr in this case.

As BDA functions under the control of ministers and bureaucrats, elite groups find their ability to influence BDA officials as limited and unproductive compared to their access to BBMP, which is run by locally elected representatives. This finding suggests that recent academic work overestimates elite groups' influence in higher circles of

governance in post-liberalization Indian cities. It also raises the question of the manner in which elite groups such as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents engage with public agencies.

According to the residents, previous corporators did not show any interest in interacting with them or addressing their issues. As one long-term Koramangala resident put it:

[For] 20 years we have faced step-motherly treatment. We were not able to meet the elected body. We did not know where he stayed. He was not meeting us and we were not meeting him. It was a big constituency... The MLA could have kept his local constituency here [but he did not]. Even the corporator [before Mr. Reddy] was not an educated fellow.<sup>155</sup> He was a carpenter who was elected. So he didn't know how to develop the area. He didn't know what was development. We found it hard to meet him. He never came to this locality; he was concentrating on his vote bank.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents' first line of action supports existing research that shows that elite groups prefer to approach high-level city officials. Mr. Heble said that his position as a senior ex-serviceman opened many doors to him that would not be accessible to other people.<sup>156</sup> However, as the residents found, high-ranking officials and politicians faced at least two challenges in pushing their case forward. First, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents had taken the case to court, and lawsuits tend to unfold at their own pace. Second, as Mr. Heble observed, bureaucrats heading parastatal agencies are "birds of passage" whose job tenure lasts for only two years before they move to another agency. Another resident surmised that it was the subordinate officer with a permanent posting in BDA that

---

<sup>155</sup> The connection between education and the ability of people's representatives to efficiently undertake their responsibilities is a topic of hot debate among middle-class associations/groups in Bangalore, which they discuss quite animatedly on email list serves and online blogs.

<sup>156</sup> In their study of middle-class RWAs in Bangalore, Kamath and Vijayabaskar (2009:373) observe, "...elite RWA activists preferred to use their access to the topmost officials in the city, in keeping with claims made by scholars in the context of Delhi and Mumbai (Harriss 2005; Zérah 2007) regarding privileged access of upper/middle-class associations to the administration. The elites tend to draw upon privileged social networks based on a common socio-economic background and the use of English language communication. At least two informants reported playing golf regularly with the excorporation commissioner. Another was a retired top official from the police force who categorically stated that bureaucrats would not fail to heed his call as he knew exactly "how to make them work". Good access to bureaucrats was no doubt made easier by the many senior retired bureaucrats and public sector professionals in top associational positions in elite RWAs."

“becomes the pen-pusher” and controls the daily pace of work in the agency. Therefore, despite their high-level connections, the 3rd Block residents were not exempt from the daily grind of interacting with BDA officials or *babus*.<sup>157</sup> Mr. Heble (H) and his neighbor (V) described their interactions with BDA officials in getting details about PO Ground as follows:

V: And it’s an uphill task *yaar*.<sup>158</sup> For example you fight these things with only correct information. And to get the information, [we made] twenty trips [to BDA].

H: What twenty [trips]? Fifty trips.

V: And you are talking about a distance of 12 km [to BDA]. And you are talking a good portion of the day going and waiting – the fellow will make you wait.

Basically these government guys have a time-tested thing. They wear you out.

And they’ve always been successful. Either they will give you irrelevant data – irrelevant information or wear you out. They say, “Sir, I will just bring it. Please be seated.”

H: Yeah, they’ll give you all sorts of excuses.

V: Then finally it would become so bad we said we are not leaving. And we became smart. Whenever we wanted some critical information, we would go there around 4 o’clock. We know that until 5.30 pm these guys push off home. So we say, ‘We won’t go until you get it.’ So, reluctantly one bit will come out. And ... you don’t even have a place to [sit and] read that [in BDA]. You must visit the BDA. It’s such a rotten institution.

H: You see, unless money changes hands, nothing moves there.

V: Everything is money.

H: And I for one have just come out of the Services. I said I am not going to bribe anyone. Either you give it or ... So I had to use influence or pressure from various bureaucrats whom *I* had known. I had just retired. With that I managed to get [work done], but even with that I had to do so many tricks.

V: It’s because - you know what? ... You are delegating work, no? And this delegation, when it comes to the junior level thing, those guys suffer from inertia, *yaar*. They just will not move. And you recollect the earlier point he (Heble) made – Commissioners come and go, but these bandicoots go on forever.

Practically. They retire from the place. First, they exactly know where the records are. For money or for their political masters, they will get all the information. But if a common man goes, he has to work against the entire system.

---

<sup>157</sup> Indian term for government officials.

<sup>158</sup> Casual term in Hindi for “friend”.

For their part, senior BDA officials feel that people misuse the Right to Information (RTI) process to blackmail and harass public officials.<sup>159</sup> As one official put it, “People keep asking us for old records. We do not have old records. After 10-15 years, nobody has an idea of where the people who made the records have gone or the records themselves.” Another official said, “Whenever a new Commissioner comes, he changes the system. Files get shuffled.” Yet another official said:

When a person is not from a specific area, why should he want information about that area? What for is that information required? That person never says why he needs the information. Especially during the tendering processes – that is when RTI starts getting filed.

While the officials’ statements reveal glaring problems in BDA’s work culture, they also point to the pressures, hurdles and disincentives that BDA staff face in their work. A Koramangala resident who is active in civic affairs had a different opinion about some BDA officials he encountered during his work:

Remember that these people (government officials) are different when confronted with citizens who are not [asking], “Please, please, how, how [to get the information]?” and [asking], “How much money should I give it?” [When] they are confronted by a slightly different texture of citizens up there, they are very different people. And in that whole woodwork of what we call the bureaucracy, pearls come out. There are pearls of great people who say, “Yeah, I don’t know why the delay is. Let’s do it today.”... There are some gems who are just waiting for opportunities to do the right thing. And [they] have been cowed down under the weight of bureaucracy and political pressure, etc., etc. to do everything the wrong way. And when they get the opportunity to do things the right way and they feel that the wind is along those lines, they’ll come fully with you. We’ve found enough people like that.

Similarly, a senior government official noted that, “Some [officials] have their heart in the right place [and] they get a boost by people’s activities and support.” From such

---

<sup>159</sup> The PO Ground case took place well before the RTI Act was implemented in 2005. Still, what the BDA officials had to say about BDA’s sharing of information with applicants applies to the PO Ground case as well.

statements, we can infer that people within and outside public institutions view sincerity and efficiency in public officials as personal attributes of a few officials, rather than being part of the work culture of their institutions. Here the respondents see motivation in public officials as a function of society-state engagement where the “boundary between the state and society, therefore is not only unclear; it is fluid and negotiable according to social context and position” (Benei & Fuller, 2001, p.14).<sup>160</sup>

If “social context and position” contribute to society-state interactions, so does the more mundane issue of who possesses the wherewithal to engage in lengthy, expensive legal processes or to pursue elusive government officials. Mr. Heble’s exertions in pursuing BDA officials and the court case suggest that people with means are more likely to spend time fighting for public resources.<sup>xxv</sup> One respondent echoed a common opinion that malpractice in governance occurs partly because so few people can afford to challenge it:

The layman cannot afford that money. So the government knows that the layman cannot file a case and win. So, whatever atrocities they do, they get away with it because of this. So, the moment you fight the case and you have the money to fight it [and] win it, then you have an advantage.

A former RWA leader who entered politics explained why she thought that the city’s elite class had the potential to be effective leaders in civic activism:

I believe the people who are wealthy are the people who should be able to make the difference - because they have the time, the energy and the money to do this. It is people like you and me who need to take up cudgels, because I can afford to lose a half a day of work. Because I have an income and I will not lose my food for the day. *Roti, kapda aur makaan* (Hindi terms meaning “food, clothing and

---

<sup>160</sup> As this research finds too, Benei & Fuller (2001:14) find that, “The state is not a discrete, monolithic entity ‘acting’ impersonally above or outside society. Rather, the *sarkar* – indifferently ‘state’ and ‘government’ in the commonest Indian vernacular term for them – appears on many levels and in many centres, and its lower echelons at least are staffed by people with whom some kind of social relationship can or could exist; the ‘faceless bureaucrats’ actually do have faces. The boundary between the state and society, therefore is not only unclear; it is fluid and negotiable according to social context and position.”

shelter”) is already there for me. So I still believe that it is the elite which has to wake up to make the difference to the country, though one will always turn around and say that the *aam aadmi* (Hindi term for “ordinary man”) must do that.

My fieldwork shows that in entering disputes with local bodies, not many elite-class residents view themselves as social crusaders working for the greater good of society. Many of my respondents said that they were in the fight for their own benefit. But they definitely feel more qualified (and perhaps entitled) to undertake the job than ordinary people with limited time and money. Often the job extended to “educating” elected representatives and municipal officials about how to execute public works to benefit the most vocal group.<sup>xxvi</sup> Yet the politician strikes a pragmatic note in her observation that elite-class people are better equipped to pursue issues and pressure public functionaries.

In terms of resources, Mr. Heble and his neighbors represent the upper crust of Bangalore society. Many 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents are either businesspeople or retirees from high-ranking government or corporate positions. The Hebles are neighbors to Nandan Nilekani, then Chairman of the IT company Infosys, and Rajeev Chandrasekhar, an MP from the ruling BJP Party.<sup>161</sup> Incidentally, Nilekani was a prominent member of the ex-officio advisory committee Bangalore Agenda Task Force (BATF) that then Chief Minister of Karnataka, SM Krishna, appointed in 1999. BATF’s goal was to “consider the ways and means to upgrade Bangalore’s infrastructure and systems, raise resources for its development and secure greater involvement of citizens, corporations, industry and institutions in the orderly development of the city with enhanced quality of life of its residents” (Ghosh, 2005).<sup>xxvii</sup>

---

<sup>161</sup> Member of Parliament.



BATF became defunct in 2004 with the departure of S.M. Krishna's government and had limited success in achieving its goals. But during its brief tenure, BATF had the support of elite and middle-class associations who saw it as a platform for practicing good governance without having to deal with the messiness in local politics. Mr. Heble spoke with Nilekani, among other influential 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents regarding his struggles with government agencies, but the BATF member had no role in the final outcome for PO Ground.<sup>xxviii</sup> Despite their influential contacts, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents finally got their gated, orderly park only by engaging with the local politician.

Once PO Ground came under BBMP's jurisdiction, the MLA, being a local elected representative, could use his official powers to make decisions about the site. That PO Ground was malleable to the various forces acting on and claiming access to it, make it a democratic space. Yet the politics shaping the site underline Massey's (2005:152) assertion that, "From the greatest public square to the smallest public park these places are a product of, and internally dislocated by, heterogeneous and sometimes conflicting social identities/relations."

If the residents' social and economic status gave them a natural advantage in terms of access to individuals in powerful positions, so did their ability to invest time and effort in prolonged fights for quality-of-life issues. It is no coincidence that elite and middle-class male retirees are among the most active champions of neighborhood activism in Bangalore and other Indian cities.<sup>xxix</sup> Such residents are less likely to be cowed by lower-ranking officials in government offices. They are less likely to hesitate to use pressure tactics to persuade lower-ranking officials to fall in line with what they see as their

legitimate demands.<sup>xxx</sup> One 3<sup>rd</sup> Block resident illustrates this point in his description of a visit to the BBMP Chief Engineer's office for information on PO Ground:

The problem is they don't do anything, because till now they got away with doing just about anything. Because there is nobody to question. No large groups of people to question... So that day we sat in his office and said, "Look, that's the letter we have – that six of us have sent." And we said, "Show us the rest of the documents." He said, "I am not showing you [the documents]." There were 3-4 women in the room – we were 10 of us. So we actually went and locked this guy's door from the inside. We put a chair and asked an old lady who's about 70 to go sit near the door, and said, "You are not going home and we are not going home unless you give us the documents." And in about an hour, we had them photocopied and in our hands. That's when we knew all the nonsense that was going on. Till then, he was not going to part with any information.

Elite groups like the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents may have the means to get involved in local spatial politics, but what motivates them to do so? After all, court cases require money, time and dedication, and despite their privileged positions, retired government officials like Mr. Heble are "not at the peak of their earning," according to one respondent (Mani 2010). Also, according to neighbors, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents did not use the Ground as much as younger residents being more inclined to exercise at a sports club or golf course. Yet the elderly Mr. Heble and a handful of other residents got involved in a long court battle and even continued to fight after the verdict, in their bid to gain control over PO Ground.

Though the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents fought for PO Ground in terms of a general public interest, their claims were "actually just competing private claims to define the public interest" (Chandavarkar, 2009).<sup>162</sup> The residents were anxious to protect their private property value and the quality of life Bangalore's master plan promised them.<sup>xxxi</sup> Safety

---

<sup>162</sup> Zérah (2007: 67) makes a similar observation about civic activism in Mumbai where she finds that, "... contrary to their claims of defending the public good and general interest, neighborhood associations emerge as an interest group mobilized on an apparently exclusive vision of the city"

concerns also played a role in the residents' desire to secure non-private spaces in their locality against unwelcome users. A respondent described how unpoliced public spaces made neighborhood residents feel insecure:

And there are some good reasons that are often given for why there needs to be certain kind of policing of the space (PO Ground). I don't want to pretend that all of the objections brought about by the residents are always without merit. Because quite often in the evenings, it becomes a place where people congregate and drink [and] have fights - as in any kind of open space these things can happen. And there's virtually no policing. Sometimes elderly people living alone feel justifiably concerned for their safety. But quite often their justifiable concerns get resolved in a NIMBY way. Not in my backyard way, you know. Then you have things that were truly public spaces being converted into something else that is being called a public space but is not a public space in quite the same way.

The uncertainties and dangers associated with life in public space motivate neighborhood residents to secure their open spaces through policing and regulations. However, blanket rules and regulations often interfere with other groups' access to parks and playgrounds for "safe" recreational practices. A respondent from a neighboring block ascribed the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents' actions to a prevalent culture of intolerance in Koramangala and other elite neighborhoods:

Whenever the local residents don't like (children and outsiders playing), they approach the political people here and they get these parks converted to how they want it.

Scholarly accounts and my own interviews portray the efforts of residents of Koramangala and in general, elite groups, to police public spaces as elitist, exclusionary, and reflecting narrow notions of public interest. Yet there is nothing unreasonable in wanting safe, crime-free public spaces where young children and senior citizens could exercise without the threat of flying balls and speeding bicycles. It is also difficult to question residents' efforts to secure parks and playgrounds from drunken brawls and unexpected dangers. Furthermore, parks and playgrounds that facilitate healthy lifestyles

and social life are essential aspects of urban life. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents' claims were exclusionary because, in asking for a park, they were not considering the users of the playground, or that there was no such playground in surrounding lower income neighborhoods.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents' claims to PO Ground went beyond formal citizenship and private property ownership. They were holding the master plan to its promise of lung space and asserting their use value to the site. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents' prolonged efforts to restore PO Ground to the public realm resemble *right to the city* struggles where residents protest displacement from spaces of everyday use. However, what transpired in the PO Ground story after the court verdict shows that struggles against displacement are not the same as struggles for inclusive spatial planning (Purcell, 2002). The elite 3<sup>rd</sup> Block group sought inclusivity for themselves and their neighbors with similar socioeconomic backgrounds, but not for other groups. After the court victory, motivated by territorialism and anxiety fuelled by the changing master plan, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents wanted BBMP to convert the Ground into a gated park. Their actions opened unexpected possibilities for a more inclusive resolution. The following section discusses the next phase of the story, when fights for PO Ground shifted from behind BDA's closed doors to the site itself.

### **6.3.3. The Cricket Camp and the MLA**

After the court victory in 2001, the court cancelled BDA's allotments and restored PO Ground as a playground. Since it was no longer a civic amenity site, BDA transferred it to the municipal authority BBMP for development and maintenance. However, this did not occur until 2005, and despite the court verdict, which one respondent termed the

residents' *Brahmastra* against future BDA encroachments, the PO Ground Park was not developed until 2010.<sup>163</sup> The delays were partly due to conflicts between BDA and BBMP and partly due to the encroachment of a private cricket coaching camp on the Ground.



Pictures 6.11 & 6.12. Bleachers in the playground

Two Koramangala residents and their associate, a cricket coach, occupied one half of PO Ground in the mid-1990s to run a cricket coaching camp. Regardless of their private motivations, the men claimed to be running a charitable coaching facility for underprivileged children. The camp was based on a cross-subsidy model where well-to-do students paid fees and poor students did not. 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents say that the men gained access to the Ground with BBMP's compliance as one of the proprietors was related to the BBMP Commissioner. Residents believe that even during the time that BDA managed the Ground, there were informal monetary transactions between the camp proprietors and BBMP officials. A resident explained:

So he (one of the camp proprietors) got this land on a letter [from BBMP] saying that, "You can use it for playing cricket. [A letter from the Municipal] Corporation, saying that, "We give you permission to play cricket." Now the letter he misused to say that the ground has been allotted to him by the BBMP. So

---

<sup>163</sup> In Hindu mythology, the *Brahmastra* is a deadly weapon that never misses its target on the battlefield.

he took control over the [Ground]... So the letter was with him, so nobody's going to ask him, "Show the letter, *nah*? So BBMP has given me this space. [He said], "If you have any doubts, go and talk to the Commissioner." Commissioner was a relative. So he used to take over the ground. Suppose these children want to have a cricket match, he will say, "No, you cannot play here, this is my ground."... Every day he would be here. Mornings and evenings he will come. And if they want to play, he will say, "Okay, I will allow you to play but you have to pay me Rs.2000 for the day usage of the ground." So he used to collect money from them. So he was running his academy on public ground, making money from the academy, and if somebody else wants to use – corporate ones have a picnic or a party or a school day, he will collect 2000-2500 from that also. So it was a very convenient situation for him. He was making Rs.25000 just like that... The idea was [that] over a period of time, say 10 years, 15 years he will lay stake to this place and one fine day he will say, "This is my property."

These predictions for the transition of PO Ground from public to private ownership are not entirely unfounded, given the developmental trajectories of civic amenity sites in Bangalore. One of the proprietors also cited Bangalore's disappearing public playgrounds as a justification for using PO Ground:

So many playgrounds - everything is given away to builders. I will tell you about this (PO Ground) park. I thought I will meet you over there [in the park, for this interview]. But it's locked. So, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. it is locked. You know what all our parks in Koramangala have become? For children under 6 and for adults over 66. So even if an adult like me [and my friend here] who are fortunately in good health, we want to blow steam and play something, we can't.

The camp proprietors viewed PO Ground as a public space where diversity in economic and social status was accepted in true sportsmanship spirit. However their own tolerance did not extend to people living around the Ground. In their perspective, the elite 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents did not need PO Ground since they could afford to exercise in clubs or gymnasiums. Hence the proprietors termed the residents' efforts to dislodge them as a "class war" against children from lower-income neighborhoods. Some neighbors and BBMP officials also corroborated with this idea that property-owners around the Ground did not like outsiders playing noisy games there.<sup>xxxii</sup> Indeed, Mrs. Heble's collection of

cricket balls that flew everyday into her property testified to the daily discomfort to her household because of the cricket practice.

The residents around PO Ground were concerned because they felt that the cricket camp disturbed their neighborhood's peace and restricted their access to the Ground.<sup>xxxiii</sup> They could tolerate youth from other areas temporarily occupying the Ground, but the cricket camp was set to become a permanent fixture.<sup>xxxiv</sup> The camp proprietors continued to make incremental additions to the Ground, including a storage shack, practice nets and cricket pitches. In 2006, BBMP built concrete bleachers on one end of the Ground, ostensibly at the cricket proprietors' request. The residents expected these developments to lead to an eventual private takeover of PO Ground and again deprive them of their park, despite the court verdict. A tug-of-war ensued as the residents and camp proprietors used their connections with bureaucrats and politicians to pressure BDA and BBMP to develop the Ground to fit their own requirements.<sup>xxxv</sup> Though both parties made claims to the Ground as public space, their claims reflected narrow visions of public interest. The residents wanted their park, and the camp proprietors wanted their cricket pitches.

In a parallel development, in the year 2008, an aspiring MLA named Ramalinga Reddy approached Koramangala residents for votes since he was running for office in a bid to become their representative in local Assembly elections. Mr. Reddy belonged to the Congress party, the main rival to the BJP party governing the state at the time. The term of BBMP's previous Council of locally elected corporators or councilors had ended in 2006, but due to delays caused by the redrawing of ward boundaries, BBMP did not hold municipal elections again until the year 2010. Therefore Bangalore did not have an elected Municipal Council for nearly four years. During this period, local MLAs who

represented the higher tier of elected public representatives took the place of corporators in Bangalore. Thus Mr. Reddy became an important actor in the PO Ground story. In the process of campaigning, Mr. Reddy developed a rapport with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents and promised them their park if they voted him to power. He won the election in 2008, reportedly with the help of the elite residents of Koramangala.<sup>164</sup> After he won the elections, he delivered on his promise.

BBMP developed half of PO Ground as a park in the early months of 2010. Before that, the cricket camp continued until mid-2009, notwithstanding the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents' persistent efforts to evict the camp proprietors. Matters came to a head in August 2009 when BBMP started laying more cricket pitches at the request of the camp proprietors. A respondent described an incident that took place on 15 August (India's Independence Day) as follows:

And finally the last straw happened – we were again putting pressure on the BBMP to evict this fellow. And it wouldn't happen, *yaar*. Because he [the camp proprietor] came up with saying, "I am teaching poor children," and all that. And the MLA was also a bit [circumspect] because he did not want to rock the boat. No politician likes to rock the boat. He wants everything calm. He said, "No, no, I will do it" and he kept saying [that]... We meet him early in the morning before he starts his day. We tell him we are coming, and we go and meet him. He says, "Nothing will happen. I will do it. But just wait. You should have patience." We come back and we get a call [from the Hebles] that bulldozers are coming and putting permanent pitches there. And we told the MLA. We said, "Sir, but you said nothing is going to happen. He's got enough materials to build. And he is already going ahead with his bulldozers and diggers to make pitches." Now what we did is, we consulted among ourselves and made a police complaint. Because this is basically a public property, right? So, when an individual does it, he is basically damaging public property. So the cops also came... So when this happened, many of the residents started coming up, "Hey, this guy is doing something wrong. We can't keep quiet." And then this was happening, where he was systematically trying to take over the whole place. And the earth-moving equipment also came in. So that day, the MLA jumped into the fray. He told that fellow to clear out, "Otherwise, I'll break your bones"... He (the MLA) brought a lot of people. Three of us were there. But you see ... the engineers are hesitant

---

<sup>164</sup> All the respondents felt that the MLA came into power because of their support.



because the Commissioner was still there and he wasn't allowing anything to happen... The previous Executive Engineer ... he was hesitant because he was getting threatened from all fronts... We ensured that when the things had reached this level, we asked the BBMP to clear all that. They came and stopped the lorry here. Wouldn't come ahead ... They wouldn't move up. Then we sort of took him aside. I took that fellow's cell phone [and] told him, "Don't worry. I will just switch it off now. Don't pick up any calls. Please do this [demolition]. Afterwards, you can tell them what you have done." And because there were some 100 people from our side, that guy had to come and do it. And because the MLA got into it. After that things started happening. He said, "I will get you grants for this." And he got us grants. And the irony is we had prepared ourselves to go into one more litigation, okay? This MLA comes and says, "Yes, the boundary is going to here." And the park just happened. Otherwise if we had gone into litigation, [we would have] still been fighting it.

Despite all the political backing and high-level contacts on both sides, the residents could evict the cricket academy only by using of strong-arm tactics. Like the incident where 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents held the BBMP official hostage, the cricket camp eviction demonstrates that when pushed far enough, even civil society can resort to acts of incivility. In the past, elite groups were reluctant to engage in placard-holding public protests, but recent cases of activism against infrastructure projects in middle-class neighborhoods reveal an increased show of support from elite classes.

Urban elites are motivated to engage in local spatial contestations in order to protect their quality of life. It is noteworthy that despite their high-level connections, they have limited ability to influence state governance policy and will take to the streets if need be, in addition to phoning their high-level contacts. As the PO Ground case illustrates, alliances with local politicians looking to consolidate their position with the growing middle-class and elite urban population provide opportunities for mutually beneficial arrangements.

While he fulfilled his promise to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents, the MLA also displayed political savvy in appeasing other users of the Ground. For instance, he helped the

residents get their park only after they registered as an RWA in 2009, since an RWA is a collective interest that has greater official legitimacy than individual claims to public resources. Also, it was common knowledge that children from lower-income areas came to PO Ground because they had nowhere else to play.<sup>xxxvi</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents know this, but they have not ceased their efforts to cement their own tenuous hold on the space. This is reflected in their future plans to develop basketball courts and skating rinks on the playground space and in the inscription they planned for the commemorative stone in the public park:<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Our grateful thanks to Shri.Ramalinga Reddy, MLA for this wonderful park from the 3rd Block Residents Welfare Association.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

Similarly, BBMP officials knew that many other people used PO Ground, yet they acceded to the demands of the most vocal group - the newly formed 3<sup>rd</sup> Block RWA. Mr.Heble and his neighbors who around the Ground sought Mr.Reddy's support in developing it entirely as a park. But the MLA refused because he did not want to publicly take sides with any one group or lobby. After much negotiation about the park/playground proportions, the MLA split PO Ground in the way he considered appropriate. One respondent succinctly described the MLA's resolution of the PO Ground struggles thus:

He's wonderfully managed to give the NIMBYs their NIMBY park and also keep part of it as a playground for ordinary children. That is, I guess the work of the politician – to balance the different needs of his constituency.

The MLA's solution was to divide PO Ground in the middle (Pictures 6.13-16). The Post Office, postal quarters, BBMP bleachers and disputed land allocated to Ananda Trust are on the playground side. Other than the little Hindu shrine in the corner, the park space is free of encroachments and authorized allotments. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Block RWA kept up

constant interactions with BBMP officials to develop the park by fencing, landscaping, building pathways and installing park furniture in the space (Pictures 6.17 & 6.18). The park is gated and open in the morning and evening. It is locked during the afternoon hours. At the time that I was conducting fieldwork, Mrs.Heble had the key to the park gate since it was under construction and BBMP had not yet appointed a caretaker.



Picture 6.13. BBMP signboard in PO Ground park detailing rules for park users



Picture 6.14. The local corporator inaugurates PO Ground Park as 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents look on, April 2010



Pictures 6.15 & 6.16. PO Ground on either side of the fence, December 2011

Once the park was completed, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents converted the caretaker's room into a library for their use (Pictures 6.19 & 6.20). That the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents could make all these modifications with BBMP's cooperation, reflects more on the MLA's influence within BBMP than the municipal agency's initiative in developing the park. On the other

side of the fence, life goes on as different groups continue to play different sports, lounging and talking on the benches and bleachers (Pictures 6.21 & 6.22). Thus the divided PO Ground is visual testimony of the politics of spatial planning as it reveals how public agencies and functionaries respond to different social groups.



Picture 6.17. 3<sup>rd</sup> Block RWA's board on the park gate



Picture 6.18. Park furniture



Picture 6.19. The small clubhouse within the park



Picture 6.20. Library in the clubhouse

#### 6.3.4. The MLA and 3<sup>rd</sup> Block Residents

The local MLA Mr. Reddy played an important role in resolving the PO Ground contestations. He divided the Ground to benefit all users, earning the good will and votes of Koramangala's elite residents in the process. For their part, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents organized as an RWA and became proactive in their neighborhood governance issues. On

the face of it, these developments appear to be local park politics where influential elite residents got their way. But they got the park by also engaging in vote bank politics, contradicting scholarship that finds a mutual disengagement between elite residents and politicians in Indian cities. This subsection discusses the engagement of the 3rd Block residents and Mr. Reddy in the PO Ground case.



Pictures 6.21 & 6.22. Interactions across the fence between the park and playground

Elected representatives have always been an important link between city residents and government in Indian cities. In his ethnographic study of councilors in New Delhi, Oldenburg (1974: 73) characterizes the relationship between citizen and elected representative as follows:

In the ward, the councilor is the pivotal person in council-citizen interaction. It is at this level that the citizen has the greatest access to the governmental process, but largely because the councilor brings the government to the citizen in the form of himself and ward-level administrators, on regular “rounds” of the constituency. The “round group” has a structure of deference patterns and implied authority, and the relations between councilor and citizen are complex, consisting of mutual deference, mixed formality and informality, etc.

As Oldenburg suggests, terms of engagement between the politician and resident are complex. The councilor-constituent relationship is a symbiotic one based on electoral demands and promises vis-à-vis Ward-level quality-of-life issues. Existing scholarship in

Indian cities suggests that elite residents have tended to steer clear of local politicians and officials, instead relying on connections with high-level politicians and bureaucrats (Kamath & Vijayabaskar, 2009). Arguably, the factors contributing to this preference include elite society's access to high-level contacts, ideological differences, and a lack of faith in local councilors. This lack of faith is reflected in the way members of RWAs and CSOs in Bangalore talk about elected representatives:

Respondent One

Even the corporator was not an educated fellow. He was a carpenter who was elected. So he didn't know how to develop the area – he didn't what was development. We found it hard to meet him. He never came to this locality; he was concentrating on his vote bank.

Respondent Two

The tragedy here is because political parties are not mentioned in our Constitution, all our elected representatives - they stand on a platform of a political party to get elected. And once they become elected, they are all mercenaries. To give you an example, our last MLA had been our MLA for what, 8 years? And we saw him once - in this house when Major called him and told him off for not doing anything in this area. That was the last time I saw him, and that was it.

Respondent Three

When the councilors were there, the biggest problem was they were not that educated. They couldn't see. And ego issue comes. If we put it to them, "This is the program. Push this. Take this. You ask us whenever you want. We are there to support you, give you the figures [and] give you the information required for it. Do it." For reasons best known to him, we could not get things [done] properly.

Three aspects of these comments are particularly relevant to the current discussion.

First, many individuals within elite and middle-class groups do not think that local leaders are qualified to do their jobs, in terms of either education or job experience.

Second, many believe that elected representatives' loyalty rests primarily with their constituents in lower-income neighborhoods. Third, the elite residents do not consider councilors as their peers due to perceived differences in social background, political

ideology and work ethic, among other factors. Hence, elite residents tend to feel superior to their elected representatives and adopt a superior tone when engaging with them. This tendency is exemplified in an RWA president's account of coaching a councilor after a Ward level participatory budgeting exercise:

*Arrey, he (councilor) is the man who is representing us. We have got to make him understand things. It is our job to do it... My intelligence and my dexterity is in making those people [councilors and BBMP officials] come up to a little bit higher level ... We made a booklet titled "Ward Vision."<sup>165</sup> That was three years back and nothing has happened. What we did is we made out a map – a GIS map, with Janaagraha<sup>166</sup>... We were the first persons to first [do it] ... It just struck us [that] everyone was making an English version and giving it to the [BBMP] Commissioner. We made a Kannada version (local language of Bangalore) and gave it to the councilor, and said, "This is your Bible. Now you take it." Oh, he was thrilled. Of course, the interpretation was that he used to his best advantage.*

As the last line in this quote implies, RWAs' efforts to educate councilors could be subverted if the councilors take the information but use it to meet their own agendas. For their part, councilors in Bangalore think that elite RWAs interfere with democratic processes and manipulate city-level planning decisions (Kamath & Vijayabaskar, 2009).<sup>xxxix</sup> The councilors' antagonism is not unfounded, as recent official instances of citizen participation in local governance (such as BATF's initiatives), have tended to sideline elected representatives and their low-income constituents (Ghosh, 2005).

The 74<sup>th</sup> CAA mandated devolution of planning powers and citizen participation at the Ward level. Yet the state government of Karnataka, like other Indian states, retains firm control over the planning function through parastatal agencies such as BDA. If middle-class residents mobilize through organized associational activity to contest weaknesses in local governance, then state actors have selectively responded by supporting middle-class

---

<sup>165</sup> "We" refers to Citizens Action Forum (CAF), which is a federation of Bangalore-based RWAs.

<sup>166</sup> Janaagraha is a non-governmental organization that in its early years focused on mobilizing middle-class associations to participate in municipal governance.

campaigns that further official agendas of building clean and green cities.<sup>167</sup> Local elected officials have little or no role to play in such state-civil society collaborations. These efforts to confine urban governance to select sections of state and society also widened the gap between local politicians and middle-class groups in Bangalore.

It is in this backdrop of gaps and compromises of governance that the interactions between the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents and Mr. Reddy must be examined. As mentioned above, Bangalore did not have a municipal council from 2006 to 2010. In the absence of Ward councilors, MLAs like Mr. Reddy got more involved in Ward affairs than their job description requires.<sup>x1</sup> In seeking local support and votes during Assembly elections in 2008, Mr. Reddy campaigned more as a councilor than as an MLA who ranks higher than councilors. A Koramangala resident who helped Mr. Reddy connect with elite members of his neighborhood during election campaigning described the MLA's efforts:

He was quite proactive. As I was the [RWA] President he met me and he wanted to organize a meeting. So I organized a meeting. I invited people from the few other high rises (apartment buildings) too. Quite a few came because they were interested in the road.<sup>168</sup> Because of the road they all came. I was presiding over the meeting. As an MLA, roads do not come under his jurisdiction. I started talking about what comes under his [jurisdiction], because I know from having been being in civil society. I know what MLAs' functions are. So bus stands, power [don't come under their jurisdiction]. These people who came to the meetings – all they wanted and they said, "We want roads." I tried to tell them that roads do not come under his jurisdiction, but this man also [said], "*Illillala* (Kannada for "No, no"), I will do it." And he promised that he will get the roads done. By then I had everybody registered as a voter here. I did the voter registration process, etc.; got everybody a card. Today we are about 350 voters strength [in our] block. So he addresses [our issues and] we all voted for him; he won.

---

<sup>167</sup> In her paper titled "The politics of forgetting: class politics, state power and the restructuring of urban space in India," Fernandes (2004) notes a convergence in the state's and middle-class citizens goal of city beautification that is exclusionary to the city's marginal groups.

<sup>168</sup> At that time, the area did not have a proper permanent road and the residents had been trying to get the BBMP to construct the road for years. The residents' interest in meeting the MLA came from getting the road built.



Respondents identified at least two reasons behind the MLA's motivations in developing public work projects like parks and playgrounds. First, in doing so, the MLA earned the good will and votes of his middle-class constituents. Several respondents felt that elected representatives are realizing the significance of growing middle-class population, and of residential welfare associations – the former as potential vote banks and the latter in helping them “maintain their political relevance and visibility” (Ghertner, 2011, p.526).<sup>xli</sup>

Second, residents see public work projects as good sources of revenue for public officials. As respondents have cynically observed, building parks and roads is a time-tested way for elected representatives to get back the money that they spent on election campaigns. Despite the self-interest attributed to the elected official's style of functioning, middle-class residents have a “can't love them; can't leave them” attitude towards elected representatives.

Commenting on the years without ward councilors, only few respondents voiced relief at having one less “intermediary” in the long chain of municipality functionaries (for instance, corporator, executive engineer, assistant engineer, planner) taking their cuts from funds allocated for ward projects.<sup>169</sup> Most respondents viewed councilors as essential cogs that kept the governance machinery moving. One city planner explained

---

<sup>169</sup> “I am a true democrat, but for the past two years I am happy that the intermediaries are not there. Whatever - wherever officials we have gone [to], somehow everything got sanctioned. If they are there, purposely they divert that amount because they got power.” MR: Not only that – sharing the booty, you know. One more was there – that is what happens. What happens is – the engineer takes money obviously; the contractor cheats – all this has been going on. Earlier what used to happen is – the third party - the corporator wants his cut. Now that they have eliminated. For the last two years like he said – the advantages – whatever we have tried to convince somebody – the BBMP, the BBMP himself thinks something should be done. “This man has his own agenda; he has his own angle. Often in the process, everything gets distorted. Without him, atleast some of us feel it is better not to have this kind of people.” (Koramangala resident, 2010)

the role of elected representatives in ensuring that projects did not get stuck or lost in bureaucratic mazes:

Whenever people say that government does not have a head, it does not have a tail, it does not have a body – that’s all false. That is just to put themselves in the right limelight of saying that there is no public participation. That’s all false. There is tremendous public engagement. The way we elect, the way we work with our elected people, you know. You know, officials are working. They are on their toes in any of the departments because the local MLA is always calling them, and local councilor is calling them and telling [them to do things]. Maybe he is asking for not the thing that you want him to ask, but he is asking. He is saying, “Boss, what happened to the drain that you are constructing? Why isn’t the drain complete?” Then the engineers cry a song and tell, “No sir, funds *bandhilla*, meeting *hogilla*, *aagilla*” (No sir, we did not get the funds. We did not go to the meeting. The meeting did not happen.) And they just derail that, like - find a way to escape. But accountability is there. Very much.

Despite some ambivalence among middle-class groups regarding their relevance, elected representatives continue to be critical actors who keep things moving in local governance, but at their own pace and direction. As the PO Ground case shows, the MLA’s work ethic did not affect the residents’ willingness to engage with him. A veteran civic activist from Koramangala voiced the common opinion that the relationship between the middle-class resident and the public official is a pragmatic one. Here the residents’ primary focus was on forging ties with the councilor instead of questioning his style of working.<sup>xlii</sup> Mr. Heble described the Koramangala residents’ lack of interest in the MLA’s politics and way of operating as follows:

You see, as far as we as residents are concerned, we are not worried about the [political] party. We are worried about the individual who is going to get things moving for us. And what is to his credit is in spite of the local dispensation – state dispensation being with the BJP and he being in the Congress, still he has managed to get a lot of things done for us which no BJP guy had ever done.

Mr. Heble’s disinterest in Mr. Reddy’s politics is consistent with Indian elite-class and middle-class groups’ detachment from local electoral politics. Yet the Koramangala

residents actively voted for the MLA because he promised to address their concerns if elected. Their interest in electing him stemmed from their inability to gain control over PO Ground using the master plan, the judicial process or their influential contacts.

If the elite class's tenuous hold on local spaces is symptomatic of their detachment from local politics, it may also be due to the state's detachment from the idea of the city as a social entity. For instance, a prominent Bangalore-based social scientist made the following connection between the deterioration of governance in Bangalore and deteriorating state-society relations:

You don't have any expectations of the government. You see, it is a very crooked machine... [Before] the government was not malicious. Government could be neutral; could be stupid. And if you really protested, they listened... There was also a decline in the bureaucracy. You see, this was a very paternalistic state. The Maharajah looked after you. [The state was governed by] a good, bureaucratic, paternalistic cadre. Now, once the politicians became corrupt, the bureaucracy became corrupted... I think after a while they (bureaucrats) benefited from that. Yeah, yeah, it takes two to dance. The thing is the original sinners may be the politicians. Having started a particular process, [if] you are not corrupt, they will shunt you aside and put someone else in your place. That's all there is to it.

If bad governance is a result of bad government, then this quote indicates that the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA and urban reforms mandating transparency and inclusive planning practices do not seem to have made much headway. Here elite groups find themselves in a situation where they use their contacts and resources within government to fight against the very same "malicious" government. The results of such fights are uncertain. Viewed in this light, the efforts of elite groups to forge alliances with local politicians appear to be pragmatic acts to gain a foothold in the everyday management of their own localities.<sup>xliii</sup> One 3<sup>rd</sup> Block resident described the increased engagement between middle-class residents and politicians as follows:

But things have changed. Ten years ago, any RWA just did things on their own. There was a total disconnect between the MLA, corporator and the RWA. They didn't want to know who we were, and we didn't want to know who they were and things just happened. I think in ten years it got to a point where we got to know who those guys are and they want to come and listen to us. But we haven't got to the next stage by saying, "Please be honest with what you do." They will listen to you and do what you want, by and large but they will do their own way.

This account endorses the growing cordiality between RWAs and elected politicians in the past decade in Bangalore. It also indicates the preconceived notions and expectations that middle and upper class residents take into their interactions with elected representatives. As the quote indicates, the residents did not expect any change in the MLA's department just because he was collaborating with members of civil society rather than political society. Instead, it was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents that were compelled to engage in patronage politics to find favor with the MLA who went about his business as usual.

The PO Ground story shows that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents' struggles to gain control over the site was a long and difficult process despite their privileged status in social and public life. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents were able to move BDA to restore the civic amenity site only after a drawn-out, expensive judicial process. The elite residents of 3<sup>rd</sup> Block also faced competing claims from other groups within and outside their own neighborhood for the civic amenity site. The final partition of PO Ground as a park and a playground resulted not from the master plan but from pragmatic arrangements between the MLA and 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents. If the residents benefitted by gaining control of half the Ground, the MLA also gained political mileage by making the civic amenity site available to different users. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents' struggles for PO Ground shows that public spaces in elite neighborhoods are not exempt from non-transparent planning decisions. As the master

plan counters local contestations for neighborhood public spaces with claims of legality and public interest, this research finds civil society groups turning to local governing agencies and elected politicians to address their claims to urban public space.

#### **6.4. Conclusion**

This chapter examined the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents' mobilizations in the backdrop of scholarship that identifies the middle-class citizen as a central figure in driving spatial transformations and governance policies in Indian cities (Fernandes, 2004; Chatterjee, 2004; Nair, 2005). This research also considers the implications of upper-class claims on public space for planning space and policy in Indian cities. The PO Ground case shows that elite-class claims to public space in Indian cities belong in the broader arena of local spatial politics and not in rarefied circles of officialdom and power. The case finds that lawful elite-class claims to public space are unable to curb official developmental pressures and competing claims from taking over neighborhood public spaces. Far from being privileged insiders in formal planning processes, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents at best have only one foot through the door behind which planners and politicians make and interpret the master plan. Finally, the case shows a growing engagement between elite-class groups and local public functionaries, shaping public space in actions "oscillating between coalition, collusion and collision" (Arabindoo, 2005, p.4).

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents started their fight for PO Ground in public courtrooms. After filing the PIL, Mr. Heble and his neighbors also maintained a sustained campaign through informal conversations and meetings with bureaucrats, government officials, ministers and neighbors who are influential in the private sector. Despite their

connections and persistence, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents were unable to expedite the court proceedings or counter other events impeding their access to the Ground. Despite having a favorable court verdict, the residents had to wait another four years for BDA to transfer PO Ground to BBMP. Though the Ground was restored to the public realm, the residents could not uproot the cricket academy proprietors who used their connections in BBMP to occupy the space. When BBMP took charge of PO Ground, the MLA stepped in to evict the cricket academy proprietors and reshaped the space to suit different users. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents started their battle in courtrooms and government offices, the case was finally resolved in a show of power on the Ground by a local politician.

In the past two decades in Bangalore, elite and middle-class civil society groups made inroads in participatory governance exercises via governmental and non-governmental initiatives such as BATF and Janaagraha. These exercises marginalized the role of elected representatives though they “play an essential role in the allocation of funds and implementation of ward works, upgrades to basic infrastructure, in the city” (Ghosh, 2005).

As previous scholarship and this research also shows, elite and middle-class groups and elected representatives in Indian cities are not natural allies, the former approaching state level bureaucrats and politicians, and the latter acting as a conduit between government and the urban poor (Benjamin & Raman, 2001; Ghosh, 2005). Furthermore, elected officials do not have a direct role in developing the plan for the city.

As ongoing contestations for civic amenity sites in Bangalore suggest, major decisions regarding urban planning occur behind the closed doors of parastatal agencies like BDA and the offices of state politicians. At ground level elected representatives have

considerable autonomy in everyday management of their own jurisdictions. The events connected with PO Ground follow the enactment of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA but precede JNNURM which mandated public participation in master planning in Bangalore. Thus I cannot conclusively infer whether the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents would have found a different resolution for their contestations for PO Ground if they took place after JNNURM which mandated public participation in master planning. Recent studies show that middle-class RWAs “increasingly tend to address what they call “encroachments” and zoning violations by arguing for enforcement of the Master Plan.” (Kamath & Vijayabaskar, 2009, p.374). Yet ongoing middle-class struggles for civic amenity sites between in Bangalore (that media reports that I have quoted in this chapter reflect to some extent), indicate that the dynamics of struggles for public space have not changed significantly due to greater transparency or citizen participation in planning practices. As in the Hasiru Usiru case, I propose that planning processes in the post-reforms era provide local residents greater traction in questioning official planning decisions, but have not substantively changed the politics of state-society engagement since there is little change in the administrative and power structures within different tiers of government.<sup>170</sup>

The PO Ground case shows that elite groups also interact with local elected officials. As state actors continue their development agenda of urbanization by displacement, partnerships between urban elites and local politicians present as pragmatic politics.

---

<sup>170</sup> Noting that the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA has enhanced representation of minority communities and women in local elected bodies, Chandra (2004: 37) finds in her study comparing the implementation of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA by different political parties in Kolkata that, “The Leftist parties and the non-Leftist parties have similar centralised practices towards the general polity, creating barriers for any decentralisation initiative to succeed. They make the party so overarching and co-opt the mechanisms of the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA to make them so weak that people are forced to byass the formal mechanisms and use the party party structures and patronage for accessing the municipal government. In the process they end up suffering party control over them.”

Chipping away at the notion that vote bank politics is the domain of marginalized groups, the PO Ground case poses the question of how new alliances between elite class groups and elected representatives could affect the distribution of public resources.<sup>171</sup>

While agreeing with scholarship that finds a synchrony in governmental and middle-class visions of clean and green Indian cities, this research finds notes of dissonance when planning processes interfere with everyday life in middle-class neighborhoods. As official planning processes transform public spaces citing exigencies of urbanization, I propose that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents' efforts to lock the civic amenity site as a gated landscaped park is not just an act of NIMBYism. Their actions also reflect a culture of anxiety responding to intense developmental pressures that privilege exchange value over use value. I also propose that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents' activism shows that civil society activism complicates binaries of *right to the city/right to nature* and political society/civil society which assume that elite residents can summon the resources of the state at will. Instead, in a milieu of capital-driven and capricious governance, elite class activism regarding urban commons operates on an uneven terrain of local state-society-space relations.

---

<sup>171</sup> Kamath and Vijayabaskar (2009:375) make a similar observation about evolving relations between RWAs and local councilors when they write, "Despite little evidence of RWAs influencing the state, there is unmistakable convergence of interests and agendas, towards the new rule of property and capital. Viewed in this light the increasing visibility of RWAs appears to be created by the media and by policy discourses that seek an organised middle-class constituency of property-owning people to position as "stakeholders" in the new trends of urban reforms. Several factors make this situation even more contingent and complicated. Even in terms of "legality", our earlier discussions reveal that there are variations across different segments of the middle-class (also Coelho and Venkat, this issue). With the advent of Greater Bangalore, the city is now undergoing processes of change in political structure and power relationships. For instance, there will be fewer councillors in the city council but each of them will represent far more people, in effect giving them powers almost similar to that of MLAs. Whether the changes brought in by reforms will strengthen the relative bargaining position of RWAs vis-à-vis councilors is therefore not clear. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise the multiplicity of middle-class mobilisations and motivations to understand how public service delivery gets shaped by their actions."



In conclusion, the PO Ground case shows that urban elite groups are unable to leverage their privileged social status to bend decisions regarding neighborhood public spaces in either bureaucracy or courts of law when the latter bodies are entrenched in the same politics that triggered the contestations. The PO Ground case demonstrates that elite groups seek to fulfill their demands of urban life through vote bank alliances with local politicians or direct participation in local electoral politics. This new form of elite class politics is exemplified in the emergence of political parties such as Lok Satta, whose founder declares that “The only antidote to bad politics is politics, good politics, more and more politics” (Lok Satta Party, n.d.). This research also calls into question the nature of planning and governance in Indian cities where even enfranchised elite communities feel marginalized by planning policies. For if urban elites engage in what Ghertner (2011: 526) terms as “the gentrification of political participation”, where will the city’s disenfranchised turn to fulfill their rights and needs for basic services? This question is central to examining the role of elite class groups in the politics of public space and policy in Indian cities.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **A Discussion of Research Findings and Contributions to Planning Theory and Practice**

#### **7.1. Introduction**

In a milieu of rapid urbanization and centralized planning, this research engaged with the question, “How do different actors of state and society conceptualize public space and what do their claims to public space reveal about planning and governance in Bangalore?” Applying a grounded theory research approach, this dissertation examined three cases of contestations for everyday public spaces in Bangalore. The politics of public space in Bangalore highlight the contextual role of public streets, parks, playgrounds and sidewalks as places shaped by local spatial practices. This research finds that city residents make claims of use value to public space that collide with official planning policies and projects. Here, grassroots politics challenge official claims of public interest and rational planning with counterclaims rooted in local spatial histories and practices. Through their collective contestations for public space, city residents evolve as political actors seeking inclusion into the discursive and material spaces in the city. This research shows that as centralized planning policies use public interest to counter local resistance, resident groups engage in electoral and caste politics to press their agendas with local governing agencies. In sum, this research demonstrates that contested public spaces in Indian cities are shaped by local politics of opportunity and opportunism between different actors of state and society.

This research embarked on the premise that the politics of public space reflects urban spatial politics. In Indian cities, public spaces are not merely embedded in people's social and cultural lives, but also integral to the economic lives of indigent communities. As accelerated urbanization and planning policies transform public streets, parks, playgrounds and lakes, the transformations significantly affect uses and users of the commons. As displaced groups contest the transformations to public spaces, the emergent politics reveal the loci of power and decision-making that shape everyday space in Indian cities.

Post-globalization literature on Indian cities attributes a dominant role to official planning policies and middle-class associations in shaping imaginaries and decisions regarding public goods and services (Rajagopal, 2001; Baviskar, 2003; Chatterjee, 2004; Fernandes, 2004; Nair, 2005; Roy, 2005; Anjaria, 2006; Zérah, 2007; Nainan & Baud, 2008; Benjamin, 2008; Bhan, 2009; Anjaria, 2009; Harriss, 2010). Elite and middle-class associations invoke their rights as propertied and lawful citizens to access public space, whereas indigent groups claim rights to shelter and livelihood in their contestations for public space. In this literature, state-society engagement follows the contours of Chatterjee's (2004) formulation of civil society and political society. State actors treat middle-class residents as civil society making rightful demands to the city as lawful citizens, while engaging with disenfranchised groups as political society through arbitrarily-handled welfare programs.

Arguing for a more nuanced engagement with questions of how grassroots mobilizations affect state-society relations and urban space, this research examines three cases of local contestations for public space. The three cases represent different economic

sections making claims that reflect their use value, access to state actors and mobilizations vis-à-vis public spaces. The case studies demonstrate that notwithstanding differences in economic status or access to power and resources, local residents engage as political actors in collective activism and electoral politics in their fights for everyday public spaces.

This chapter summarizes this dissertation's contributions to literature on the politics of public space in Indian cities. The next section summarizes the three case studies that empirically inform this research. In the following three sections, the chapter discusses the theoretical, practical and pedagogical implications of this dissertation for literature on public space, master planning and the *right to the city* concept in Indian cities. The concluding section identifies areas of future research in studies on spatial planning and governance in Indian cities.

## **7.2. Summary and contributions of case studies**

This research draws on three different cases to understand how various actors of society and state conceptualize and make claims to public space in Bangalore. The first case examined the struggles of a subaltern community of bamboo craftspeople against eviction from a public sidewalk being modified for a public transit project. The second case represented a middle-class network's campaigns against government projects destroying or commercialising the city's street trees and lakes. The third case examined an affluent neighbourhood group's struggles to reclaim a civic amenity site from authorized and unauthorized encroachments.

In contrast to official formulations of public space as public property, the cases show that different groups are bound to public spaces as contextual, location-specific places. The case studies demonstrate that neither official nor grassroots conceptualizations of public space are inclusive or free of subversions. Thus, terms such as public interest and welfare emerge as rhetorical constructs that state and social actors use to legitimize specific agendas that do not necessarily represent collective interests. This research finds that omissions and internal conflicts in centralized planning processes create openings for local electoral and caste politics to influence urban form.

Furthermore the cases endorse Massey's (2005) description of public space as places formed by everyday spatial practices and negotiated uses. In their struggles for public space, this research finds local groups evolving as political actors and asserting their rights to urban life through collective claims of use value and cultural rights. Official responses to the groups in the three cases show that state actors do not enact official policies or judicial recommendations without political intervention. This finding highlights the entrenchment of electoral politics in planning processes, thus challenging normative governmental claims of public interest in undertaking public works projects.<sup>172</sup> Furthermore it questions the ability of civil society members to further their agendas without local political support, thus indicating "that the field of citizenship, at certain points, overlaps with that of governmentality" (Chatterjee, 2004, p.41).

---

<sup>172</sup> Electoral politics represent public (and collective) endorsement of elected leaders in a democratic system. However in India, where electoral processes are overrun with political dynasties and patronage politics, votes are not necessarily the only signifier of broad-based public approval or public interest.

### **7.2.1 The KR Road sidewalk case**

The KR Road sidewalk case explored the impact of official planning and governance on the ability of marginal groups to maintain their foothold in Indian cities. Though they had no legal rights, the bamboo weaving community claimed a right to the sidewalk as a public space based on tenure, use value and economic significance. The case demonstrates that despite legal mandates of meeting the public interest through development, state actors cannot ignore subaltern claims to public space. Finally BMRCL's offer of resettlement housing instead of workspace suggests that state actors engage in a politics of appeasement rather than recognizing the self-employed community's economic rights.

The KR Road weavers' use of the sidewalk were evocative of pre-colonial spatial practices in the commons that conflict with modern conceptualizations of the sidewalk as a pedestrian right-of-way. The weavers' contestations for the sidewalk were contestations for rights to housing and subsistence that are basic citizenship rights to the city. For BMRCL, the sidewalk represented municipal property that was required for the construction of a public rail project. Though there are national policies that recognize the economic and social value of street economies, BMRCL did not consider the weavers' demands for workspace as legitimate claims. Instead BMRCL's actions echoed official responses to indigent groups that occupy public spaces in Indian cities through informal arrangements with local state actors.

The bamboo weavers acted as political society which relies on patronage politics and connections with municipal officials to maintain a tenuous foothold in the city (Chatterjee, 2004). The weavers' long tenure on the sidewalk was possible not only

because of the public nature of the space, but also because a local *dalit* leader protected them. The weavers' growing entrenchment in *dalit* politics suggest that disruptive caste-based mobilizations helped them more than official processes of rehabilitation. The promise of official policies and master planning to recognise and dignify the presence of street economies through spatial planning policies remained unrealised.<sup>173</sup>

Within current frameworks of governance and planning, there is little security that “micro-entrepreneurs” such as the weavers have against displacement, particularly when it occurs in the name of public interest. The weavers' struggles to have the Slum Board declare the sidewalk as a slum reveal state actors' ambivalence in accepting their claims of use value and location. BMRCL's response of offering resettlement housing recalls Weinstein's (2009) observation that exigencies of development drive state actors to appease displaced marginal groups as a means to expedite development processes. These are politics of appeasement where state actors take steps to create as “smooth and uncontested a development process as possible” (Weinstein 2009, p.401).

### **7.2.2. The Hasiru Usiru case**

This case examined an environmental network's campaigns for Bangalore's green spaces in the backdrop of scholarly accounts of middle-class influence on planning policy in Indian cities. Hasiru Usiru provides an important discursive forum for a subset of Bangalore's middle-class residents that seek inclusion in planning and governance vis-à-vis public goods and services. The network's activism shows that middle-class groups are

---

<sup>173</sup> For instance, the National Policy on Urban Street Vendors “recognizes that street vendors constitute an integral and legitimate part of the urban retail trade and distribution system for daily necessities of the general public.” However the same Policy also details provisions for physically evicting street vendors if they are causing “genuine public obstruction of a street, side walk etc.”

willing to adopt confrontational methods if state actors ignored their demands in more civil forums.

BBMP had the authority to undertake a road-widening project that would ameliorate traffic congestion. Yet the High Court ruled in favor of Hasiru Usiru's involvement in BBMP's decisions regarding tree felling. The court ruling reflected official receptiveness to bourgeois voices speaking the language of urban policy, laws and urban planning to contest official development projects. On the other hand, BBMP's continued tree felling without involving Hasiru Usiru highlights the role of other unofficial forces in dictating planning decisions.

Hasiru Usiru members' imaginaries of the city resonate with bourgeois visions of clean, green and healthy urban environments. Unlike bourgeois environmentalism however, the network members are not overtly hostile towards the urban poor. The network's efforts to involve indigent groups in their campaigns find limited success as the different groups have different uses for public space. The case highlights the challenges of consolidating battles of different economic groups for public space against governing bodies.

Hasiru Usiru's members have varied conceptualizations of urban public space as sites of culture and public life. The Hasiru Usiru case shows that notwithstanding the support of judicial and official policies, the network's visions have limited traction in an arena of spatial struggles that is less influenced by official policies than it is by politicized planning.



### **7.2.3. The PO Ground case**

This case examined the mobilizations of an elite neighborhood group for a local civic amenity site. The PO Ground case finds that elite-class claims to public space based on legalities are not enough to ward off encroachments from state and private actors. Furthermore the case shows a growing engagement between elite groups and local public functionaries in shaping urban space.

Despite a favorable court verdict, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents had to wait four years before the Ground was restored as an open space. Though the residents started their battle in courtrooms and government offices, they were finally able to reclaim PO Ground only with the help of a local politician. Elite groups and elected representatives in Indian cities are not natural allies, as the former engage with state-level bureaucrats and politicians, while the latter work for the votes of marginal groups (Benjamin & Raman, 2001; Ghosh, 2005).

The alliance between the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents and MLA Reddy challenges prevalent research that finds a greater responsiveness of officialdom to elite residents' demands. It indicates that elite residents' access to high level officials does not necessarily translate into favorable decisions, particularly in issues related to contested public resources.

### **7.2.4. Summary**

The cases in this research represent struggles between city residents and state actors using different conceptualizations and uses of everyday urban spaces. Scholars of urban public space argue that conflict is an essential element of democratic life or public life (Mitchell, 1995; Neuman, 1998; Flyvberg, 1998; Massey, 2005).<sup>174</sup> Though the three case

---

<sup>174</sup> Mitchell (1995) writes, "Whatever the origins of any public space, its status as "public" is created and maintained through the ongoing opposition of visions that have been held, on the one hand, by those who

studies signal the existence of grassroots struggles for urban space, their outcomes are less promising in their democratic potential. Instead, the cases reveal that urban planning in Indian cities is a deeply political process, where issues of citizenship and access to public goods are linked to electoral politics.

State actors treat the city's sidewalks, streets, parks and playgrounds as state-controlled public goods serving a general public interest. Despite official mandates to integrate public participation and transparency in public works projects, government bodies try to disengage from local resistance to displacement. In the KR Road case, BMRCL utilized its official mandate of public interest to circumvent the weavers' claims to the sidewalk. In the Hasiru Usiru case, BBMP cited public traffic improvements to justify cutting trees, displacing communities and businesses in the processes of widening road. In the PO Ground case, BDA used the master plan to convert an open space into public amenities.

The cases demonstrate that official processes could not circumvent local residents' claims to material and discursive spaces of planning and governance. The KR Road weavers invoked their rights as a project-displaced community; the Hasiru Usiru members sought inclusion in participatory planning as concerned citizens; and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents challenged changes in the master plan as entitled users of open spaces. Thus this research finds that state actors actively engage with local residents in order to

---

seek order and control and, on the other, by those who seek places for oppositional political activity and unmediated interaction" (115). Massey (2005: 153) argues, "... precisely because of the elements of chaos, openness and uncertainty which they both embody, space and here specifically place, are potentially creative crucibles for the democratic sphere. The challenge is having the confidence to treat them in this way. For instituting democratic public spaces (and indeed the spaces of places more generally) necessitates operating with a concept of spatiality which keeps always under scrutiny the play of the social relations which construct them."

overcome hurdles to time-sensitive and capital-intensive projects or due to pressure from influential local politicians.

As the case studies show, grassroots mobilizations in Bangalore strive for public spaces that represent “articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings” (Massey, 2005, p.154). The commons are spaces of collective life but they are also negotiated spaces that different actors make conflicting claims to. Thus contestations for public space are collective demands but they are not necessarily demands for collective uses of the commons. This distinction is important in considering who has a voice in shaping the commons.

The politics of public space in Bangalore shows that ongoing spatial transformations have raised a multitude of voices that are not quelled by official claims of public interest and rational planning. The three cases also demonstrate the evolution of local residents as political actors in making collective claims to public space. Having summarized the salient findings of the cases, this chapter proceeds to discuss their contributions to planning theory.

### **7.3. Contribution to planning theory**

This dissertation reiterates that public space is contextual space where different groups make different and many times, conflicting claims. Local struggles for public space in Bangalore highlight the role of electoral and caste politics in influencing spatial decisions in the city. In the KR Road case and PO Ground case, two diverse economic groups took the help of powerful politicians to pressurize local governing agencies. In contrast, the Hasiru Usiru case demonstrates that judicial and official recommendations have little

control in regulating local development processes. The three cases reiterate the political nature of planning in Indian cities, providing a closer look at the highly uneven terrain of local spatial politics.

First this research challenges current knowledge regarding the mobilizations of elite-class, middle-class and marginal groups in countering state decisions vis-à-vis urban planning or governance. Existing literature talks about the dominance of middle-class voices in claims to public space in Indian cities that are exclusionary to indigent communities. Baviskar (2003) describes this form of middle-class activism as bourgeois environmentalism. Studies in post-liberalization Indian cities also note a convergence of middle-class aspirations with governmental goals of making sanitized and efficient cities (Fernandes, 2004; Nair, 2005).

However, the struggles of Hasiru Usiru and 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents show that access to power and resources in government do not ensure favorable decisions for elite and middle-class residents. This research also shows that unlike bourgeois environmentalism, there exist other bourgeois imaginaries of public spaces that clash with official formulations of public space. These imaginaries do not differ from bourgeois environmentalist claims to clean and green urban spaces, but they do not seek exclusive rights to urban space. Instead some groups, like Hasiru Usiru, seek democratic dialogue with state actors in decision-making regarding public spaces.

Second, for indigent groups, public spaces provide shelter and subsistence that they cannot afford in formal spaces in the city. As development projects erode public spaces such as sidewalks and street markets, marginal groups find it hard to maintain a foothold in the city. Anjaria (2006) also finds in his study of Mumbai street hawkers that marginal

groups seek legitimacy within official frameworks in order to avoid harassment from the “predatory state.”<sup>175</sup> Though government policies provide displaced marginal groups resettlement housing, relocated communities only get housing titles but not land titles. Thus state actors retain control over land and keep project beneficiaries in a state of insecurity vis-à-vis their tenure in the city. Local elected representatives help marginal groups access public goods and services in Indian cities (Benjamin & Raman, 2001; Chatterjee, 2004; Ghosh, 2005). This research finds that elected representatives do not help groups such as the KR Road weavers because they are not viable vote banks. In their efforts to consolidate their place in the city, marginal groups turn to *dalit* politics.

Local elected representatives continue to wield significant power within their own constituencies. This is particularly significant in understanding how corporators and MLAs manage the allocation of public goods and services at the ward level. The inability of middle-class groups to influence centralized governmental policies combined with elected representatives’ ambitions to broaden their electorate is bringing the two groups together. This research notes a growing engagement between local politicians and middle-class associations in mutually beneficial alliances that is akin to vote bank politics.

Existing literature portrays the master plan as a document that privileges lawful citizens and illegalizes marginal groups (Baviskar, 2003; ALF, 2003; Ghosh, 2005; Nair, 2005). The KR Road shows that development policies continue to disregard the economic and political rights of marginalized groups. But the struggles of the elite 3<sup>rd</sup> Block

---

<sup>175</sup> In his study of Mumbai hawkers, Anjaria (2006: 2145) writes that “the subversive act of the street hawker is, ironically, not to circumvent the law or the surveilling eye of the state, but to find a place within it.”

residents and Hasiru Usiru suggest that official processes do not always heed bourgeois voices either. The PO Ground and Hasiru Usiru cases show that despite their access to power and resources, bourgeois groups find uneven results to their claims on public space.

Central and state governments remain the loci of power and decision-making in planning and governance in Indian cities, working through parastatal agencies that have limited interactions with local residents. Though planning projects have a participatory component, middle-class groups have little or no access to centralized planning processes that occur outside public scrutiny. At the same time, this research highlights the limitations of the master plan in disciplining urban space. The PO Ground case demonstrates that official planning processes are riddled with interference and interruptions from conceptualization to implementation. Holston (199: 163) argues that, “To exclude the imaginary and its inherently critical perspective...is to condemn planning to accommodations of the status quo, and I reject such paralysis.”

Acknowledging its practical limitations in regulating land use and promoting social or spatial justice, this research suggests that the master plan serves two important functions. First, the plan has substantive benefits as a tool of dialogue between planners and local communities (Neuman, 1998). Second, the master plan is the only comprehensive official document that reveals governmental visions for the city, and serves as an analytical lens for exposing the flaws and inequalities in the planning process. The master planning process also provides citizens a forum for voicing and exchanging views about the city. As an analytical tool, the plan-making process (different actors influencing the plan; involvement of local residents in the planning process only at the draft plan stage;

selection of community halls and meeting rooms in hotels for public participation that tacitly exclude indigent and disenfranchised groups) is revelatory of the politics of plan-making.

This research looked to the *right to the city* concept as a starting point in considering how different local groups stake claim to public space based on use value. This research shows that the *right to the city* is not just the right of disenfranchised groups, but the right of all displaced groups, irrespective of their economic status or perceived entitlements to urban space. If grassroots mobilizations against displacement are demands for a *right to the city*, then the three cases in this research show that fights for public spaces are not demands for generalized rights, but demands of access to specific places with use value to the contesting groups. As this research demonstrates, *right to the city* claims reflect cultural and historic claims to urban space that official definitions and formulations do not or unable to address in spatial planning in Indian cities.

The 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 and Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission represent efforts of policy-makers to decentralize governance and broaden the arena of representational and participatory democracy for various groups in Indian cities. However, the process of decentralization yet remains an incomplete project either due to gaps between policies and implementation; lack of resources in local governments; lack of coordination between agencies; subversive interpretations of policies and inertia (or unwillingness) within government agencies in transferring or sharing regulatory powers. As the empirical data in this research demonstrates, in the absence of proper implementation, official policies do not go far in engaging with

different social groups who then turn to local electoral or patronage politics to address their claims to the city.

As the three cases show, use value has different origins and could represent either public or private uses of the commons. While different public uses of a public space can be articulated as legitimate claims of public interest (as the PILs of Hasiru Usiru and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents did), there is less clarity when urban groups claim private rights to public space (as the KR Road weavers did). In cases involving indigent groups, government agencies tend to respond by selective dispensation of state welfare, depending on political expediency (Chatterjee, 2004).

The three cases in this research suggest that struggles for public space unfold in a terrain marked by local power relations, electoral politics and caste-based mobilizations. The cases show that state actors acknowledge the claims of different groups to public space. But official responses either manifest in the form of politics of appeasement (as in the KR Road and Hasiru Usiru cases) or politics of compromise (PO Ground). The *right to the city* conceptually expands the arena of claim-making for local residents, but struggles for urban public space do not change the politics of engagement between different actors of state and society.

#### **7.4. Contribution to planning practice**

Having identified the dissertation's theoretical contributions, this section draws on the case studies to identify implications of this research for planning practice in Indian cities. The previous section shows that the outcomes of the cases reflected an entanglement of local spatial politics with electoral politics and caste politics. The interlinkages between



planning decisions and local power politics highlights the gap between policy and practice in shaping urban space in Indian cities, as discussed below.

Despite national laws and policies legitimizing street economies, the KR Road case exposes the inability of planning policies in meeting the needs of street hawkers and vendors. The case also exposes uneven governmental control of street economies, even as state actors are increasingly aggressive in trying to police and control public spaces. In a more democratic planning scenario, for example, BMRCL officials would have considered the self-employed weavers' economic rights, viewing them as a project-affected community. The weavers would not have had to engage in *dalit* politics in order to gain concessions from state actors.

In the PO Ground case, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents used the master plan to challenge official plans for the Ground, and the High Court responded favorably. In a more democratic planning outcome, BDA would have recognized that PO Ground's use as a playground for twenty years before the planning agency decided to introduce new land uses on the space. BDA would have engaged in dialogue with the users of the Ground (the neighborhood residents and the players) regarding the proposed land use changes. Also, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents would not engage in vote bank politics with the MLA to reclaim the Ground from encroachers. The process through which the PO Ground contestations unfolded reveals the politics that underlie seemingly rational planning processes. Furthermore, their long drawn battle for the Ground only made the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents more militant and territorial about the space.

A more effective planning solution in the Hasiru Usiru case would have been for BBMP to follow the court ruling and involve Hasiru Usiru members in decisions

regarding tree felling. Despite the court decision, BBMP's continued tree felling exposes the limitations of official policies and recommendations empowering civic groups. In this case, the High Court and BBMP gave all the right responses to Hasiru Usiru but could not carry through their promises on the ground as other forces weighed in.

In terms of local politics and pressures on land, the only way to accommodate negotiations and reconciliation would have been if state actors were more responsive to local claims and protests. This could have been accomplished by: informing project-affected residents in advance about upcoming projects; engaging in public consultations to gain inputs from different actors; engaging in public consultations before making plans and not after finalizing plans; and treating indigent communities as productive members of urban society.

In all three cases, official planning processes triggered local resistance and protests. The cases highlight the politics of local groups struggling to preserve their imaginaries of urban public space. The actions that shaped the processes in each case varied. In the Hasiru Usiru and the PO Ground cases, the court had a role in shaping the outcomes. In the PO Ground case and KR Road sidewalk case, influential politicians played pivotal roles in shaping the groups' engagement with government actors. In the PO Ground case, the MLA's role in deciding the final outcome for the site indicates the control that elected representatives have over public resources in their constituencies. In the Hasiru Usiru case, the environmental group ESG played a key role in rallying the protestors. The High Court played an important role in validating the network as a legitimate collective middle-class voice, indicating the continued significance of judicial activism for urban groups to register their concerns for concerns regarding planning and governance.

(Notably the absence of politicians in Hasiru Usiru's campaigns coincided with the network's limited ability to curb BBMP's tree felling activity). In the KR Road case, the *dalit* leader was instrumental in organizing the weavers and leading them to protest against BMRCL.

The spaces in which the KR Road weavers were heard was outside the offices of BBMP, BMRCL, District Commissioner and *dalit* rallies. The spaces in which the Hasiru Usiru network members articulated their concerns were in courts of law, the offices of bureaucrats, corporators, legislators and politicians, in the premises what BBMP offices, in workshops, and in street protests. The spaces in which the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents engaged with government officials were in courts of law, the BDA office, and offices of bureaucrats and politicians. In the cases in this research, bourgeois and subaltern groups set out to engage with government bodies as civil society and political society respectively.

Yet, there were moments in Hasiru Usiru's activism and even the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents' conduct where they engaged in behavior attributed to uncivil society. When a BBMP Engineer refused to share public documents, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents locked themselves inside his office, refusing to leave till he gave them the information. Similarly Hasiru Usiru members made an unauthorized entry into the BBMP Commissioner's office after the Residency Road tree felling, refusing to leave till the Commissioner heard their concerns. These are acts of uncivil society that stand in stark contrast to interactions in officially-sponsored civil forums of interactions. This observation echoes recent research that finds that when government bodies respond slowly or are non-cooperative, Indian civil society "does not only permit contentious, disorderly action, it privileges it" (Wood,

2012, p.186).<sup>176</sup> The cases in this research show state-society interactions do not always conform to the actions of political society or civil society. This finding suggests that government bodies need to increase accountability and accessibility of information to social actors in order to avoid disruptive behavior.

This research found a general reluctance among government officials to share information with local residents, as they felt that multiple voices of dissent would only delay or halt projects. In considering planning reforms, this research suggests that governing bodies should develop more systematic mechanisms of engaging with project-affected communities in planning practice. Specific steps within existing frameworks of participatory governance would include timely and regular information dissemination; providing easy access to public information regarding projects; reducing response periods and bureaucratic hurdles to citizens' queries; and following official procedures that already exist as policies. There is also a need to improve efforts to operationalize the mandates of 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment for devolving planning authority to local agencies and public participation in Indian cities.

The participation of local officials in Hasiru Usiru's workshops suggests a general willingness among bureaucrats and municipal officials to engage in public forums with local residents over issues of local governance. The Hasiru Usiru case also reveals the limitations to finding common ground for the concerns of middle-class residents and indigent groups. However in creating accessible forums of engagement as Hasiru Usiru did, government actors can create forums where different economic groups interact and understand the other groups' concerns.

---

<sup>176</sup> As evidenced by the less common street protests by RWAs for better services in their neighborhoods

Finally, this research reiterates the significance of planned and unplanned public space as negotiated places with locational value and use value to multiple users. This is also a good place to recall Massey's (2005: 154) call to planners and users to recognize that public spaces are "potentially creative crucibles for the democratic sphere. The challenge is having the confidence to treat them in this way." In practice, this dissertation argues for official acknowledgment of two characteristics of public spaces. First, the recognition that public spaces, like cities, are "decidedly local lifeworlds, thick with specific experiences, practices, imaginations, and memories" (Gyanprakash, 2008, p.2). Second, planned and unplanned urban public spaces are produced through everyday spatial practices and negotiated uses, where official regulations play a small, but significant role.

### **7.5. Implications for planning pedagogy**

The master planning process, as it is taught in schools of planning and developed by planning agencies in India, is considered a process that only trained planners can engage in. However this research finds that the plan is not a hidebound product of rational planning, nor is it the only author of spatial planning in the city. This research demonstrates that the master plan is a tool of power and that urban planning is "about the exercise of power" (Baviskar, 2003, p.91). Education on master planning should recognize that planning is political and conflict-filled when planning processes "bring peoples, disciplines, urban functions, problems, interests, and ideas together in institutional settings" (Neuman, 1998, p.215).

This dissertation calls for more pedagogical engagement with structures of power and functioning in public governing institutions. Schools of urban planning and associated

disciplines should pay special attention to processes through which public agencies allocate public goods and services, and the mechanisms for public participation in these processes.

Following Benjamin's (2008: 720) concept of occupancy urbanism, this research also calls for continued pedagogical engagement with the idea of "cities as consisting of multiple, contested territories inscribed by complex local histories." Benjamin (2008: 720) invites the planning scholar to "consider more closely rich works of ethnography that recognize and maintain fluid and open-ended views of the space of city politics. This perspective, although complex and necessarily uneven, seems fundamental to conceptualize contemporary contestations." This dissertation reiterates the significance of examining the mobilizations of local groups bound by common ideologies or needs of urban space and how they negotiate the uneven terrain of urban spatial politics.

#### **7.6. Directions for future research**

This research demonstrates that ethnographic studies yield rich and new insights regarding local mobilizations, state-society interactions and outcomes of spatial politics in cities. Such studies are increasingly relevant as intense urbanization and planning policies in Indian cities provoke a clamor of diverse voices contesting displacement from material and discursive spaces of the city. This research demonstrates that new forms of state-space-society dynamics are emerging as local residents rise in protest against large public works projects that are affecting urban space. Ongoing spatial transformations are creating new arenas for discussions about urban form, citizenship and governance in

Indian cities. This research highlights the scope for future research on how grassroots mobilizations are shaping spatial politics in Indian cities.

This current research adds to the growing taxonomy of the Indian urban middle-class. Here, Hasiru Usiru members emerge as bourgeois environmentalists whose claims to the city do not center on demands for the exclusion of marginal groups. The elite 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents in the PO Ground case emerge as vote bank constituents. Arguably there are other ways in which members of the Indian middle-class engage in efforts to influence planning and governance. This research invites a continued academic scrutiny of the actions and activism of the vast and diverse spectrum of the Indian urban middle-class and their role in shaping Indian cities.

This research suggests that as official planning processes seek insulation from grassroots resistance, local politicians and middle-class groups will continue to pursue mutually beneficial alliances of opportunity and opportunism. It is a question for future research to examine how such collaborations will affect marginal groups that constitute traditional vote banks. As Neuman (1998: 215) states:

Comprehensive plans bring peoples, disciplines, urban functions, problems, interests, and ideas together in institutional settings. Plans become focal points in conflict when these collide. Conflict is a necessary part of planning and of politics. Without conflict, plans and planning become apolitical and thus are rendered meaningless. Plans can be used to set agendas and resolve conflicts, because they are ideal “single texts” that the participants in plan-making rely on to make decisions (Moore 1986; Forester 1989).

This research also finds that marginal groups continue to rely on vote bank politics and surrogate forms of citizenship to maintain a foothold in the city. I also posit that the intense academic focus on the Indian middle-class in the backdrop of economic globalization further the academic stereotyping of urban marginal groups as political

society. I propose that there is a need for research examining instances where marginal groups engage with government officials in formal forums of engagement.

Finally, this research also invites enquiry into the role of the Right to Information (RTI) Act in shaping grassroots politics and governmental accountability. Recognizing that a “democracy requires an informed citizenry and transparency of information which are vital to its functioning and also to contain corruption and to hold Governments and their instrumentalities accountable to the governed,” the Government of India’s Ministry of Home Affairs (2005: 1) passed the RTI Act in 2005, defining it as:

An Act to provide for setting out the practical regime of right to information for citizens to secure access to information under the control of public authorities, in order to promote transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority, the constitution of a Central Information Commission and State Information Commissions and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

The RTI was not used in the three cases examined in this research, either because the events occurred before its implementation in 2005 or because lower income groups are not still using the RTI as much as their middle-class counterparts (Kamath & Vijayabaskar, 2009). After this research was conducted, however, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Block residents and Hasiru Usiru members started using RTI for the dual purpose of procuring information and monitoring governmental agencies vis-à-vis local spatial planning. Local RTI activists in Bangalore periodically hold workshops in public places to educate local residents about the benefits of exercising their right to information.<sup>177</sup> It is a task for future research to examine how grassroots efforts to raise governmental accountability

---

<sup>177</sup> The Bangalore based trust CIVIC is one NGO that is trying to educate local marginal groups regarding the benefits of RTI.



using RTI are affecting or changing material and discursive spaces of democracy in Indian cities.

**Appendix One**  
**List of Interviews in Bangalore (Dec 2008-July 2010)**

1. Chandra Ravikumar, Co-founder, Sanmathi & Hasiru Usiru member
2. Sugata Srinivasaraju, Journalist, The Outlook
3. Dharma Somashekhar, Civic Activist, Sanmathi & Hasiru Usiru member
4. Solomon Benjamin, National Institute of Advanced Studies
5. Edgar DeMello, Architect
6. Chiranjeev Singh, Ex-Chief Secretary, State of Karnataka
7. Vaishali Chandra, Journalist, DNA
8. Divya Ravindranath, former Hasiru Usiru member
9. Anil Kumar Sastry, Journalist, The Hindu
10. Sivanand, Engineer, Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited
11. Praveen Dhaneskar, Journalist, Deccan Herald
12. G.V. Dasarathi, Engineer-Entrepreneur & Hasiru Usiru member
13. M.Venkataswamy, President, Samata Sainik Dal
14. Murlidhar Rao, Koramangala Resident & Politician, Lok Satta Party
15. Siddharaj, Bamboo weaver, KR Road
16. Vishwanath, Member of 3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala Resident Welfare Association
17. Air Marshall (Retired) Heble, Member of 3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala Resident Welfare Association
18. Mrs.Heble, Resident of 3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala
19. Goverdhan Reddy, Resident of 3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala
20. Anjali Mohan, Planner
21. Rajan, Independent Researcher
22. Rohan Dsouza, Independent Researcher
23. Ashwin Mahesh, Professor, Indian Institute of Management – Bangalore
24. Clifton Rosario, Lawyer, Alternate Law Forum
25. Siddharth Narain, Lawyer, Alternate Law Forum
26. Lawrence Liang, Lawyer, Alternate Law Forum
27. Sujata, Bamboo weaver, KR Road
28. Leelavati, Bamboo weaver, KR Road
29. Mariamma, Bamboo weaver, KR Road
30. Siddhamma, Bamboo weaver, KR Road
31. Gopal, Bamboo weaver, KR Road
32. Jayalaxmi, Bamboo weaver, KR Road
33. Venkatesa, Bamboo weaver, KR Road
34. Shiva, Bamboo weaver, KR Road
35. Nagamma, Bamboo weaver, KR Road
36. Gouri, Bamboo weaver, KR Road
37. Manjunath, Bamboo weaver, KR Road
38. Somasekhar, Bamboo weaver, KR Road
39. Kumari, Bamboo weaver, KR Road
40. Suresh, Manager, Madhwa Yuva Sangha, KR Road
41. T.K. Thimmaraja Shetty, Secretary, Theosophical Society, Bangalore
42. Gouramma, Bamboo weaver, KR Road

43. Manjunath, Bamboo weaver, KR Road
44. Jhansi, Social Worker, Don Bosco
45. Gururaj Buddhya, Independent Researcher
46. Vijay Narnapatti, Architect & Hasiru Usiru member
47. Raghuram, IT professional & former Hasiru Usiru member
48. Vinay Sreenivasa, Civic Activist & Hasiru Usiru member
49. Kshitij Urs, Regional Manager, ActionAid
50. Narendra Pani, National Institute of Advanced Studies
51. Rajeev Gowda, Indian Institute of Management – Bangalore
52. Bhargavi Rao, Environmental Support Group
53. Evelyn Hust, Maxmueller Bhavan
54. Champaka Rajagopal, Architect & Independent Researcher
55. Pushpa Achanta, Citizen-Activist & Hasiru Usiru member
56. Satyaprakash Varanasi, Architect
57. Narayan, Caretaker of Sri Rajarajeswari Choultry, KR Road
58. Store manager, Hopcoms, Koramangala
59. Alick Aranha, Resident of 3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala
60. Thomas, Resident of 3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala
61. Dr.B. P.Radhakrishna, Geologist, Mysore Geological Department
62. Ravi, Koramangala Resident
63. Merchant, Koramangala Resident
64. Carol Upadhyay, National Institute of Advanced Studies
65. Radhakrishna, Resident of 3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala
66. Harpreet Singh, Resident of Koramangala
67. K.K. Paulose, Lawyer
68. Imtiaz, CMH Road Traders Association President
69. Isaac Arul Selva, Slum Activist
70. Ramesh Ramanathan, Co-founder, Janaagraha
71. Sapna Karim, Janaagraha
72. Subbarayana Prasanna, Ex-Dean, Indian Institute of Management - Bangalore
73. Suresh Moona, Historian
74. Leo Saldanha, Co-founder, Environmental Support Group
75. Sadashiv Manjunath, Independent Researcher
76. Sridhar, Business Owner, Avenue Road
77. Dr.Meenaxi Bharath, Politician, Lok Satta Party
78. SK Aruni, Deputy Director, Indian Council of Historical Research
79. Prithvi Reddy, Citizen-Activist & Resident of Koramangala
80. Vijayan Menon, Citizen-Activist & Member of Koramangala Initiative
81. Ajay Reddy, Resident of 3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala
82. Dr.Harini Nagendra, Researcher, Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and The Environment
83. Dr.Vinod Vyasulu, Co-founder, Centre for Budget and Economic Studies
84. S.S.Topagi, Town Planner, Bangalore Development Authority
85. Narayan Gowda, Deputy Director, Bangalore Development Authority
86. S.M.Hegde, Joint Director, Bangalore Development Authority
87. Arun Padaki, Banker & Hasiru Usiru member

88. Dinesh, IT Professional & Hasiru Usiru member
89. Kavita Krishnamoorthy, Founder, KILIKILI
90. Lata Mani, Researcher & Ejipura Resident
91. Ammu Joseph, Columnist & Resident of Ejipura
92. Laila Ollapally, Lawyer & Resident of 3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala
93. Imtiaz, Business Owner, CMH Road, Indiranagar
94. Major Promod Kapur, Citizen-Activist & Koramangala Initiative member
95. Srinivas, Bamboo Depot Owner, KR Road
96. Siddhamma, Bamboo weaver, KR Road
97. Michael F. Saldanha, Judge and former Justice of the Bombay High Court
98. Kathyayani Chamaraj, Co-Trustee, CIVIC & Hasiru Usiru member
99. Sunil Dutt Yadav, Advocate - Karnataka High Court & Environmental Support Group member
100. Venky, Hasiru Usiru member
101. H. Murali, Hasiru Usiru member
102. H. S. Sudhira, Researcher
103. Venkatesh, Horticulture Inspector, BBMP
104. M.V. Amarnath, Deputy Conservator of Forests, BDA
105. Dr.Shekhar Reddy, Assistant Director of Fisheries, BDA
106. U.V.Singh, Chief Executive Officer, Lake Development Authority
107. Geeta Anantaswamy, Planner, BBMP
108. Narayanaswamy, Joint Director of Horticulture, BBMP (Freedom Park)
109. B.V.Satish, Chief Executive Engineer (Lakes), BBMP (Utility Building)
110. A.Narayanaswamy, BBMP Horticulture Officer
111. Ajay Reddy, Resident of 3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala
112. Pranav Jha, IT Professional & Co-founder of PRAJA
113. Lalitha Kamath, Independent Researcher
114. Vinay Baidur, Independent Researcher
115. S. Gopi Prasad, Director, IDES Consulting Private Limited
116. Dr. Sarah Joseph, Lecturer
117. Mr.Goverdhan, Langford Road
118. Nagarajiah, Coordinator, Association for Voluntary Action and Services
119. Ramesh Dutt, President of RWA
120. Suresh Heblikar, Film maker & Environmentalist
121. Tirukana Gowder, BBMP
122. Manager, Jain Sangha Choultry, KR Road
123. Anil Kumar, President, Ejipura Resident Welfare Association
124. Mohan Rao, Resident of Ejipura
125. Gajendra, Resident of Ejipura
126. Prasanna Rao, Architect
127. Sadanandappa, Tahsildar, BMRCL
128. Tejaswini Niranjana, Centre for the Study of Culture and Society
129. Hemachandra Sagar, Politician, Bharatiya Janata Party
130. Dinesh Gundu Rao, Politician, Indian National Congress
131. Ramalinga Reddy, MLA, Indian National Congress
132. N.P. Sharma, Chief Engineer ( Design & Contract ), BMRCL

133. Captain Doddihal, Chief Engineer for Reach Four, BMRCL
134. Xerxes Desai, Ex-President, DÉCORA, Defence Colony
135. Jyoti Hosagrahar, Columbia University
136. Ravi Kumar, Assistant Executive Engineer, Karnataka Slum Clearance Board
137. Narayan Singh, Watchman, 3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala
138. Ananthram, Secretary, ST Bed Layout RWA
139. Ashok Kumar, Resident of BMRCL Resettlement Housing, Peenya
140. K. Meera, Co-Editor, Citizen Matters
141. Suresh Moona, Historian
142. Shivanna, Senior Assistant Director of Horticulture, Horticulture Department, BBMP
143. Ananthaswamy, Chief Engineer, BBMP (South Zonal Office)
144. Lakshapathy, Association for Promoting Social Action
145. Naresh Narasimhan, Architect
146. Prem Chandavarkar, Architect
147. Ekta Mittal, MARAA
148. Deepak Srinivasan, MARAA
149. Ram Bhat, MARAA
150. Dr. Kumar, 3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala
151. Vidyadhar, President, RT Nagar Resident Welfare Association
152. Dr. D.S.Ravindran, CEO, Centre for E-Governance, State of Karnataka
153. Jagannath Reddy, Ex-Sarpanch, Bellandur Village
154. Dr. Sanjiv Aundhe, Chief Operating Officer, Fire Luxur Developers Pvt. Ltd.
155. S.Vishwanath, Planner & Rainwater Harvesting Consultant

Note: Other than the enlisted interviews, I also had casual conversations with other individuals including auto-drivers driving me to different destinations every day, users of PO Ground and researchers whose names do not appear in this list but whose inputs provided valuable insights regarding conceptualizations of public space and everyday life in the city.

**Appendix Two**  
**BDA's list of lakes that were converted to other uses**

	<b>Name of the Lake</b>	<b>Converted to</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Type of Conversion</b>
				Residential
1	Marenahalli *	Marenahalli layout	Village	Layout
2	Kodihalli *	New Tippasandra/ Government buildings	Village	Residential Layout
3	Subhashnagar *	Subhashnagar layout	Village	Residential Layout
4	Kurubarahalli *	Kurubarahalli layout	Village	Residential Layout
5	Sinivagulu *	ST Bed Layout	Village	Hockey Stadium
6	Akkithimimmanahalli *	Sai Hockey Stadium	Village	Residential Layout
7	Millers * Sarakki Agrahara/	-	Cantonment	Layout
8	Doresanipalya	JP Nagar 4th Phase	Village	BDA Layout Residential
9	Chinnagara	Ejipura Karnataka Golf Association	Village	Layout
10	Challaghatta	Domlur Second Stage	Village	Sports
11	Domulur	Siddapura/Jayanagar 1st Block	Village	BDA Layout
12	Siddapura	RMV 2nd Stage, 1st Block	Village	BDA Layout
13	Geddalahalli	RMV 2nd Stage, 2nd Block	Village	BDA Layout
14	Nagashettihalli		Village	BDA Layout Residential
15	Tyagarajanagar	Tyagarajanagar	Village	Layout
16	Tumkur	Mysore Lamps	Village	Manufacturing
17	Ramshetty Palya kere	Milk Colony (Playground)	Village	Recreation
18	Agasana	Gayathri Devi Park Rajajinagar (Mahalakshmiapuram)	Village	Recreation Residential
19	Ketamaranahalli	Minerva Mills / Open ground	Village	Layout Manufacturing/ Open space
20	Gangashetty	Krishna Floor Mills	Village	Manufacturing
21	Jakraya	Kempedegowda Bus Terminal	Village	Public transport facility
22	Dharmambudhi		<i>Peté</i>	Residential
23	Agarahar hosa kere	Cheluvadipalya	Village	Layout

24	Kalasisipalya	Kalasisipalya	<i>Peté</i>	Residential Layout
25	Sampangi	Kanteerva Stadium	<i>Peté</i>	Sports
26	Shule Tank	Ashoknagar Football Stadium	Village	Sports
27	Sunkal Tank	KSRTC Regional Workshop	Village	Institutional
28	Koramangala	National Dairy Research Institute	Village	Institutional
29	Hoskere	Residential Railway Stockyard	Village	Institutional Residential
30	Sonnehalli	Austin town	Cantonment	Layout Residential
31	Gokula Tank	Mattikere	Village	Layout Residential
32	Vidyaranyaपुरa	Vidyaranyaपुरa / Jalhalli East	Village	Layout Residential
33	Kadugondanahalli	Kadugondanahalli	Village	Layout
34	Hennur	Nagavara (HBR Layout)	Village	BDA Layout
35	Banaswadi	Subbapalya Extension	Village	BDA Layout Residential
36	Chennasandra	Pulla Reddy Layout	Village	Layout Residential
37	Vijinapura (Kotturu)	Rajarajeswari Layout	Village	Layout Residential
38	Murueshpalya	Murueshpalya	Village	Layout
39	Parangipalya	HSR Layout	Village	BDA Layout
40	Mestripalya	Mestripalya (Open Ground)	Village	Open space Residential
41	Timeryard	Timeryard Layout	Cantonment	Layout Residential
42	Gangodanahalli	Gangodanahalli	Village	Layout Residential
43	Vijayanagar Chord Road	Vijayanagar	Village	Layout
44	Oddarapalaya	Rajajinagar (Industrial area) Shivanahalli (Playground) /	Village	Manufacturing Manufacturing/ Open space
45	Saneguruvanahalli	KSPCB Buildings	Village	Open space

\* Converted under Mosquito Eradication Program

Source: Nesargi Bengaluru. BDA 2010.

## References

- Alternate Law Forum. 2003. *Of Master Plans and Illegalities in an Era of Transition*. Retrieved from <http://www.altlawforum.org/PUBLICATIONS/Master%20Plans%20and%20Illegalities.pdf> (Retrieved on 16 February 2009).
- Alternate Law Forum. n.d. ALF Homepage. Retrieved from <http://www.altlawforum.org/> (Retrieved on 21 March 2013).
- Amin, A. 2008. Collective Culture and Urban Public Space. *City*, 12(1), 5-24. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13604810801933495> (Retrieved on 27 June 2008).
- Anjaria, J.S. 2006. Street Hawkers and Public Space in Mumbai. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 41(21), 2140-2146.
- Anjaria, J. S. 2009. Guardians of the Bourgeois City: Citizenship, Public Space, and Middle-Class Activism in Mumbai. *City & Community*. 8(4), 391–406.
- Appadurai, A. 1987. Street Culture. *The India Magazine* 8(1), 2-23.
- Arabindoo, P. 2005. A Class Act: Bourgeois Ordering of Public Spaces in Chennai. *BASAS Annual Conference 2005*.
- Arabindoo, P. 2011. City of Sand: Stately Re-Imagination of Marina Beach in Chennai. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 35(2), 379–401.
- Balasubramaniam, V. 2011. Greed and Connivance. (Report by former Additional Chief Secretary and Chairman of the Government of Karnataka's Task Force for Recovery and Protection of Public Lands). Retrieved from <http://bangalore.citizenmatters.in/docs/2011/GoKVBalaTaskForceReport.pdf> (Retrieved on 31 May 2012).
- Bangalore Development Authority. 2012. The Bangalore Development Authority Act 1976. Retrieved from <http://www.scribd.com/sindhulaw/d/77763774-BDA-Act> (Retrieved on 31 May 2012).
- Bangalore Development Authority. 2007. Bangalore Master Plan – 2015; Volume One: Vision Document. Government of Karnataka.
- Bangalorean, The. 2008, October 30. Bellandur Lake: Problem of Plenty. *Sights, Sounds and Smells of Bangalore*. Retrieved from [http://bangalorebuzz.blogspot.com/2008\\_10\\_01\\_archive.html](http://bangalorebuzz.blogspot.com/2008_10_01_archive.html) (Retrieved on 03 April 2009).
- Baud, I. & Nainan, N. 2008. Negotiated Spaces for Representation in Mumbai: Ward Committees, Advanced Locality Management and the Politics of Middle-Class Activism. *Environment and Urbanization*; 20: 483. Retrieved from <http://eau.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/20/2/483> (Retrieved on 6 July 2011).



Baviskar, A. 2002. The Politics of the City. *Seminar*. Retrieved from [http://www.india-seminar.com/2002/516/516amita\\_baviskar.htm](http://www.india-seminar.com/2002/516/516amita_baviskar.htm) (Retrieved on 11 April 2010).

Baviskar, A. 2003. Between Violence and Desire: Space, Power, and Identity in the Making of Metropolitan Delhi. *International Social Science Journal*, 55(1), 89-98. Retrieved from <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/bpl/issj/2003/00000055/00000001/art00023> (Retrieved on 02 February 2008).

Bayat, A. 2000. From 'Dangerous Classes' to 'Quiet Rebels': Politics of the Urban Subaltern in the Global South. *International Sociology*, 15:533-557.

Benei, V. & C.J. Fuller. 2001. *The Everyday State & Society in Modern India*. Social Science Press.

Benjamin, S. & Raman, B. 2001. Democracy, Inclusive Governance and Poverty in Bangalore, *Urban Governance, Partnership and Poverty*. Working Paper 26, The University of Birmingham.

Benjamin, S. 2003. From Income to Urban Contest in Global Settings: Chronic Poverty in Bangalore. *CPRC-IIPA Working Paper*. Retrieved from <http://www.chronicpoverty.org/p/326/publication-details.php> (Retrieved on 15 January 2009).

Benjamin, S. 2008. Occupancy Urbanism: Radicalizing Politics and Economy beyond Policy and Programs. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 32(3), 719-729.

Bhan, G. 2009. "This is No Longer the City I Once Knew". Evictions, the Urban Poor and the Right to the City in Millennial Delhi. *Environment and Urbanization*. 21(1): 127-142.

Bhowmik, S.K. 2006. Social Security for Street Vendors. *Seminar*. Retrieved from [http://www.india-seminar.com/2006/568/568\\_sharit\\_k\\_bhowmik.htm](http://www.india-seminar.com/2006/568/568_sharit_k_bhowmik.htm) (Retrieved on 10 April 2010).

Birkinshaw, Matt. 2013. Infrastructure and Governance: A View from the JnNURM. Eighth Annual International Conference on Public Policy and Management - Infrastructure: Hard and Soft. Conference Proceedings. Retrieved from [http://www.academia.edu/4618141/Infrastructure\\_and\\_Governance\\_A\\_View\\_from\\_the\\_JNNURM](http://www.academia.edu/4618141/Infrastructure_and_Governance_A_View_from_the_JNNURM) (Retrieved on 17 May 2014)

Boer, R.W.J. & Vries, J. de. 2009. The Right to the City as a Tool for Urban Social Movements: The Case of Barceloneta. *The New Urban Question – Urbanism beyond Neo-Liberalism*, The 4th International Conference of the International Forum on Urbanism (IFoU): Amsterdam/Delft, 1321-1330.

Buchanan, F. 1807. *Journey from Madras Through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar*. T. Cadell and W.Davies.

Campbell, S. 2003. Case Studies in Planning: Comparative Advantages and the Problem of Generalization. *Urban and Regional Research Collaborative Working Paper Series, URRRC 02-07*. Retrieved from [www.caup.umich.edu/workingpapers](http://www.caup.umich.edu/workingpapers) (Retrieved 22 February 2013).

Carr, S., Francis, M., Rivlin, L.G., Stone, A.M. 1992. *Public Space*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CASUMM. 2007. *The Bangalore Metro: for....?* Bangalore.

Central Secretariat, GOI. 2006. Environmental Impact Assessment Report of Central Secretariat – Badarpur Corridor. 2006. Retrieved from [http://www.delhimetrorail.com/eia%20report/envioremnt\\_impact\\_assesement\\_Central\\_Secretariate\\_Badarpur\\_Corridor-1.pdf](http://www.delhimetrorail.com/eia%20report/envioremnt_impact_assesement_Central_Secretariate_Badarpur_Corridor-1.pdf). (Retrieved on 27 September 2012).

Chakrabarty, D. 1991. Open Space/Public Place: Garbage, Modernity and India. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 14(1), 5–31.

Chandra, M. 2004. Bridging Everyday and High Politics – the CAA and Inclusion in Kolkata, India. Paper presented at the 18<sup>th</sup> European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, 6-9 July, in Lund, Sweden. Retrieved from <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/EASASpapers/31MedhaChandra.pdf> (Retrieved on 16 May 2014).

Chatterjee, P. 2004. *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Chattopadhyay, S. 2005. *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism, and the Colonial Uncanny*. London: Routledge.

Childs, M.C. 2004. *Squares: A Public Place Design Guide for Urbanists*. Albuquerque: University of Mexico Press.

CIVIC. n.d. CIVIC Homepage. Retrieved from <http://civicspace.in/content/what-we-do> (Retrieved on 21 March 2013).

CIVIC. n.d. What we do - CIVIC. Retrieved from <http://civicspace.in/content/what-we-do> (Retrieved on 21 March 2013).

CIVIC. 2010. Implementation of Basic Services to the Urban Poor (BSUP) under Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM): Case Study of Bengaluru Slums (Executive Summary). Retrieved from <http://www.civicspace.in/sites/default/files/attachments/Study%20of%20BSUP%20under%20JNNURM%20in%20Bangalore's%20Slums-2010-1-f.pdf> (Retrieved on 16 May 2014).

Coelho, K., Kamath, L. & Vijayabaskar, M. 2011. Infrastructures of Consent: Interrogating Citizen Participation Mandates in Indian Urban Governance. *IDS Working Paper 362*: Institute of Development Studies.

Crawford, M. 1995. Contesting the Public Realm: Struggles over Public Space in Los Angeles. *Journal of Architectural Education*, 49(1), 4-9. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1425371> (Retrieved on 18 June 2008).

Crossa, V. 2009. Resisting the Entrepreneurial City: Street Vendors' Struggle in Mexico City's Historic Center. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 33(1), 43-63.

Da Cunha, D. & Mathur, A. 2006. *Deccan Traverses: The Making of Bangalore's Terrain*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co.

Da Cunha, D. & Mathur, A. 2008. From Garden City to *Tota*? In A. De (Ed.), *Multiple City: Writings on Bangalore* (pp.22-31). New Delhi: Penguin Books.

Dahiya, B. 2005. Understanding Local Politics, Democracy and Civil Society; Environmental Governance in Urban India. In C.Bates & S.Basu (Eds.). *Rethinking Indian Political Institutions*, (pp.107-24). Anthem Press.

Denzin, N.A. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.) 1998. *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Deponi. 2009, May 23. "Shraddha" Ceremony for the Death of Bangalore Trees. Bangalore Metblogs. Retrieved from <http://bangalore.metblogs.com/tag/hasiru-usiru/> (Retrieved on 12 April 2013).

Deshpande, S. 2007. The Metamorphosis. In J. Kodkani & R.E. Sudhir (Eds.), *Bean Town to Boom Town: Bangalore in the World of Words*, (pp.38-46). New Delhi: Rupa & Co.

Desai, R. & Sanyal, C.R. 2012. *Urbanizing Citizenship: Contested Spaces in Indian Cities*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Dey, P., Raghupati, U.P., Thakur, S. and Gupta, S. 2006. Looking Back to Look Ahead: Background Paper on CDP Appraisals. NIUA WP 06-01. Retrieved from [http://www.niua.org/Publications/working\\_papers/Final%20paper-CDP%20appraisals.pdf](http://www.niua.org/Publications/working_papers/Final%20paper-CDP%20appraisals.pdf) (Retrieved on 17 May 2014).

DHNS. 2011, December 15. CA Sites Will be Resurveyed: Sadananda. *Deccan Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/212093/ca-sites-resurveyed-sadananda.html> (Retrieved on 31 May 2012).

DHNS. 2011, July 05. BDA in Slumber as Realtors Grab CA Sites. *Deccan Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/174025/bda-slumber-realtors-grab-ca.html> (Retrieved on 31 May 2012).

Dittrich, C. 2010. Governing Change. In N. Pani, S. Radhakrishna & K.G. Bhat (Eds.), *Bengaluru, Bangalore, Bengaluru: Imaginations and Their Times* (pp.233-249). New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd.

Douglass, M. & Friedmann, J. (Eds.). 1998. *Cities for Citizens: Planning and The Rise of Civil Society in a Global Age*. John Wiley & Sons: England.

Douglass, M., Ho, K.C. & Ooi, G. 2008. *Globalization, the Rise of Civil Society and Civic Spaces in Pacific Asia Cities*. London: Routledge.

Down to Earth. 2007, October 14. Opinion Divided on Bangalore Metro Rail Project. India Environment Portal. Retrieved from <http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/news/opinion-divided-bangalore-metro-rail-project> (Retrieved on 27 September 2012).

Duneier, M. 1999. *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Eisenhardt, K. 1989. Building Theory from Case Study Research. *Academy of Management Review*. 14(4), 532-550.

Environmental Support Group. n.d. About Us - ESG. Retrieved from <http://www.esgindia.org/about-us/index.html> (Retrieved on 21 March 2013).

Environmental Support Group. 2011, November 02. Karnataka High Court Committee Strongly Discourages “Commercial” Involvement in Lake Management and Rejuvenation. Retrieved from <http://www.esgindia.org/sites/default/files/campaigns/lakes/press/esg-lakes-pil-hc-cmt-reject-pvtz-021111.pdf> (Retrieved on 12 March 2014).

Environmental Support Group. 2011. *Karnataka High Court Committee strongly discourages “commercial” involvement in lake management and rejuvenation* [PRESS RELEASE: Bangalore (02 November 2011)]. Retrieved from <http://www.esgindia.org/campaigns/lakes/press/karnataka-high-court-committee-strongly-.html> (Retrieved on 7 February 2014).

Environmental Support Group. n.d. *List of Dates/Synopsis: In the High Court of Karnataka at Bangalore W.P. No. / 2008: Under Writ Original Jurisdiction between Environment Support Group and others (Petitioners) and State of Karnataka and others (Respondents)*. Retrieved from [http://www.indiawaterportal.org/sites/indiawaterportal.org/files/Public\\_Interest\\_Litigation\\_ESG\\_Bangalore\\_Lakes\\_High\\_Court\\_2008.pdf](http://www.indiawaterportal.org/sites/indiawaterportal.org/files/Public_Interest_Litigation_ESG_Bangalore_Lakes_High_Court_2008.pdf) (Retrieved on 11 May 2011).

Fernandes, L. 2004. The Politics of Forgetting: Class Politics, State Power and the Restructuring of Urban Space in India, *Urban Studies*, 41(12), 2415-2430.

Fraser, N. 1990. Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy. *Social Text*, 25/26, 56-80. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/466240> (Retrieved on 27 July 2008)

Frietag, S.B. 1991. Enactments of Ram's Story and the Changing Nature of the 'Public' In British India. *South Asia*, 14(1), 65-90.

Gandhi, D & Shivanand, S. 2007, July 25. A Farewell to Hebbal Lake? *The Hindu*. Retrieved from <http://www.thehindu.com/2007/07/25/stories/2007072558510100.htm> (Retrieved on 20 September 2013)

Gehl, J. 1980. *Life between Buildings: Using Public Space* (Translated by Jo Koch, 1987). New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company.

Ghertner, A.D. 2011. Gentrifying the State, Gentrifying Participation: Elite Governance Programs in Delhi. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 35(3), 504–532.

Ghertner, A.D. 2012. Nuisance Talk and the Propriety of Property: Middle-class Discourses of a Slum-Free Delhi. *Antipode*, 44(4), 1161–87.

Ghosh, A. 2005. Public-Private or a Private Public? Promised Partnership of the Bangalore Agenda Task Force. *Economic & Political Weekly*. 40(47), 4914-4922.

Gidwani, V. & Baviskar, A. 2011. Urban Commons. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 46(50), 42-43.

Glover, W.J. 2008. Construing Urban Space as "Public" in Colonial India: Some Notes from the Punjab. *The Journal of Punjab Studies*, 15(1), 1-14.

Government of Karnataka. n.d. The Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act, 1976. Retrieved from [http://karnatakaforest.gov.in/English/Acts\\_Rules/acts/KTP\\_Act\\_1976.pdf](http://karnatakaforest.gov.in/English/Acts_Rules/acts/KTP_Act_1976.pdf) (Retrieved on 5 April 2013).

Government of Karnataka. n.d. Economic Survey of Karnataka 2013-14 (Prepared by the Planning, Programme Monitoring & Statistics Department). Retrieved from <http://planning.kar.nic.in/docs/economic%20survey%202013-14/Web%20Eng/14%20URBAN%20DEVELOPMENT.pdf> (Retrieved on 16 May 2014).

Government of India. 2009. Sub-Mission on Basic Services to the Urban Poor (BSUP). Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation. Retrieved from <http://urban.bih.nic.in/Docs/BSUP-Guidelines.pdf> (Retrieved on 18 May 2014).

Government of India. 2011. Census of India. Ministry of Home Affairs. Retrieved from <http://censusindia.gov.in/> (Retrieved on 20 August 2012).

Gowda, A. 2011, July 11. Scam-hit Yeddyurappa Gets Karnataka HC Notice on a Land Deal. *India Today*. Retrieved from <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/yeddy-gets-hc-notice-on-land-deal/1/144351.html> (Retrieved on 14 Jun 2012).

Hall, Peter. 2002. *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century*. 3rd Edition. Wiley-Blackwell.

Harriss, J. 2010. 'Participation' and Contestation in the Governance of Indian Cities. *Simons Papers in Security and Development*, No.3/2010.

Harriss, J. 2010. "Participation and Contestation in the Governance of Indian Cities." Workshop on "Contesting the Indian City; State, Space and Citizenship in the Global Era, Kolkota, March 5-6, 2010.

Harvey, D. 1992. Social Justice, Postmodernism and the City. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 16(4): 588–601.

Harvey, D. 2008. The Right to the City. *New Left Review* 53, 23-40.

Harvey, D. 2006. *Spaces of Global Capitalism: A Theory of Uneven Geographical Development*. Verso Books.

Harvey, D. 2012. *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. Verso Books.

Hasan, M.F. 1970. *Bangalore through the Centuries: A Historical Narrative of Bangalore*. India: Historical Publications.

Hasiru Usiru. 2005. "Call for Ideas and Solutions: How Do We Save the Trees and Manage Traffic?" *Hasiru Usiru Flyer*. Bangalore.

Holston, J. 1999. Spaces of Insurgent Citizenship. In J. Holston (Ed.), *Cities and Citizenship* (pp. 155-173). Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Hosagrahar, J. 2005. *Indigenous Modernities: Negotiating Architecture, Urbanism and Colonialism*. Great Britain: Routledge.

IISC. n.d. Bangalore City Profile. Retrieved from <http://wgbis.ces.iisc.ernet.in/energy/water/paper/bangalore/index.htm> (Retrieved on 12 March 2014).

Iyer, M. 2009, May 19. Citizens Differ over Metro. *Citizen Matters*. Retrieved from <http://bangalore.citizenmatters.in/articles/1101-bengaluru-metro-alignment-nanda-road/print> (Retrieved on 18 October 2013).

Janaagraha. n.d. About us: Janaagraha Homepage. Retrieved from <http://www.janaagraha.org/content/pages/about-us> (Retrieved on 11 April 2013).

JNNURM. 2011. Final Draft of JNNURM Primer on Implementation of the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment: State Level Reform under JNNURM. Retrieved from [http://jnnurm.nic.in/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Optional\\_Primer\\_Primer-CAA.pdf](http://jnnurm.nic.in/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Optional_Primer_Primer-CAA.pdf) (Retrieved on 5 December 2013).

Kalia, R. 2006. Modernism, Modernization and Post-colonial India: A Reflective Essay. *Planning Perspectives*, 21(2), 133-156.

Kamath, L. & Vijayabaskar, M. 2009. Limits and Possibilities of Middle Class Associations as Urban Collective Actors. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 44 (26-27), 368-376.

Karnataka High Court. 1997. *S.G. Heble and Ors. vs Bangalore Development Authority* ... on 29 August, 1997. Retrieved from <http://indiankanoon.org/doc/619937/> (Retrieved on 6 June 2012).

Karnataka High Court. 2002. *Vishwa Chetna Trust And Anr. vs R.P.C. Layout Residents Welfare*. Retrieved from <http://www.indiankanoon.org/doc/905168/> (Retrieved on 22 April 2012).

Karnataka High Court. 2005. *Bhavani Housing Co-Operative vs Bangalore Development Authority*. Retrieved from <http://www.indiankanoon.org/doc/338747/> (Retrieved on 19 May 2012).

Kaviraj, S. 1997. Filth and the Public Sphere: Concepts and Practices about Space in Calcutta. *Public Culture*, 10(1), 83-113.

Khandekar, S. 2008, November 05. High Court Stays Privatisation of Lakes. *Citizen Matters*. <http://bangalore.citizenmatters.in/articles/view/577-lake-protection> (Retrieved on 11 March 2009).

Krueckeberg, D.A. 1995. The Difficult Character of Property: To Whom do Things Belong? *APA Journal*, 61(3), 301-309.

Lake Development Authority. 2002. LDA Memorandum of Association and Byelaws of Association & Rules, 2002.

Lakshmikantha, B.K. 2012, April 20. Land-grab Slur on Man Tipped to be Next Bangalore Mayor. *DNA*. Retrieved on [http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report\\_land-grab-slur-on-man-tipped-to-be-next-bangalore-mayor\\_1678304](http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report_land-grab-slur-on-man-tipped-to-be-next-bangalore-mayor_1678304) (Retrieved on 31 May 2012).

Lefèbvre, H. 1996. *Writings on Cities*. (Selected, translated, and introduced by E. Kofman & E. Lebas). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Lok Satta Party. n.d. Lok Satta Party: New Politics for a New Generation. Retrieved from <http://www.loksatta.org/cms/> (Retrieved on 12 March 2014).

Low, S.M. 2000. *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Low, S. & Smith, N. 2006. *The Politics of Public Space*. New York: Taylor and Francis Group, Routledge.

Manjusainath, G. 2011, March 27. Land Sharks Prey on Lakes. *Deccan Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/149151/land-sharks-prey-lakes.html> (Retrieved on 5 January 2012).

Maringanti, A. 2011. No Estoppel: Claiming Right to the City via the Commons. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 46 (50), 64-70.

Massey, D. 1992. Politics and Space/Time. *New Left Review*, I/196. Retrieved from <http://www.newleftreview.org/?page=article&view=1693> (Retrieved on 17 June 2011).

Massey, D. 1994. *From Space, Place and Gender*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Massey, D. 2005. *For Space*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Mawdsley, E. 2004. India's Middle Classes and the Environment. *Development and Change*, 35(1), 79-103. <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/118749718/PDFSTART> (Retrieved on 2 August 2008).

Merrifield, A. 2011. The Right to the City and Beyond. *City*, 15(3-4), 473-481.

Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation, GOI. 2009. National Policy on Urban Street Vendors. Retrieved from <http://mhupa.gov.in/policies/StreetPolicy09.pdf> (Retrieved on 12 March 2014).

Ministry of Urban Development. 2011. Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission. Retrieved from <http://jnnurm.nic.in/> (Retrieved on 10 March 2014).

Ministry of Home Affairs, GOI. 2005. Right to Information Act, 2005 (Act No.22 of 2005). Retrieved from <http://rti.gov.in/rti-act.pdf> (Retrieved on 25 February 2014)

Mitchell, D. 1995. The End of Public Space? People's Park, Definitions of Public, and Democracy. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 85(1): 108-133.

Mitchell D. 2003. *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*. The Guilford Press: New York.



- Mishra, K. & Mishra, D. 2000. Visioning Local Planning And Governance: Post 73<sup>rd</sup> & 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment Acts. Working Paper 143. Institute of Rural Management, Anand. Retrieved from [https://www.irma.ac.in/pdf/randp/761\\_41422.pdf](https://www.irma.ac.in/pdf/randp/761_41422.pdf) (Retrieved on 16 May 2014).
- Mohan, A.K. & Rajagopal, C. 2010. Outsourcing Governance? Revising the Master Plan of Bangalore, *46th ISOCARP Congress 2010*, 1-11.
- Mohan, D. & Vaidyanathan, V. 2009, February 23. "Narrow Avenue, Broader Minds" in *Citizen Matters*. Retrieved from <http://bangalore.citizenmatters.in/articles/view/838-intach-heritage-walk-avenue-road> (Retrieved on 9 August 2009).
- Mohapatra, B. 2013. Local Self-Governance and People's Empowerment. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, 59 (4), 804-11.
- Moudgal, Sandeep. 2011, December. BDA's 7,000 Acres Under Litigation. *Deccan Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/120037/ipl-2012.html#> (Retrieved on 9 August 2012).
- Mumford, L. 1937. What is a City? *Architectural Record*, 82(5), 59-62.
- Murray's 1924 Handbook. 1924. Bangalore 1924 Map.gif. *Wikipedia*. Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bangalore1924\\_map.gif](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bangalore1924_map.gif) (Retrieved on 29 December 2012).
- Nair, J. 2002. Past Perfect: Architecture and Public Life in Bangalore. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 61(4), 1205-1236.
- Nair, J. 2005. *Promise of the Metropolis: Bangalore's Twentieth Century*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Natural Resources Data Management System. n.d. 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments (12<sup>th</sup> Schedule). Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India. Retrieved from [http://nrdms.gov.in/74th\\_ammendment.asp](http://nrdms.gov.in/74th_ammendment.asp) (Retrieved on 18 May 2014).
- Navya, P.K. 2013, January 16. Bengaluru's CA Sites are 'Crorepathi Amenities'. *Citizen Matters*. Retrieved from <http://bangalore.citizenmatters.in/articles/4815-bda-civic-amenity-sites-crores-of-losses> (Retrieved on 09 August 2012).
- Navya, P.K. 2011, September 04. Beware, the BDA Fuels Land Grabbing. *Citizen Matters*. Retrieved from <http://bangalore.citizenmatters.in/articles/view/3340-beware-bda-fuels-land-grabbing> (Retrieved on 03 May 2011).

- Navya, P.K. 2011, February 01. Lying Unwatched: Bengaluru's 1067 Parks and Playgrounds. *Citizen Matters*. Retrieved from <http://bangalore.citizenmatters.in/articles/2734-parks-playgrounds-bbmp> (Retrieved on 13 February 2014).
- Neuman, M. 1998. Does Planning need the Plan? *American Planning Association. Journal of the American Planning Association*, 64(2), 208-220.
- Norris, P.B. 1996. *Follow My Bangalorey Man*. BACSA.
- Oldenburg, P. 1976. *Big City Government in India: Councillor, Administrator and Citizen in Delhi*. University of Arizona Press.
- O'Yeah, Z. 2008. Majestic: The Place of Constant Return. In A. De (Ed.), *Multiple City: Writings on Bangalore* (pp.150-56). India: Penguin Books.
- Pani, N., Radhakrishna, S. & Bhat, K.G. 2010. *Bengaluru, Bangalore, Bengaluru*. Sage: New Delhi.
- Patrao, M. 2013, December 17. When Parks were a Lark. *Deccan Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/374962/when-parks-were-lark.html> (Retrieved on 13 February 2014).
- Perry, A. 1998. Law and Urban Change in an Indian City. In E. Fernandes & A. Varley (Eds.), *Illegal Cities: Law and Urban Change in Developing Countries* (pp.88-103). Zed Books: London.
- Purcell, M. 2002. Excavating Lefebvre: The Right to the City and its Urban Politics of the Inhabitant. *GeoJournal*, 58(2-3), 99-108.
- Pu, M. (Ed). 2001. *Public Places in Asia Pacific Cities: Current Issues and Strategies*. Dordedcht: The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Rajagopal, A. 2001. The Violence of Commodity Aesthetics: Hawkers, Demolition Raids, and a New Regime of Consumption. *Social Text*, 68(3), 91-113.
- Rajagopal, C. 2008. Bangalore: The Informal Economy of the Historic Pete. *Journal of the Development and Research Organisation for Nature, Arts and Heritage*, 5(1), 137-46.
- Raman, B. 2010. *Street Traders, Place and Politics: A Case Study of Bangalore*. (PhD Dissertation). London School of Economics.
- Ramani, C.V. 2011, September 19. BBMP Contemplating New Policy for More Revenue from Markets. *The Hindu*. Retrieved from <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/bangalore/bbmp-contemplating-new-policy-for-more-revenue-from-markets/article2467138.ece> (Retrieved on 14 February 2014).

- Rao, S. & Suma P. (Eds). 2007. *Patrick Geddes in India*. Bangalore: Select Books.
- Ravindran, D.S. 2007. *Wither Open Spaces? A Politico-economic Analysis of Open Spaces Provisioning in Bangalore, India* (PGPPM Dissertation). Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore.
- Rao, S. 2012, February 7. Goodbye Gandhi Bazaar: What Do We Destroy When We Demolish Illegal Structures? *Global Urbanist*. Retrieved from <http://globalurbanist.com/2012/02/07/goodbye-gandhi-bazaar> (Retrieved on 10 June 2013).
- Rao, S. 2011, March 15. Sharks Swallow Chunks of Government Land. *Times of India*. Retrieved from [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-03-15/bangalore/28691149\\_1\\_land-grabbers-committee-report-bbmp](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-03-15/bangalore/28691149_1_land-grabbers-committee-report-bbmp) (Retrieved on 03 May 2012).
- Ministry of Home Affairs, GOI. 2005. The Right to Information Act, 2005 (Act No.22 of 2005). Retrieved from <http://rti.gov.in/webacrti.htm> (Retrieved on 18 February 2014).
- Rosenzweig, R. & Blackmar, E. 1992. *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Roy, A. 2004. The Gentleman's City: Urban Informality in the Calcutta of New Communism. In A. Roy & N. AlSayyad (Eds.), *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia* (pp.147-170). Lexington Books: Lanham.
- Roy, A. 2005. Urban Informality: Towards an Epistemology in Planning, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 71(2), 147-158.
- Sen, A. 2000. *Development as Freedom*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Sen, J. 2001. The Unintended City. *Seminar*. Retrieved from <http://www.india-seminar.com/2001/500/500%20jai%20sen.htm> (Retrieved on 17 January 2014).
- Sennet, R. 1973. *The Fall of Public Man*. New York. London: W.W.Norton and Company.
- Sharan, A. 2002. Claims On Cleanliness: Environment and Justice in Contemporary Delhi. *Sarai Reader 02*, 31-37. Retrieved from <http://www.sarai.net/publications/readers/02-the-cities-of-everyday-life> (Retrieved on 10 June 2011).
- Sharma, D. 2011. An Evaluation of the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act: A Case Study of Chandigarh, India. *JOAAG*, 6 (1), 83-92. Retrieved from [http://joaag.com/uploads/6\\_1\\_-8\\_Case\\_Study\\_Sharma.pdf](http://joaag.com/uploads/6_1_-8_Case_Study_Sharma.pdf) (Retrieved on 16 May 2014)

- Sreenivasaraju, S. 2008. *Keeping Faith With the Mother Tongue: The Anxieties of a Local Culture*. Bangalore: Navakarnataka Publications Pvt. Ltd.
- Srinivas, S. 2004. *Landscapes of Urban Memory: The Sacred and the Civic in India's High-Tech City*. Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan.
- Srinivas, S. 2008. The Karaga Festival: A Performance Archive of an Alternative Urban Ecology. In A. De (Ed.), *Multiple City: Writings on Bangalore* (pp.133-139). New Delhi: Penguin Books.
- Staley, E. 1981. *Monkey Tops: Old Buildings in Bangalore Cantonment*. Bangalore: Tara Books.
- Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. 1990. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Sundaresan, J. 2011. Planning as Commoning: Transformation of a Bangalore Lake. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 46(50), 71-79.
- TNN. 2011, December 16. Government to Fix Irregularities in CA Site Allotment. *Times of India*. Retrieved from [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-12-16/mysore/30524341\\_1\\_site-allotment-clear-encroachments-irregularities](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-12-16/mysore/30524341_1_site-allotment-clear-encroachments-irregularities) (Retrieved on 3 May 2012).
- TDR Bazaar Infrastructures Pvt. Ltd. 2012. What is DRC? *TDR Bazaar*. Retrieved from <http://www.tdrbazaar.com/abouttdr.html> (Retrieved on 06 March 2014).
- TNN. 2012, May 08. *Court Pulls Up Bangalore Development Authority, Cancels Civic Amenity Site Allotment*. *Times of India*. Retrieved from [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-05-08/bangalore/31626187\\_1\\_civic-amenity-bda-act-allotment](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-05-08/bangalore/31626187_1_civic-amenity-bda-act-allotment) (Retrieved on 31 May 2012).
- UDD-GOK. 2007. Zoning of Landuse and Regulations: Revised Master Plan 2015, Bangalore 2007:III. Retrieved from <http://www.advantagekarnataka.com/images/pdf/Bangalore-Development-Authority-Zoning-Regulations-RMP2015.pdf> (Retrieved on 12 March 2014).
- Ullasavadan. 2009, July 05. Flashpoint Metro. *Skyscrapercity.com*, Retrieved from <http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?p=39269754> (Retrieved on 04 April 2011).
- Vidyarthi, S. 2004. 74<sup>th</sup> Constitution Amendment Act And Present Economic Growth As Catalyzing Agent For Urban Development. *ITPI Journal*. 1:3 (2004) 65-9. Retrieved from <http://itpi.org.in/pdfs/july2004/chapter8.pdf> (Retrieved on 16 May 2014).

Vittal, V. 2010, February 10. ABIDe Pins High Hopes on New Reforms Blueprint for Bengaluru. *Citizen Matters*. Retrieved from <http://bangalore.citizenmatters.in/articles/1769-abide-bangalore-plan-2020-blueprint> (Retrieved on 14 October 2013).

Wankhede, H.S. 2008. The Political and the Social in the Dalit Movement Today. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 43(6), 50-57.

Weinstein, L. 2009. Democracy in the Globalizing Indian City: Engagements of Political Society and the State in Globalizing Mumbai. *Politics & Society*, 37(3), 397-427.

Yajaman, A.M. 2013, Agara Lake on Track. *Citizen Matters*. Retrieved from [http://bangalore.citizenmatters.in/blogs/like-a-lake/blog\\_posts/agara-lake-on-track](http://bangalore.citizenmatters.in/blogs/like-a-lake/blog_posts/agara-lake-on-track) (Retrieved on 12 March 2014).

Zérah, M. 2007. Middle-class Neighbourhood Associations as Political Players in Bombay. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 42(47), 61-68.

Zukin, S. 2010. *Naked City: The Death and Life of American Cities*. New York: Oxford University Press.

---

<sup>i</sup> Srinivas (2004:135-6) describes the decline of lakes in Bangalore thus, “The degradation of Bangalore’s environmental base has been one of the most important subtexts of the city’s transformation. In 1985, for example, the Government of Karnataka set up the Lakshman Rau Committee, so named after its chairman, to make recommendations with respect to the tanks in the city area. The committee reported that of the 390 tanks within the jurisdiction of the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA), 127 tanks lay within the conurbation limits; of these only 81 tanks were ‘live’, the others having been breached after Independence due to various ‘development’ activities. A report published in 1993 by the Centre for Science and Technology, a non-governmental organization in Bangalore, noted that of the 127 tanks under the purview of the Lakshman Rau Committee, three tanks have already been converted by the BDA into residential layouts and a further seven tanks could not be traced. Of the other tanks, eight had completely changed their use and were converted to residential and commercial properties, 18 were undergoing transformation into slums and housing for the poorer strata, some through government schemes, and seven had been leased to various parties, public and private, for the purpose of building colonies, bus depots, schools, hospitals and colleges. The BDA had encroached on 27 tanks beds for creation of housing layouts. In addition, 23 tanks were threatened because of mud lifting and brick making; there was solid waste dumping in 25 tanks; domestic waste flows in 56 tanks; and industrial effluents in 14 tanks.”

<sup>ii</sup> “...over a period of time, actual area under open spaces in Bangalore has not increased to a great extent despite increasingly large provision of open space in the planning process. In fact in the most recent land use analysis (2003), open spaces have recorded a decline in absolute terms compared to 1990 land use. While the ODP proposed to increase the existing open space by a factor of 2.2, this increased to 2.9 in CDP-84, to 3.7 in CDP-1995 and to 5.5 in the proposed Master Plan – 2015. This very clearly brings out the growing gap between the plans and achievement.” (Ravindran, 2007, p.74)

---

iii “A simple calculation would show that out of the 15,165 Acres “handed over” to the Engineering Section of the BDA, 10% or 1,516 Acres should be CA sites as per BDA Rules in BDA-layouts alone. The area covered by the CA sites is not forthcoming from the BDA. It is said that till now the BDA added together the CA sites and Parks and Open Spaces and the total area together is shown as 31.53 lakh sq.meters equivalent to 780 acres. As the Engineering Wing has taken possession of 15,165 acres and formed layouts, 10% of this area should be CA sites and another 15% should be Parks, Playgrounds and other open spaces – in all 25% of the total area. This comes to 3,791 acres as against which the BDA has said it is in possession of only 780 acres.” (Balasubramaniam, 2011, p.45)

iv As a consequence of inadequate Constitutional provision for Local Self Government, democracy in municipal governance was not stable. Though the respective municipal acts of the States provided for regular elections to municipal bodies, they were frequently suspended and superseded for indefinite periods of time. Frequent and indefinite suspensions of supersessions eroded the very basis of local self-government and had a negative effect on democracy at the grassroots level. The general position with regard to financial resources of the municipal bodies was also not satisfactory. Over the years, there was a steady encroachment on the assigned functions and revenues of Urban Local Bodies by specialized agencies of the State Governments. As a result, many urban local bodies became weak and were not able to perform effectively. The weakened status of Urban Local Bodies crystallized public opinion in favour of need for a Constitutional guarantee to safeguard the interests of urban local bodies in order to provide for

- Regular and fair conduct of elections to these bodies
- Holding of elections within a specified time limit in case of supersession
- Adequate representation of SC/ST and women in the elected bodies
- Placing on firm footing the relationship between the State Governments and the urban local bodies with respect to:
  - functions and taxation powers of the urban local bodies
  - arrangements for revenue sharing between the State Government and the urban local bodies
- Involvement of elected representatives at grassroots level in planning at the district and metropolitan levels. (Ministry of Urban Development, n.d)

v Excerpt from an article titled “The public must control public places”<sup>v</sup> (Business Standard. (2010). “The public must control public places”. <http://www.business-standard.com/india/storypage.php?autono=401701> (Retrieved on 21 Jul 2010): “Some residents of Hyderabad have initiated a campaign to assert their ‘right to walk’. The campaign is led by a middle-aged lady who finds it offensive to have to walk past patches where men relieve themselves — and these in turn will point to the extreme scarcity of public conveniences. The point is that when public money is spent to improve public thoroughfares, no thought is given to the right of citizens to walk comfortably and safely along those roads. All too often, carriageways are widened by eating into pavements, placing the needs and demands of those using motorised transport over those of walkers. A similar public protest movement has gained momentum in Bangalore, in which the affected residents of particular areas and prominent citizens who empathise with them have banded together to protest against counter-productive road-widening work. Homes, shops and grand trees are being razed to make way for slightly wider roads, which will do little to relieve the traffic congestion for which the city is now known. The citizens’ contention is that a contractor-civic official-petty politician nexus is focused on helping itself, unconcerned about what real benefit road-widening projects and flyovers bring to the public, and the damage they cause to public spaces. They have been emboldened by a concerted citizens’ campaign which was able to halt the construction of a war memorial in a prominent park which is currently just a green lung.

The time may have come to formalise the avenues for citizens to express their views. One of the reforms that the national urban renewal mission says civic authorities should put in place in order to qualify for central funding is active ward committees, and these should be consulted regularly when formulating an urban agenda. The NGO Janaagraha has been seeking to mobilise and train Bangalore citizens to insist on a say in the way their neighbourhoods are run. It is campaigning for a law that will make it mandatory for the civic authorities to consult local residents on their work programme and agenda. In other words, it is not enough for citizens to simply criticise local government bodies for misdirected urban growth models and the declining quality of urban life. They have to take the initiative, mobilise and make themselves heard so that they get a say in the governing of their cities, and take ownership.”

vi Intense pressure came from the buying public, especially low-income workers, to occupy lands even when they are under litigation, so large numbers of squatters constructing or renting houses throughout the

---

periphery of the city, making their own arrangements for delivery of basic services and roads. As a result of BDA's increasing immobility, many of the new dwelling units in the BDA region and even within the corporation are unauthorized or unplanned, labelled as 'revenue pockets'. If one counted all the unauthorized constructions that had come up by the mid-1980s, there were about 150,000, housing nearly one-fifth of the population of the agglomeration, without official approval and without officially planned utilities or roads. (Galagali, 1987; Pattanaij, 1997; Reddy, 1987)" (Heitzman, 2004, p.56-7).

<sup>vii</sup> "Land prices in Bangalore have continually shown increase over a period of time. Ravindra (1996) reports that the land value measured in terms of registered value of the sale deeds increased by 300% for the 'city' as a whole while varying from 100% to 1200% for individual localities, between 1976-77 and 1985-86. The land values existing in the year 1985-86 were on an average 4215% over the base year of 1950-51. The land price increase estimates from real estate agents – which are more likely to be truer – reveal an increase in the value of land in the city by 20 times between 1973-87 and 10 times between 1980-97. Development of IT sector in the 1990s brought about lopsided development of the city and contributed to further hiking of real estate prices" (Ravindran, 2007, p.127).

<sup>viii</sup> To illustrate, LDA gave the Chellakere Lake to a school trust named "Royal Concorde Education Trust" to maintain under the agency's "Adopt-a-lake" scheme for five years. According to media reports:<sup>viii</sup>

A sizeable part of the 35-acre Chellakere lake on the Outer Ring Road near HRBR Layout appears to have turned into an exclusive playground for an international school that "adopted" it two years ago. After receiving a flood of complaints from residents, the Forest Department has written to the Lake Development Authority (LDA) to "hand the lake back" to it.

Chellakere Lake, which was handed to the private Royal Concorde Education Trust under LDA's "adopt a lake" scheme for its "maintenance" in 2006 for five years, has instead "become private property of the trust," says the letter of September 8, sent to LDA by Deputy Conservator of Forests, Bangalore Urban, R.K. Srivastav.

Complete with a concrete basketball court and other facilities (including a tennis court and skating rink) the playground has been built on the lake shore where vegetation once grew, the letter states. It points out that a gate built by the Royal Concorde International School authorities along with a security guard appointed by them ensures that the right of entry to the playground is reserved for their students alone, and that "children from the vicinity or general public are not able to use these facilities."...

LDA sources have confirmed that several conditions of the policy on adoption of lakes had been violated.

L.R. Shivamegowda, former MLA and owner of the education trust which has adopted the lake, said: "We are not running a restaurant. We are running a school which is in the interest of the public. My company has invested Rs. 30 lakh in improving the lake and will be spending Rs. 50 lakh more. I am confident that we are safeguarding the lake."

<sup>ix</sup> "There has been considerable interest in recent years in the character and consequences of poor people's politics in India and throughout the global South. Characterizing them as *subaltern politics*,<sup>15</sup> *deep democracy*,<sup>16</sup> *political society*,<sup>17</sup> and *the politics of inclusion*,<sup>18</sup> political theorists have examined how seemingly marginalized groups assert their centrality and make political claims on the state. Meanwhile, because this interest in poor people's politics has arisen alongside what Gyan Prakash and others have called "the urban turn" in Indian historiography and social science,<sup>19</sup> many of these authors have highlighted political engagements occurring in and in response to the changing Indian metropolis. Their inquiries fall into two broad sets of questions. The first concerns the interests and organizational capacity of the urban poor, including how ongoing political and economic shifts—such as neoliberal globalization, transnational activism, and democratic decentralization—have shaped the character of political mobilizations. The second set focuses on the state's responsiveness to these mobilizations. While some have argued that ongoing transformations have created more inclusive spaces and compelled the state to engage more directly with the urban poor, others have highlighted the state's disengagements from this population and its political demands." (Weinstein, 2009, p.401)

<sup>x</sup> For instance, Harvey (2008:30) writes, "In Mumbai, meanwhile, 6 million people officially considered as slum dwellers are settled on land without legal title; all maps of the city leave these places blank. With the attempt to turn Mumbai into a global financial centre to rival Shanghai, the property-development boom has gathered pace, and the land that squatters occupy appears increasingly valuable. Dharavi, one of the most prominent slums in Mumbai, is estimated to be worth \$2 billion. The pressure to clear it—for environmental and social reasons that mask the land grab—is mounting daily. Financial powers backed by

---

the state push for forcible slum clearance, in some cases violently taking possession of terrain occupied for a whole generation. Capital accumulation through real-estate activity booms, since the land is acquired at almost no cost.”

<sup>xi</sup> “STREET vendors form a very important component of the urban informal sector in India. It is estimated that the total number of street vendors in the country is around 10 million.<sup>1</sup> They comprise around 2% of the total population in the metropolitan cities. This paper broadly defines a street vendor as a person who offers goods for sale to the public at large without having a permanent built-up structure from which to sell. Street vendors may be stationary in the sense that they occupy space on the pavements or other public/private spaces, or mobile in the sense that they move from place to place by carrying their wares on push carts or on their heads.” (Bhowmik, 2010)

<sup>xiii</sup> In describing the ways in which poor groups act to cope with urban life, Benjamin (2003:204) writes, “We see this in three ways. First, is the nature of the institution, (Benjamin 1996). Here, municipal government plays a key role in shaping “voice” of local groups including the poor. This was conceptualized as the “Porous Bureaucracy” to give a sense of the internal administrative circuits as poor groups influenced them in strategic ways (Benjamin 1996). The second is related to the complex local politics centered on the formation and use of “vote” banks. Although effective, this did not always favour all poor groups at all times. Poor groups, especially those in the most fragile situations, used more subtle political strategies, which we termed as “Politics by Stealth” (Benjamin and Bhuvanewari 2001). The third was the way the PDS system was used not only to access subsidized food and daily consumption items, but also to claim land tenure and political voice.”

<sup>xiii</sup> “Ironically the English term public would be used in the discourse of this crucial detournement of space. If asked, the people would reply that they settled there precisely because this space was *pablik*, not owned by individual property owners, and as poor people because they had a quasi-claim to settle in such state or municipal property” (Kaviraj, 1997, p.108).

<sup>xiv</sup> “Because of that poverty increases. In order to get votes during election times, these people come and distribute free rice, money, saris, and all sorts of goodies. And in the poverty-stricken state that people are, they accept these freebies because they meet their immediate needs, and elect these crooked politicians. These people want to be in power for the sake of their own property security and to maintain their influence over decision making. If such people become public representatives in the government, what kind of policies can we expect them to make? They will make policies to favor themselves. They are not concerned about how the city is growing; they are not concerned about eradicating poverty or educating people. There is a growing indifference with each generation over the state of the country. (JR 2009)

<sup>xv</sup> Benjamin (2003:246) writes, “What is striking in all the cases is the low political clout of these groups. Our earlier work showed the critical importance of political voice via local politicians – even more important than advocacy attempts by NGOs, and the so-called “participatory” projects. Political voice was often important to subvert at times a regressive development agenda promoted by NGOs and “poverty projects” (Benjamin and Bhuvanewari 2001) and to consider political voice not only as an explicit protest but rather the importance of “politics by stealth”. In parallel, this also required groups to interface with the local government in a pro-active way and the use of the ‘porous bureaucracy’. However, the critical difference between those cases and the ones presented here is two fold. First, the poor groups were relatively more “urbanized” and grouped for the sake of solidarity – allowing a keen sense of urban politics to emerge. Second, their relative stability and consolidation in central city areas or within local economy rich “slum belts” backed political voice with a complicated form of economic clout set in place by reciprocal connections with other social groups including those more well endowed than them. It is these comparisons that may help to differentiate between households and individuals in different situations of poverty and when they seem to slip into a chronic situation.”

<sup>xvi</sup> The social worker recounted BMRCL’s process of slum clearance in another slum in the W area, “There is also a slum called Ganesh Gudi which is going to be demolished for the Metro in a couple of days from today. If a slum is demolished then the dislocated people should be given homes elsewhere. And they need some Rs.12,000 or more for shifting and settling when they move to Laggere where they were finally rehabilitated. We found out about the impending demolition, informed the people and protested last July and stopped the demolition. They brought in bulldozers and started razing down the hutments, but we organized the people and resisted the bulldozing. There was a school, shops – all those were demolished. Only our slum is standing now..... We visit the slum daily. During one such visit, those people told us that they were offered Rs.5000 to vacate their homes in the slum. The Metro folks went and told them that it is government land that they have to vacate and that they would be compensated Rs.5000 per household to



---

vacate. The slum dwellers actually started packing up and getting ready to leave. There were 44 families. We found out casually. Then once we found out, then we notified our network of 13 NGOs. So we all collectively found out information about the project, went and confronted to the Metro officials why they are not giving the package, talked to the BBMP officials, and Slum Board. Within a week of our collective agitation, they declared it a slum..... We did several protests. In front of Slum Board – 4 times, BBMP, Metro office, DC Office [behind Cauvery Bhavan in Majestic]..... Then what the Metro folks did was to call aside a few of the senior members of the slum and told them that they would pay them Rs.50000 if they convinced the other people to vacate the slum. Those people actually signed on the Rs.50000 agreements with the Metro saying that they will give up all claim to any homes and we will just take the money. We found out later that they'd signed.”

<sup>xvii</sup> In order to avoid exploitation that might arise from such situations, the representatives of the slum dwellers deploy their own strategies. The social worker described their approach to countering Metro officials' attempts to get away with providing as little compensation as possible, “So we also have to strategize, right? So we told them to allege that the Metro people coerced and threatened us to sign on those agreements against our will. And we got it cancelled. We got them to say that, “We did not want to sign, and now we refuse to leave this land.” We had this petition submitted to the Commissioner [BBMP?]. Thus we got that agreement scrapped and we made a new list of the petitioners which we took to all concerned agencies. Initially they proposed giving alternate housing for these people in Koodlu (Electronic City). The Metro was willing to give them compensation for the housing in Koodlu there, but that housing does not have electricity, water or school for the kids. The houses are in finishing stages now. So we rejected those houses because they lack these facilities. Then we saw the houses in Laggere – there the houses are much better and more expensive than the Koodlu housing - Rs 1.35 lacs more than the Koodlu houses. So we petitioned Metro to let these people have the Laggere housing which is nearly worth Rs.4 lacs. But the Metro folks said they would pay only the earlier promised amount. And these people were expected to pay the remaining Rs.1.35 lacs from their own pockets. So we applied for the 18% grant for SC/Sets from the BBMP and we got that money sanctioned two days back.”

<sup>xviii</sup> From the ESG PIL (2008:2), “In conformance with the aforementioned directions of the Hon'ble High Court of Karnataka and under Sec 8(1) of The Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act, 1976, the office of the Deputy Conservator of Forests, Bangalore Urban Division, Karnataka Forest Department, being Respondent – 8 in this petition, issued an order No.A9.V.CR.912/2003-04 dated 2.08.2003 to Director, Horticulture Department of Respondent – 6, withdrawing with immediate effect all orders issued previously to fell trees. Pursuant to this order, any tree felling or pruning in the city on private or public land required the permission of Respondent - 8. It also stated that two saplings have to be planted before a tree is cut and that failure to comply with these orders would invite imprisonment or heavy fine or both, in conformance with Sec 8 (22) of the Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act, 1976.”

<sup>xix</sup> “By I.A.No.I/2005, the petitioner herein has filed two documents of the proceedings of the Government of Karnataka, the authenticity of which has not been disputed by the respondents. The contents of the second document, which is found at Annexure-X of which the English translation has also been produced, would show that, with regard to the cutting of the trees within the jurisdiction of the Bangalore City, a meeting was held under the Chairmanship of the Chief Secretary and, in furtherance of the said meeting, it has been directed that with regard to the trees falling within the jurisdiction of the Bangalore Mahanagar Palike (including those on roads), it has been decided that permission has to be obtained under the Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act and permission will have to be given on top priority and that further with respect to every instance, the Bangalore Mahanagar Palike is to send details to the concerned Tree Officer in every case and the Tree Officer has to take a considered in a fair manner after exercising due caution. The contents of the said letter would further indicate that, before granting permission to cut the trees, an opportunity would be given to the representatives of ‘Hasire Usiru’, wherever possible. The learned counsel for the petitioner informs us that the petitioner is a part of that group called ‘Hasire Usiru’..... 5. The learned counsel for the petitioner submits that, if the letter dated 6.6.2005 of the State Government as per Annexure-X is implemented in its letter and spirit, the petitioner may not have any grievance and the writ petition may be disposed of accordingly. The learned counsel for the respondents submits that since a decision has already been taken by the Chief Secretary, the directions issued in the letter dated 6.6.2005 will be followed both in letter and spirit.... 6. In view of the above, we find that there is no need for us to proceed further with the matter and, on the other hand, the writ petition may be ordered to be disposed of by placing on record the decision taken at a meeting under the Chairmanship of the Chief Secretary and communicated to the Commissioner, Bangalore Mahanagar Palike, as well as to the Principal

---

Chief Conservator of Forests, and the Deputy Conservator of Forests (Tree Officer). We hope and trust that the authorities concerned will obey and comply with the directions issued in the letter dated 6.6.2005 of the State Government, in its letter and spirit. With these observations, the writ petition stands disposed of.” (3-5)

<sup>xx</sup> It is interesting to mention here what the founder of Janaagraha, Ramesh Ramanathan (2010) has to say about the dissonance between civil society organizations in Bangalore, “The problem is, I feel, unfortunately, we are still CSOs trapped in an environment where people are so ideologically entrenched there’s more moral one-upmanship that takes place. Our view on this is there is too much to be done. We are just going to go off and keep doing it. Our doors will always be open for a conversation but if somebody doesn’t want to walk through those doors, there’s nothing we can do about it.”

<sup>xxi</sup> “Looking at wikis and blogs acknowledges that media discourse, along with economic power, state power, and consumer culture, shapes the contemporary urban experience. It’s not just that old media keep running articles about how important web-based media have become, and that we know in our own lives how true this is, but that the circulation of images about the city, and about who has the right to be in specific places in the city, from neighborhoods to public spaces, is fueled to a great extent by the self-referential online conversations in local blogs. Posts are not always positive or politically correct. But they are spontaneous (or seemingly spontaneous) attempts to express common feelings of loss, quest, and anxiety about the city, and they show an urgency to convince unseen readers. Though I do not think that online communities have replaced face-to-face interaction, I do think it is important to understand the way web-based media contribute to our urban imaginary. The interactive nature of the dialogue, how each post feeds on the preceding ones and elicits more, these are expressions of both difference and consensus, and they represent partial steps towards an open public sphere in troubling times.” (Zukin, 2010, p. 27)

<sup>xxii</sup> “The question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from that of what kind of social ties, relationship to nature, lifestyles, technologies and aesthetic values we desire. The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.” (Harvey, 2008, p.23)

<sup>xxiii</sup> “23. Mrs. Laila T. Ollapally, learned Counsel appearing for the petitioner has contended that protection of the environment, open spaces for recreation and fresh air, playgrounds for children and other conveniences or amenities are matters of great public concern and of vital interest to be taken care of in a developmental scheme. Section 16[d] of the BDA Act in order to provide all those conveniences or amenities to make the life of the petitioner and others similarly situated, a meaningful one has prescribed certain percentage of area to be set-out for parks and playgrounds and other civic amenities. The BDA without -having any due regard for Section 16[d] of the BDA Act is disposing of the vacant sites to various persons without maintaining the percentage of vacant land for parks and playgrounds prescribed by Section 16[d] of the Act. It is therefore, necessary for this court to issue direction to forbear BDA to make allotment and to recall allotments which has already been made but not utilised to bring the vacant land within the ratio of the prescribed limit to provide parks and playgrounds. In support of her contention Mrs Laila T. Ollapally, relied on the decision of the Supreme Court in BANGALORE MEDICAL TRUST v. B.S. MUDDAPPA AND OTHERS, and M.C. MEHTA v. UNION OF INDIA.”

<sup>xxiv</sup> “The main grievance of the petitioners in this petition is that site Nos. 39 and 42 situated in 3rd block, Koramangala, are civic amenity sites and they were being used as playgrounds for over 20 years. That in 1992, the first respondent notified site No. 42 as a site reserved for social and cultural activities and parts of site No. 39 reserved for hospital and school and invited applications for allotment from the eligible persons for allotment. It is their contention that even though large extent of land was shown as parks and playgrounds in the development plan large extent of land were utilised for various purposes and therefore there is no vacant place for playgrounds. Site No. 42 and site No. 39 situated in Koramangala layout are being used as playgrounds for more than 20 years and it has been recognised as such by the Bangalore Development Authority and the Corporation by erecting concrete panels describing the area as "BDA Civic Amenity-Public Playground". It is their further contention that the said sites cannot be converted for different purposes in order to allot it to private persons for commercial venture. They have also further contended that the first and second respondent did not take action under the PPO Act and therefore they have violated the provisions of the said Act. The petitioners' further case is that site No. 39 which was specified for a college in the layout plan is divided into 3 parts and has been allotted in favour of

---

respondents 4 and 5 in piece-meal without having lawful authority to divert the same from one purpose to another in violation of Section 38-A of the Act.” [Karnataka High Court. 1997. S.G. Heble And Ors. vs Bangalore Development Authority ... on 29 August, 1997. <http://indiankanoon.org/doc/619937/> (6 June 2012)]

<sup>xxv</sup> A respondent described the expenses involved in the judicial process thus, “Another thing about the government is – you have to file a case – it will go to the High Court and then the Supreme Court. A case is very, very expensive. See, if you want to go to a Supreme Court lawyer, he will charge you per day a lakh or two.... For some of the very senior lawyers, it is upto Rs 5 lakhs per sitting. And if you have to go for 8 to 10 sittings....” (3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala resident 2010)

<sup>xxvi</sup> “Elected body does not have – unfortunately – not all of them have [the know how]”. You see, they get elected by virtue of several things. Hut dwellers. I am not saying hut dwellers are bad. [I am saying this] because they don’t have an idea. See, why I am able to talk [is because] I have travelled abroad. Not only abroad. Within in the country too..... So many places. Experience.... You cannot expect a guy living all through here doing all the work – see, you don’t expect him to be the master of this entire administration. He can be – he is limited. His knowledge is limited.” (Koramangala resident 2010)

<sup>xxvii</sup> Chief minister S M Krishna constituted the BATF as one of 13 task forces in November 1999. The government asserted that establishing the BATF would take advantage of the expertise of “knowledge institutions” based in Bangalore to reverse the trends of deterioration caused by rapid growth in the city. The government order (GO) constituting the BATF stated that, “The Vision of the government is to make Bangalore the best city in India within the next five years.”<sup>7</sup> The GO established a loose mandate for the BATF to “consider the ways and means to upgrade Bangalore’s infrastructure and systems, raise resources for its development and secure greater involvement of citizens, corporations, industry and institutions in the orderly development of the city with enhanced quality of life of its residents.”<sup>8</sup> The GO nominated 10 members to the BATF, including five top corporate leaders, one NGO leader, one retired academic, two bureaucrats, and one Member of Parliament.<sup>9</sup>

Although the GO authorised the BATF to provide recommendations with a report to be submitted within three months, the members of BATF took it upon themselves to set out their objectives differently at the outset and to continue their activities for a period of four years. According to members of the BATF, they decided that they would not write any “more” reports, and would rather focus on implementation of projects, since this is where the gap seemed to appear in government initiatives, and set four primary objectives:

- to increase revenue to the Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BMP),<sup>10</sup>
- to improve the management of funds within the BMP,
- to incorporate the opinions of the public in their initiatives,
- and to initiate a technology initiative in planning through the use of a Geographic Information System (GIS).” (Ghosh, 2005)

<sup>xxviii</sup> “2001 was the judgment [and in] 2005 September, it was finally handed over to the BBMP for bringing up a park. And from 2005, it took four years before we could get somebody to start moving to erect the park. And imagine how two government departments work at cross purposes. There was another lady who stays close by. Her husband is one of the very senior BBMP personnel .... She knew the Mayor. Just personal contacts. That time the Mayor was from her community. Anyway she called him home and we had a chat and he said, “Ok, I will get a park for you and all that.” And he got the fencing which you see now erected. This was in early 2000. Just before the court judgement came.... [The wild shrubbery] was growing but he put the chain link fencing which was at considerable cost, which 10 years back cost about Rs.15-20 lakhs. But the joke was that we got the judgment after the fencing came up.... I’d spoken to some people, including the then BATF chairman Nandan Nilekani. He said, “I will get you sponsors for developing the park. So get me the procedure.” So when I went to the BBMP for getting what is the procedure involved in getting a sponsor to develop a park and how does he [the sponsor] go about it, they said, “Sir, there is a hitch now. We’ve got a notice from BDA giving us notice as to why the entire fencing shouldn’t be pulled down because this is BDA property and doesn’t belong to BBMP?” After spending 15 lakhs, they got a notice - one department serving to another. This was before 2005. How they sorted it out, I don’t know. Of course it carried on. And inspite of the court judgment, it took another five years before the park was done.” (Heble 2010)

<sup>xxix</sup> A respondent observed this about the type of people getting involved in civic activism, “And then the kind of middle-class, especially – because people retire so early in the country. They retire at 60. They have a lot of administrative experience, they have a lot of physical energy; they have a lot of time. A backbone

---

of the RWAs and other organizations are people in that age bracket who've often been in senior government positions. And they are not at the peak of their earning. So they are trying to conserve whatever resources they have." (Koramangala resident 2010)

<sup>xxx</sup> "And finally when we go and ask for the file which took its own sweet time, and when we started using a few names – see, Rajeev Chandrasekhar was an MP – so he helped us. He would pressure on all these guys and they knew we were coming not like ordinary people, and that we could s\*\*\*\* them if we wanted." (V 2010)

<sup>xxx</sup><sup>i</sup> Mr.Heble (2010) framed his argument for the need of a walking track for senior citizens as follows, "Now everybody says 3<sup>rd</sup> Block is one of the best blocks and it has the largest sites. But the fact remains that 3<sup>rd</sup> Blk was the only block out of the 8 blocks in Koramangala that didn't have a single park for walking. And people used to come – lot of senior citizens come and walk around this area because this is one of the quieter areas where there is less traffic."

<sup>xxx</sup><sup>ii</sup> "Yes. Restrictions on the usage of the park. Putting their own watchman there and fencing it off. Timings and keeping off the grass. All this was justified because all kinds of nefarious activities were going on.....This is what is happening. As they grow older, they send their children off to the US. They are only bothered about their requirements as they grow older. They don't want any grounds anymore. They want only parks. They have no consideration for the younger generation at all. So the playgrounds which have been playgrounds, they are slowly getting converted into parks. And in parks again these kinds of restrictions with Nike shoes and only walking around." (Resident of Koramangala, 2010)

<sup>xxx</sup><sup>iii</sup> H: He (Shiva) erected an ugly hut which was used for all sorts of activities.

V: See, out of pity, we allowed him to do – because of a few children .....

H: We didn't mind it initially. But when he started claiming that as his property. He wouldn't allow others to come and walk there.

V: He wouldn't allow us to go there, *yaar*.

Mrs.H: We couldn't walk on that pitch. He says it belonged to him. He says this entire ground belongs to him including the silk cotton trees which were here.

H: Yes, he used to auction. We had to give a police complaint."

<sup>xxx</sup><sup>iv</sup> "No, you see – any public area, you can't tell somebody .... It's not owned by.... Children come and play, it's fine. .... Yeah, Reddy School and all which is there. All people come. It's public. It's not owned by anyone. I mean – I am talking about my personal approaches. Leave it open; we don't mind children coming and playing. It is not restricted **only** to the residents of this area or anything. It's a public park. Anybody can come and take their walks or whatever. But use it the way it has got to be. For example, we had to get the gates and we had to do a sort of policing. Because one day they were doing drag racing on the playground area. We went and told them. No, actually they went and gave a police complaint also because they were zooming across screeching to a halt and turning." (Heble 2010)

<sup>xxx</sup><sup>v</sup> "But I was telling you, when I met Jaykar Jerome [BDA Commissioner], how political influences work here. When I met Jaykar Jerome, he issued orders to remove it. Tractors, everything, bulldozers came and started removing it but within half an hour, they got a message, "Stop." So when I asked the Commissioner, "What happened?" Because he had given me his cell phone number, "Why have you stopped the work?" He says, "Sorry sir, you asked the Commissioner. But he has received orders from the top. Now which top, either the Chief Minister or one of the Ministers ... We don't know what political [backing Shiva had]. But obviously there was some backing because if the Commissioner can be stopped from a job which he has ordered, it has got to be a political thing." (Heble 2010)

<sup>xxx</sup><sup>vi</sup> Interview with Resident of Koramangala (G.R.,2010)

"G.R: Basically children from revenue layouts would come here to play because they did not have similar spaces in their layout. They play on the streets otherwise, but if they have matches they come here.

Researcher: Mr.Heble was saying kids from the Police Quarters come here to play.

G.R: The quarters are on the other side of Sarjapur Road.

Researcher: Isn't there a big ground on the other side of the road [opposite St.John's Hospital]?

G.R: There is a big ground there – it is the Police Training area next to the quarters and they were forced to put a public school there. And now the children are forced to come and play here. This happened some 4-5 years back.

Researcher: But even before that kids used to come?

G.R: Before that they used to come once in a while. But now they come regularly.

Researcher: So you see an increase in the number of kids now?

G.R: Yeah.

---

Researcher: So has there been any problem caused to local residents or have they voiced any irritation over these kids coming and playing here?

G.R: There is one more problem in our locality. We are also not using the ground. Even our own children – we are not putting them in the local games. We do not send them to play on the ground.

Researcher: Why is that? Is it because these local kids are coming?

G.R: No, we are sending them to higher [facilities] - like training camps and all that. More because there are no facilities there and also with the hard balls flying around, it is dangerous too for younger kids.”

<sup>xxxvii</sup> “We have a committee called a Sports and Park Committee [with 8-10 sub-committee members] within our association. We have one MC (managing committee) member to take charge of this issue. We have monthly meetings and we are planning it. We will plan it and put it out to the contractor or BBMP and they will do it accordingly. We have discussed the cycling issue also and the committee has proposed to the BBMP that they have to provide a cycling track in the play area. Because recently we got CA site 41 which is 33000sft and we are asking for an international skating rink and a cycling track. It is so dangerous for the kids to ride on the roads and on the ground too.” (3<sup>rd</sup> Block Koramangala resident 2010)

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Conversation between Mr.Heble, Mrs.Heble, V and G.R (2010)

“Mrs.H: Why don’t you come for the inauguration of the park? It might be this Wednesday, though we are yet to confirm it.

Mr.H: The park is being inaugurated this Wednesday?

V: [in Kannada to G.R] The stone is not ready yet.

Mrs.H: What stone?

G.R: We want to make a memento [plaque] – how we got this park and we have to thank Mr.Ramalinga Reddy for doing all this.

Mrs.H: I hope it will be in English and Kannada.

G: No, only in English. **We** are giving it.

Mrs.H: Because Kannada I cannot follow.

V: No, only in English. Very simple *yaar*. “Our grateful thanks to Shri.Ramalinga Reddy, MLA for this wonderful park.” And he [G.R] wants to put in the date.

G.R: Yes, because we got this park on one particular date.

V: We put that pole, that day Shiva fought with us. And that day, we took over that area.

Mrs.H: Oh yeah, we were here when the pole was put up.

V: You [Mrs.H] came for that. That was Independence Day. August.

V: So, simple [plaque]. And the RWA.

Mrs.H: 3rd Block Residents Welfare Association.

V: Ok, 3<sup>rd</sup> Blk.”

<sup>xxxix</sup> “Local corporators are generally hostile towards all RWAs, but in particular to elite RWAs. A conversation with an ex-corporator elicited that middle-class RWAs make a fuss about small pot holes or about the branches of an overhanging tree, that even though slum-dwellers’ problems relating to basic amenities are much more serious, they unfortunately get sidelined as the RWAs have political connections with ministers and their problems get prioritised. There seems to be the sense among corporators that not only are the needs of groups like elite RWAs and information technology companies privileged, but they have more influence over the city’s development plans. Speaking about the recently revised BDA CDP, an ex-corporator quipped “Ask Nandan Nilekani, he knows better than us.” (Kamath & Vijayabaskar, 2009, p.373)

<sup>xl</sup> “Now, he maybe needs to focus on policy matters – that is the job of an MLA and he shouldn’t continue to be doing this sort of thing about deciding on parks and all that. People have also got confused about the whole thing. Now he’s like a – he’s got a whole fan following.” (Koramangala resident 2010)

<sup>xli</sup> “There are RWAs across Koramangala, there are 2-3 in Indiranagar. The old city side – there are also RWAs. Now what happens because of the RWAs, some kind of interactions among the citizens are taking place. And the politicians have now come to realise – now RWAs are grouping up and they are becoming more powerful and more important for us for voting – future voting. So we have to be in good books with them. That’s why your MLAs or MPS or corporators are falling behind you for the vote. Because of the MLA comes or MP comes for the next election and gives a speech that, “You vote for me” [and] no one will listen to him.” (AA 2010)

<sup>xlii</sup> “What I was saying was, we are at a stage where we want to get things done because we feel a huge need for a particular thing to be done. If you want to go into the system and work out how it should be run, that kind of fight is there. You feel a thing needs to be done; Objective is there. If I want to do it in an absolute

---

corrupt-free manner, then I am trying to reinvent the system, okay? . . . . I am not an adversary. I want to get the thing done. To me that's more important. Yes, when we reach the stage where the corporator will have to say, "I'd better listen to these guys", we'll say, "No, I am sorry corporator, but we cannot accept this. Your budget says this thing; we want to see how much you are spending." We are coming into that. We are getting into that stage. But at the first instance that we have, we are going to build some bridge with the corporator." (Koramangala resident, 2010)

<sup>xliii</sup> We must get the local corporator, we must get the local MLA, we must get them involved. They are our representatives. They were elected, okay? So we have to [accept them]. Whether we voted for that particular individual or not, that's a different matter. But the process is we have to go through him. Or her. We must." (Koramangala resident 2010)