

HISTORY OF CITIES

Urban History of Form and Space from beginning till today

by

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What is a City?

The question of the History of Cities is one that is an important one for any society. Cities foster and represents the identity of a much larger space across geographies and time; be it a region, state or nation. Cities are the places where larger civilization ideas and characteristics are forged and represented. Rather than view cities as an entity represented through statistics of people and economic output, it will be worthwhile to visualize them as essential places where human culture is nurtured and projected. It is a social space that is fundamental to our identity either as individual or groups. Lewis Mumford argued that Cities is the stage where the human drama is enacted; a kind of daily performance of people with others leading to our identities, sense of community and thereby forging the very idea of a city (Mumford 1961).

Cities are the sites of cultural production and a cultural product in itself. The story of evolution of cities in terms of its structure (tangible and non-tangible) and form is really the story of the pursuits and struggle of societies in forging places that represent the key ideas of their times. The layers of history in cities of today carry with them memories of the past which are very much part of our present and define the way we negotiate and mould them for future (Boyer 1996). The idea of City as a place of memory device has been much debated and emphasized formally by thinkers such as Aldo Rossi, in the 20th century, much as a reaction to the Post War modern cities that imagined the urban space as a physical artifact alone (Rossi, Ghirardo, and Eisenman 1984).

The story of cities tells us about the complex relationship of culture and nature. The ability of human being to socialize nature itself is perhaps the fundamental departure that needs to be understood in the context of cities.

Socializing Nature: Origin of Cities on Floodplains

The birth of cities has been reported as far back as 5000 B.C in different parts of the world. Historical findings suggest that Cities flared up independently in Mesopotamia, Egypt and Harrapa around this time. What were common is all these cases were the geographical setting of a large flood plains fed by a perennial river; The Tigris in Mesopotamia, Nile in Egypt and Indus in Harrapa and Mohen-jo-daro. It is argued that particular landscape condition of river valley with flood plains was the most important reason behind the birth of cities.

The ability of communities engaged in small time agriculture (sustenance economy) to harness water from rivers to create farm surplus was perhaps the first step in creating a society that was stratified; wherein not every one needed to practice agriculture. The stratification of society into specialized roles often defined by occupation has often been seen as the fundamental aspect of a urban living condition (Sjoberg 1961). Large-scale irrigation projects were carried out during that period to control water and make full utilization of the silt brought by the rivers. Such irrigation projects are still visible in the landscape of present day Iraq that date back to 2000 BC. See figure 1



Figure 1: The Historic Canal System of River Tigris

But large-scale irrigation project meant that community had to be organized, administered and more importantly controlled by a leadership; the king and the bureaucracy were born during this period. Over the years it led to creation of a society that was able to produce enough surplus to afford functional differentiation in a small concentrated space: farmers, fishermen, cobbler, mason, soldier, preacher and the clerk. This occupational based social order of a society was unified and led by a singular autocratic figure. Religion became the convenient means to provide legitimacy to the king. The state priest became the conduit between the Kings and the Gods. This autocratic, highly centralized and powerful dynastic system of governance had a lasting impact on these parts of the world. These societies created symbols and cultural expressions of civilization importance that traversed both time and space like writing, visual arts, music, architecture, performance.

The city was strongly divided into only two distinct zones; the general quarters of the all the citizens and a rather scaled up and further raised up space in the center of the town consisting of the palace and main religious building; the royal precinct. The binary of the society of the ruling class and the general citizens of the city were reflected in the structure of the city in terms of two distinct zones. The precinct was the place where the power structure of the state were being repetitively reinforced by public procession, religious ceremonies and a general display of the special category of the royal class through religious ritual symbols in Art and Architecture; paintings on walls, carved symbols showing the blessing of the divine, the tombs of the kings etc. See figure 2 showing a reconstructed view of a Mesopotamian city or Ur.

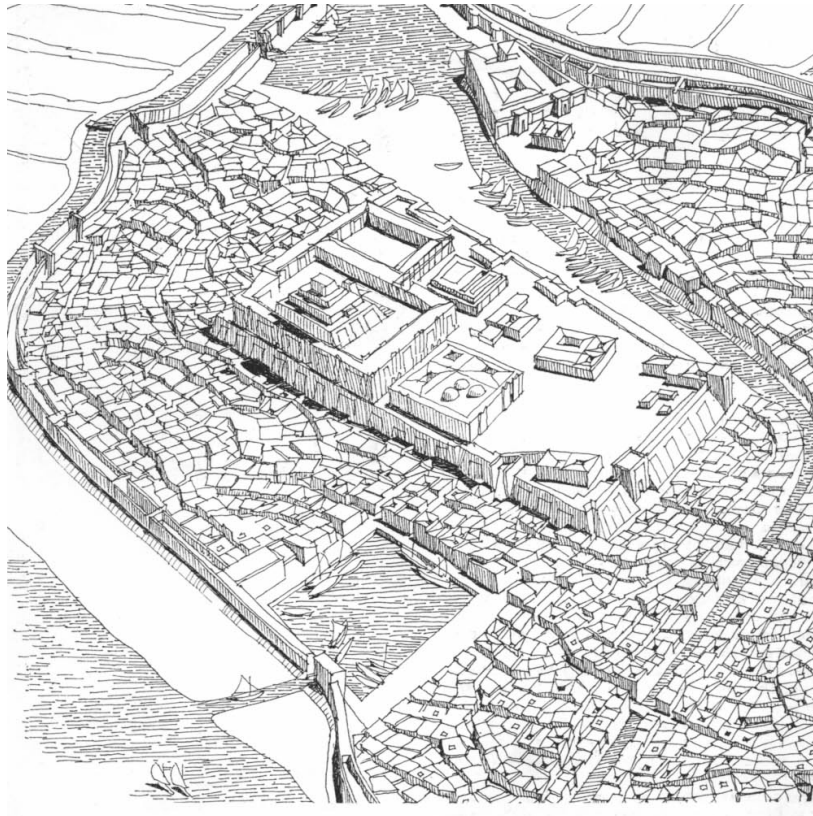


Figure 2: Reconstructed Drawings of a Mesopotamian Settlement, Ur

The formalization of spirituality in the form of an organized state religion reached a manic proportion in the case of Egypt where, large pyramids were made just on the edge of the city marking the final journey of the departed kings. The Pyramid at once reinforcing both; the divinity of the blessed kings and the world beyond that only the priest could interpret. In Indus valley (Parts of Present Pakistan and some in India) the finding of city fabric during the excavation in 1960's and 70's stunned the academic community. The city form here even though dating back to 5000 BC was a lot more elaborate and sophisticated than anywhere else in the world (Habib and Society 2003). Cities street aligned like a Gird Iron plan elaborate system of drainage, ports quarters, public baths and large granaries most probably owned by the state. These features of the cities of Mohan-jodaro and Harappa were something usually not associated with a autocratic river valley cities based on agriculture surplus alone. The discovery of many seals that were used for trading and also of the port buildings foundations suggests towards a civilization that flourished through both agriculture and trade as its economic mainstay leading to a perhaps a certain sophistication of the social order, lot more complex than the ones in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

Cities of Civilization Symbols

The landscape of Greek islands was much different than the river plains of Egypt and Mesopotamia. The dry, hilly terrain, closeness to sea and rocky outcrops meant that settlements in this landscape developed independent of each other, fairly well protected due to natural advantage due to the tough land terrain and with just enough agriculture land to sustain them. The island of Crete was amongst the first to show signs of an elaborate city like settlement. These settlements all along the Greek coast and mainland functioned as City- States, as independent political entities but bound

together by a common idea of society, governance and mythology. The Greek civilization led to creation of ideas and symbols of such power and endurance that it formed the basis of the western civilization in times to come.

The particular landscape encouraged small well-protected settlements to self govern and also amass enough surpluses through trade and agriculture. This over period of few centuries led to creation of a unique model of a city and its society that was based on ideas of humanism at its center that always strived to achieve the larger goal of a morality, justice and ethics. The social and political structure represented this concern. Unlike the totalitarian autocratic socio-political structure in River plains, here a powerful king or its bureaucracy did not govern the society. Citizens of the city-state performed various roles through their lifetimes; carpenter, soldier, farmer etc. Matters of state were debated and discussed at length in the Polis; an open place of civic importance for the people to gather and discuss everything to do with the public. The small size of the City-State covering a limited geography helped creating a sense of ownership.

The Greek society placed human beings in the center of the affairs and even their Gods showed immense human traits and were not the heavenly with mystical power but rather reflected the human desire, will and weaknesses. Greek mythologies were often stories of long journeys, family feuds, revenge, wars and return to home; very human and true to the lives of the people of region. Theater was the conscious keeper that reminded the citizens about the direction of the society and Gymnasium and other sports was the way to find truth in human body; a society concerned with the Mind and the Body.

The Greek cities represented these ideals very well. The main heart of the town was the Polis, which was the highest point of the settlement: an open space around which many temples of Greek Gods were organized. The many temples and other allied structure of state functioning together formed a large space that became the place for people to gather and discuss the matters of societal importance; it was the symbolic heart of the city with temples as the backdrop. The temples themselves connoted an immense open and public attitude. The Greek temples have an open plinth and colonnades surrounding the perimeter of the main building suggesting a more immediate and non-mediated relationship between the people and their Gods.

Near the Port, which was usually just outside the city were the market structure Stoa, which were linear structure organized around an open space called Agora (Kostof and Castillo 1995). This was the market place where trade and commerce flourished; The place that sustained the city economically. The position of Agora outside the city suggest a certain disdainful attitude towards trade and commerce of the citizens of the Greek cities who were totally committed towards finding the perfect forms of expression of beauty and truth. It was this neglect that eventually led to the downfall of the Greek cities as unable sustain their upkeep and unable to colonize further, they collapsed within. New building typologies were dedicated towards the pursuit of the ideal society was formed during the heydays of the Greek cities; the Amphitheater that used the natural levels of the sloping ground where citizens enacted plays and other performances. The stadium utilizing the flat ground above where men competed with each other and citizens of other Greek City-States.

The Greek armies soon began to command a large presence in Asia Minor. Europe and Africa and it were here, that the Grid-Iron pattern was invented for planting colonial cities. Roads were aligned in N-S and E-W directions. The center of the city usually consisted of the open space of Polis with colonnaded arcade that formed the front of public buildings, beautifully proportioned using the various orders of building leading to a legible coherent spatial form. This became the standard formula that was applied in many Greek colonies such as Pryne, Melitus in Turkey

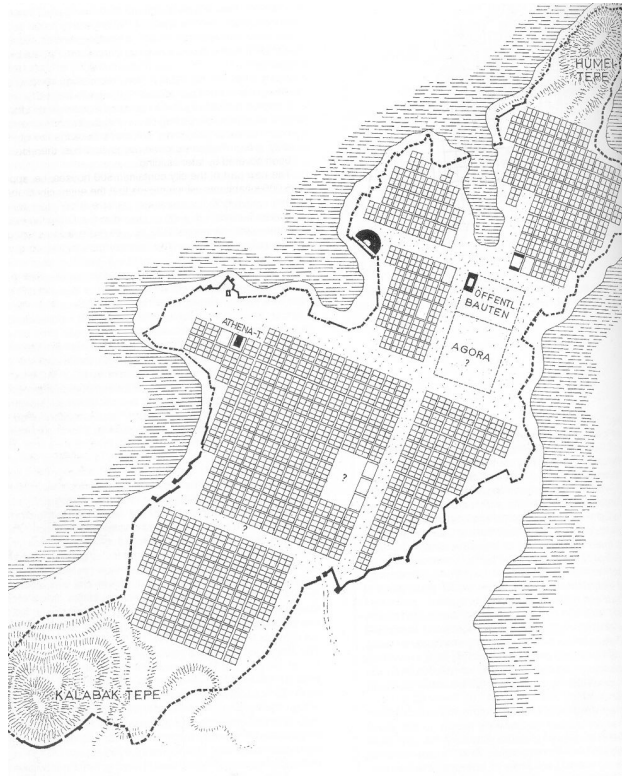


Figure 3: Reconstructed Plan of Greek Colonies, Melitus, Turkey

The Romans picked up where the Greek left and utilized all the principles of the city planning such as orthogonal geometry, public building in the center of the city, proportions and order and combined with it the grand scale that was befitting the ambitions of Rome as a city that wished to rule the world.

Roman civilization was based on an idea of human spirit like the Greek but for a very different purpose. Whereas the Greek pursuit of an ideal society or a man defined everything, the Romans believed in human actions to achieve the Divine Plan; a way of participating in history with the agreement with the Gods. This single minded pursuit, where the Romans justified their action to colonize and rule the world, dominate nature and change geographies as part of larger divine destiny meant that there was need for unity of ideas and material culture across all the scales; from a house to a city. The roman house, which was not only a private space but also a space for public interaction for the aristocracy engaged with affairs of the state, was orthogonal in plan with courtyards in the central linear axis, corridor and rooms around them followed by a garden in the backyard with colonnades on its periphery. The plan of the city seems to have originated from the requirement of an Army Camp. Two roads that meet at right angle; (called *cardo* and *decumanus*) and public building organized in blocks. The Romans combines the Greek Agora and Polis to make one

strong unifies central public place that was heady mix of the commercial, religious and institutional buildings; the Forum.

The scale of public buildings, temples, basilicas and stadiums and the forum was such that it was meant to create a spectacle; the city of Rome, which is the center of the world. It thrived on creating symbolism in Art and Architecture that flowed in different geographies their armies conquered and went on to linger for centuries to come.

In the similar time the Indian sub-continent saw the rise of the Maurayan and then the Gupta empires, which stretched from the eastern border all the way to Present day Iran and Afghanistan. The unification of the vast geography was made primarily possible by adoption of canons and religious practices that were universal and stitched together variety of different languages, culture and belief system in the Indian Sub-continent (Kosambi 1975). For example the adherence to *Dhamma* or code of good conduct defined the state affairs including the acceptable behaviors of citizens, official and the king. Such codes and canons including the treatise on statecrafts like *Arthashastra* became the hallmark of the Mauryan period. Land was most efficiently managed and revenues collected in form agriculture produce (Kosambi 1975). The *janapad* was the unit of administration denoting the equivalent of district represented a well administered, controlled and guarded parcel of land that was the most important commodity for state surplus during this period.

The spread of Buddhism during this period as a state religion saw an absolutely different ideal of governance emerge in India; the one based on care for subjects, kings as humble soul working for the up-liftment of the people and also for the maximum advantage of the state. It personified and put the state above the king and the citizens. This unleashed a new energy in the way public project were conceived in the Indian sub-continent; projects that gave no material gain to the state but rather symbolized its ideals and principles. The mix of sharp statecraft and the moral position of the Buddhism as state religion had lasting impact on the material culture of the place in form of Art and Architecture.

The flourishing of a stylization of sculpture and iconography and the expression of Architecture (Stupas, Rock-cut Temples etc) based are some of the permanent record that pointing towards the universalization of spatial expressions. Cities during these periods were mainly built of wood and not much remains of that time now. The fortification of Patna has been described to be made of wood covered with clay (Kosambi 1975).

Cities of surplus and specialization

By the 6 to 7th century BC mediaeval cities began to take root in parts of Europe and Asia, as this was the era for small kingdoms with capital cities. The main mode of production was agriculture and trade. With the ability of community to make different specialized equipment in leather, cloth, metal and wood, trade became the new basis of relationship between princely Kingdoms in many part of world. The church by then had gained a strong foothold over the society and was the moral keeper of the city. The State and the aristocratic arm represented the political power of the city and was the other pillar of the society. The third center of power in the city rested with the Guilds of Traders and craftsmen who very much controlled the economies of the

place. Together these three; King, Church and Guilds were like three pillars on which the city rested. A tripartite arrangement ensures that there were enough check and balances in the power structure and actions in the city. The city form underwent some major transformation during the period due to the distribution of both authority and control in these three power centers.

The city that was now clearly marked by a boundary wall, apart from ramparts, gates and moats were planned around defense. The center of the city was usually the palace of the king apart from the main church nearby. The Town Hall, which was the place of the trader's guild, was around a large open space that became the place of the main market. Universities were first established by the Guilds for vocational and religious learning. The church established many new institutions for the welfare of the people such as the Hospitals, Old Peoples homes; Alms-house and sanatorium apart from the monastery that was now part of the city. The large courtyard space of the monastery surrounded by the cloisters was the first gardens in a city.

The structure of the city began to change with the presence of many such institutions. It was not orthogonal anymore but rather grew organically along the slopes of the land or at times responding to the trigger of key public or religious institutions. The organic form of the city was full of surprises and mystery and was often romanticized by architects during the 20th century. The city was never a total expression of either the religious, political or economic forces, but rather an interesting mix of all the three in various proportions.

The Indian medieval cities in North and western India are good example of cities that were formed by traders and merchants governed by the various princely states with Hindu religious belief system providing the moral conscious to the citizens. Many of these cities show organic street pattern, fort walls, moats, markets and many building of religious significance. Many experts believe that Indian medieval cities came about more due to infill's rather than outwardly growth; The boundary and gates of the city were marked and built first and then slowly the city quarters were filled with buildings over a long period of time. Moreover it seems the slope of water became one of the important determinant in formation of the pattern of movement marking the public domains of the city (Shankar 2009). The role of the King in these cities was somewhat limited but still important. The king often marked certain key areas in term of the palace, mosque or main processional route and left the rest of the city evolve with its own logic. The relative long period of medieval rule saw the flourishing of trade and economic activities. These conditions were ideal for an explosion of art and architecture that occurred in everyday spaces; houses, community space, housing clusters, temples, mosques, carvings etc.



Figure 4: Town Hall and Market at Coma, Italy

Cities as Diagrams

The weakening of the church in the later mediaeval period and the consolidation for power by the king led to a shift in the balance of power towards the states. Armed with the new idea of geometry and perspective, the indulgent kings and aristocrats started to create cities based on diagrams that excluded legibility and visual clarity. These baroque cities that were in the image of a diagram and were seen as artifact symbolizing the clout and presence of the state and its aristocrats (Kostof 1993). The palace complex was based on clarified geometry often reviving classical proportions. The introduction of gardens around the palace essentially for the use of the aristocratic families was a display of the power of the state and symbolized it as a stabilized and important entity. It created an affect of awe and wonder amongst the ordinary citizens of the cities with its magical fountains, exotic trees, finely paved pavilions and running water; symbolizing a certain domination through appropriation of the forces of nature; ultimate triumph of human culture over wild nature. Today these very gardens have become public space in many cities of the world and no wonder the names of the kings and families that built it have been immortalized in history

In India many princely cities such as Bharuch, Gondal, Jamnagar in Gujarat were based on the ideas of baroque planning. Often Architect from Europe were employed to draw up plans for the cities in India. Jaipur is another example of a city conceived as a diagram based on the ancient canon of city planning the *Mansara*. It was however conceived in the 18th century when cities were being re-imagined here and in Europe as clarified objects with perfect geometries.

Colonial Cities

The Portuguese, French and finally the British established colonial cities in India. The Portuguese cities of Goa, Daman and Diu are good examples of cities that are built conveying the ethos of a colonial power dominating the sea and the people it

encountered. The missionary zeal of the earlier colonizers is evident in the manner in which Church complexes were given prominence in the open space of the city around a public square. For example in Goa and Diu. The British City on the other hand was systematic in creating spaces that maintained the balance of power between them and the native population. The British part of the city (often referred as the White quarters) were marked by large roads, Mall Road, Recreation Club and Bungalows for the British officers and Indian merchants, market places for trade and commerce, public statues, fountains and other infrastructure such as go-downs and docks to ensure free flow of goods both raw and finished. The basis of British Colonial rule in India was the trade and Industrial revolution and early phase of British rule was marked by an absolutely utilitarian attitude towards planning of cities. The mutiny of 1857 and other catastrophe such as the plague in Mumbai in 1896 led to certain shift in the attitude of Colonial state towards the city. From being obsessed with providing for efficient movement of goods and order for symbolizing the glory of the British rule, the colonial state found it necessary to ensure the well being of its subject to ensure smooth running of the state economy (Prakash 2010).

Most cities in India went through the process of urban improvement wherein new technologies of water supply and underground sewerage were introduced in the heart of the city. This was more extensive during 1890-1910 in cities such as Mumbai, Kanpur, Kolkata and Ahmedabad that experienced rapid growth due to mills and other factories. These technologies were meant to improve the congested and often un-healthy living conditions of the incrementally developed old city parts. The introduction of these new infrastructure and technologies that were already being used in the West and were being tried out in Indian towns often led to much public attention and debate. These discourses very well capture the ideas of the city and its future development during the early 20th century. For example the Ahmedabad entrepreneur and President of the Municipal Commission of Ahmedabad in 1880-90's Ranachodlal Chhotalal, faced immense resistance from the local population when he tried to introduce under-ground sewerage lines in the walled city. This led to years of debates and apprehension amongst the local population that was unwilling to pay more tax and give up their traditional ways of managing their waste. The problem of sewerage and waste water was not so much to do with the absence of any traditional system but rather its efficiency and ill-management in a changing society. The introduction of "modern" technologies such as underground sewerage lines promised to solve these problem but in the process created an ideas of traditional systems of cities as being backward and not good for the future. At one stroke the centuries of practices of managing water and waste were reduced to being inferior ones in the public eyes. It is a documented fact that the centuries old practice of collecting rainwater from roof in underground tank below the court, was abandoned the moment piped water supply was introduced. Whereas introduction of these urban infrastructures led to better public health statistics but it also led to an abrupt halt to existing urban practices and a gradual erosion of confidence in them.

Cities as the Mechanic Complex

The problems of the Industrial cities were something not limited to the colonial cities as well but also a problem that reached monstrous proportion in British mainland itself. Charles Dickens portrayal of an Industrial city of late 19th century in England and its wretched living condition and falling social structure is a grim reminder of the

horrors of industrial cities. The very foundation of these cities was based on mechanization of space and human body, with the sole aim of collection, production and distribution of goods for maximum profit.

But the seeds of this change were not only in Industrial mode of production but rather in the post-enlightenment scientific rationality that gave the confidence to the people to decipher nature and the world around them without the mediation of the Church or any other divine phenomenon. These foundational moments defined all fields of life; philosophy, economic, trade, philosophy, education and the Arts. The rationality of scientific thinking laid the foundation for a much more systematic and elaborate ideas of making cities, modifying nature to suit mankind, creating a new world through science and technology. It is not surprising that, by the end of 19th century major urban technological breakthroughs were in place; Reinforced Concrete, Underground railways, fly-over and steel bridges, piped water supply, electricity and sewerage system. The cities of 20th century were built on these urban innovations of the 19th century.

Cities of Utopias

By the turn of the century a certain discomfort began to settle in due to the in-human condition in most industrial towns in England. Architects and thinkers like Patrick Geddes, Ebenezer Howard, began to offer alternative ideas on city development. One particular trend in these initiatives was marked by a kind of innocent return to nature; cities conceived in idyllic countryside, with farm base economy, restricted population and community kitchens. For example Garden City proposal by Ebenezer Howard was essentially a reaction to both the congested cities of Industrial era and the traditional cities of down town. It was Utopian in its visualization of a new community and also a reaction to the mechanization of human life in Industrial town of England. It is surprising how contradictory and reactionary efforts were always very much prevalent and often patronized by section of the society during the peak of Industrialization and modernism in Europe and Americas. For example the Arts and Crafts movement led by William Morris in England sought to create a new aesthetics that acknowledged the presence of machines for the purpose of production of goods and different new materials. Some like Ebenezer Howard attempted to literally create a new society from scratch in the countryside whereas others like Patrick Geddes believed in surgical interventions while working with existing city to find the right social balance between various aspects of a city like housing, work environment and recreation(Geddes 1947).

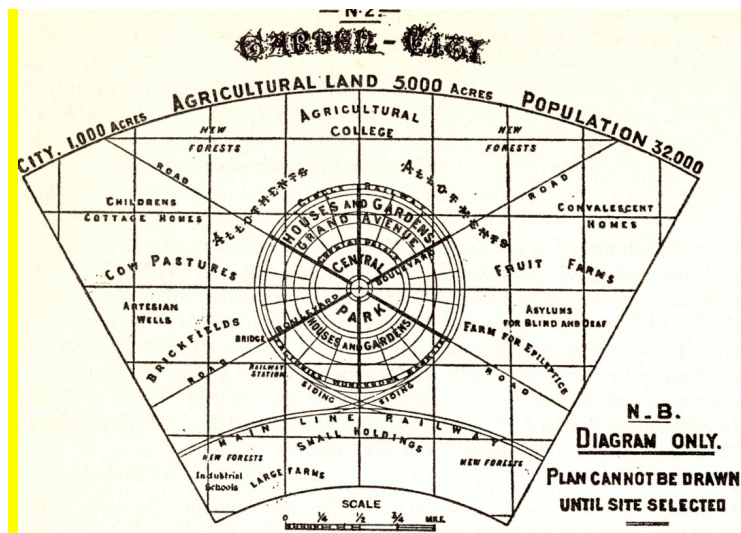


Figure 5: Plan for the Garden City

In the Americas at about the same time 1910 – 1930 an urban revolution of sort was brewing. Armed with industrial technologies in Steel and also reinforced concrete and general positive outlook of the American economy during this period, Architects began to experiment with skyscrapers to solve the problem of housing millions of people that were pouring in the American cities from Europe and elsewhere. Skyscrapers touched many floors and with aid of steel construction and mechanical vertical elevators created a design typology that is still prevalent. This saw the city center rise up with roads and railways leading daily commuters to their place of work. The separation of place of work and stay had taken firm route and with a rising migrant population, skewed sex ratios, segregated living and working quarters along with the mammoth scale of cities led to a very different idea of space and living in a city. Such cities were now called metropolis and the Urban sociologists like Weber and Walter Benjamin elaborated on certain new term like an “anonymous stranger” and “urban blasé” to explain the behaviors and attitude of the citizens in a metropolis (Benjamin 1969). The Frankfurt School was at the forefront in explaining changes in the western capitalist society in the backdrop of mass production, communication and rapid urbanization.

The second world war marked a turning point for the future trajectories for the western nations. Decades of War, destruction had a toll on cities and there was an urgent need to rebuild shattered societies and nations. Politically these were adventurous times; the UN body was in place. Colonial powers were beginning to withdraw from Asia and Africa, the east Block was rising on the promise of a just non-capitalist society and Americas was looking to consolidate the gains of the War.

Cities as the Modern Project

Cities were the sites of the origins of modernity that can be traced to the enlightenment era. The ideas of rationality, science and technology were central to the imagination of world that has broken free from the shackles of history to an emancipated future. However the trajectories and outcomes of the modern project took unique turns in different parts of the world.

The functionalist model of planning of cities took the abstract, systemic and technologized model of space organization to its extreme level while proclaiming that city is a machine to be lived in (Corbusier, 2006). The CIAM (Congress of Modern Architecture) was formed to propagate the functionalist idea of planning cities and had a strong European support base. Their Athens charter was built on analyzing cities under the four broad heads — residence, work, recreation and circulation. They encouraged a modern compartmentalized way of viewing a city and traditional cities were considered messy, chaotic and unsanitary. Le Corbusier's unrealized plan consisted demolition of the northern part of the old city and erection of 18 cruciform shaped towers with open space for movement of car and gardens in between. Surprisingly Le Corbusier's work in India was a huge leap of faith as it combined an uncanny understanding of the Indian context in terms of climate, light and construction but executed in a universal language of modernism. The ideas of abstraction, geometry and space were a common concern for sculptor's, painters and also architects during that period. As far as fine arts, architecture, engineering and performance culture goes, this was a revolutionary period as ideas of modernity propelled an imagination of a future society that rests on new ideals of rationality, equity and justice. For example Corbusier was not only trying to pursue a linear path to truth with a meta narrative but was also trying to work with the contradiction of engineering (rationality & technology) and Architecture (human connection, aesthetics etc) by creation of an hierarchy of myth(Frampton 2007). The belief in linear progress, absolute truths, and rational planning of an ideal social orders' under standardized conditions of knowledge and production was the foundation of most architectural and urban level productions during the 1950's and 60's. The modernism that resulted was, as a result, 'positivistic, techno-centric, and rationalistic' at the same time as it was imposed as the work of an elite avant-garde of Planners, artists, architects, critics, and other guardians of high taste(Harvey 1992)

The industrial and then the modern cities led to extremely altered and engineered ideas of nature in cities. Nature was to be dominated by the sheer human will and the scientific means employed to create a new society. Scientific methods and technology was central to city planning and design in post war Europe and Americas. But there were a huge danger in this kind of approach as it was about to alter the space of cities permanently. Master Planning for the new and existing cities was a top-down, centralized and a highly bureaucratic process that led to the power to alter space of cities in the hands of just few “experts”. Urban blocks were created to essentially make our cities efficient for people to work and cars to move. The practice of clean land-use like commercial, recreational, residential and other amenities meant an extremely compartmentalized view to the life of a citizen. The land-use division and the road network became the means to divide and connect spaces. The human body, family and neighborhoods and place of work were forgotten in favor of this geometrically clarified and machine like view of human existence.

The Reaction

In the west though, it was not surprising that by late 1960s there were huge opposition and disillusionment with this kind of planning of cities that saw space as a functionalist machine. There were voices being raised about the loss of public life,

crime, community feeling and overall experience of modern cities. The regimentation of daily life, the inversion of public life to private realm and the loss of the city centre were reoccurring concerns of the period (Ellin 1999) in discourses on cities in the western world. The 1960's were marked by counter-culture that confronted the ideas of modern development strategies. Antagonistic to the oppressive qualities of scientifically grounded technical-bureaucratic rationality as purveyed through monolithic corporate, state, and other forms of institutionalized power the counter-cultures explored the realms of individualized self-realization through a distinctive 'new left' politics, through the embrace of anti-authoritarian gestures, iconoclastic habits (in music, dress, language, and life-style), and the critique of everyday life (Harvey 1992).

A whole bunch of theorists were talking about a different way of reading and the planning of cities. Much of the alternatives were a reaction to the modernist planning that kept functionality and hence, technology in the centre of visualization of cities. Jane Jacobs set the discussion going when she wrote "Life and Death of Great American Cities" where she questioned the then current zoning and transport priority planning initiative in New York. Kevin Lynch spoke about the image of a city (Lynch 1960) from a personal experiential perspective and the issue of time in cities. The other reactionary movements included the Townscape in America and works of Aldo Rossi and Rob Krier in Europe. All these were anti-thesis to the functionalist technologized approach towards modernist planning and gave alternate vantage points to view and conceptualize cities. "Modernist town planners, for example, do tend to look for 'mastery' of the metropolis as a 'totality' by deliberately designing a 'closed form,' whereas postmodernists tend to view the urban process as uncontrollable and 'chaotic'" (Harvey 1992)

Indian Modern City Projects

India was a free nation after years of British Colonial rule and was waiting to break from the clutches of imperial and traditional castes impediments. The first Prime Minister Pandit Nehru led this crusade from front. The Nehruvian modern building projects were rather large scale and widespread and are often perceived to be the ones that brought in new technology paradigms in architecture. The post-independence projects rather only continued the construction technological advancement made in the 1930's but the nation building effort projected the state as the patron of these new technologies. The 50's and 60's in India were marked by new cities projects as part of the national building process. Modern thoughts and expertise were central to the realization of these goals. The city space underwent a very interesting transformation due to these efforts across the country that were marked by strong role of technology of building, control by government bureaucracy and concern for social equity

The idea that cities can be built and man has the ability to create living environment in short period of time using modern scientific knowledge and technology was a huge leap of faith for county such as India just after Independence. New city plans and additions to existing cities became important statements of the newfound optimism about Indian nationhood. The projects that were executed in the 1950's and 60's were complete anti-thesis to the old city that existed as a reference. These new townships were not segregated on the basis of religion or caste, they had far lesser density, more open spaces and most importantly a strict idea of segregated land uses. This was a

historic first for Indian urbanity. Le Corbusier's design of Chandigarh is an important example of planned modern city but there were many more like Gandhinagar, Bhuvaneshwar, Jamshedpur, Vidyadhar Nagar to name a few. Some of them like the Master Planning of Chandigarh by Le Corbusier were exemplary in their refinement, scale and statement of modernity that gets articulated more clearly in the Capitol Complex consisting of the administrative, legislative and the assembly buildings

“Dams are the temple of modern India” announced Pandit Nehru in his famous address to the nation. India embraced modernity as a state policy and new capital cities were being planned based on modern principles of town planning that was marked by functional segregation of various parcels of land (zoning), city centers, recreational areas, social amenities, sector based housing design, wide roads for ease of car movement and planned infrastructure like drinking water, storm water and sewerage. Strong technologically driven engineering solution formed the backbone of most such new city planning processes. New towns and new sectors sprang up all across the country. New ideas of infrastructure like piped water supply, centralized sewerage treatment plant, industrial zones were introduced in cities for the first time. Unprecedented believe in a new city planning, which is open, free, allows for possibilities. Technology of city planning like water supply, sewerage, culverts and bridges will solve these problems. These were technology of the masses for living, for housing, for people to use and were not limited to industrial complexes or areas of recreation or markets. Technology was not distinct for masses and elites. It was the same and it dealt with water, gardens, roads and buildings. Housing and market places was the major thrust during post independence years.

The urban development paradigm in the 60's and 70's was largely that of the provider state that attempted to build everything; markets, houses and public places. This time was marked by unprecedented focus towards new public places like new markets, gardens and small office blocks in larger cities. In cities like New Delhi the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) attempted to provide housing for all.

The Asian Games witnessed an explosion of urban infrastructure and recreation project of massive scale for the very first time in India. Some new programs of the city like exhibition grounds, stadiums, fly-over and housing was executed and are examples of very well crafted architecture pieces, which in true modernist tradition, revealed the material (exposed concrete, bricks, etc) and hence, were a strong statement of the technology of the building. This revelation of building material not as a style but rather as a functionalist need was projected itself into a new imagination of city and civic pride; one that is mediated by technology of infrastructure and built form.



Figure 6: Stamp released during Asiad Games 1982

Many cities envied it, but there was no way they could receive the enormous money and attention that the capital city received during the 80's. The state in this case was seen as central to the technology narrative of the city as an ideologist, executer and provider. Moreover, as it has been noticed in many other cities of the world it is usually the anonymous projects in public place became the showpiece of the civic pride in technology and advancement(Vesely 2004)

Globalization and the Indian City

The year 1991 was important as it marked the beginning of the process of globalization in India and led to irreversible changes in the development of cities, their management and imagination. The structural reforms carried as part of the opening of the Indian economy meant that the government had to reduce their expenditures in a massive way. The central and state government grants that were available for cities gradually began to reduce. Municipalities were encouraged to be self-sufficient in their financial matters, which in effect meant that property tax and *octroi* collection became the two important sources for collecting raising capital apart from loans and bonds. Now private equity was not a bad work anymore and private developers were seen as partners in the city building process. The municipalities saw themselves now more as facilitators rather than provider. At the same moment the very important 73 and 74th constitutional amendment act were introduced to encourage democratic centralization and constitutional endorsement of local self-government authorities. This in effect gave powers to the local government to decide their developmental priority and means. The above series of events in the 1990's further reinforced the identity of a city as an independent entity that has to fend for itself. Whereas the purpose of decentralization was to make to make the small municipalities and village *panchayat* much more stronger, it also led to the cities (larger settlements) undertaking massive restructuring process to become economically stronger. Urban economics became the prime concerns as cities were virtually left to fend for themselves.

India today has embarked on a very ambitious phase of city building. Central government schemes like JNNURM (Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission) make available large sums of money to carry out “urban renewal” of some sixty-three cities in India. But again schemes like these, which are disbursed from the center, and where the cities develop their CDB (City Development Plan) are essentially financial plans and are not necessarily in sync with the physical development plan of the cities that have a history of their own. What we are witnessing in many cities today is a rush towards implementation of these large economic packages for “urban improvement”. Whereas the sub-mission of JNNURM is to improve the condition for the urban poor and improve overall infrastructure, it goes without saying that its use for roads, transport and infrastructure projects perhaps helps city project its global credentials to attract investors.

The next chapter in the imagination and material change in cities is beginning to happen now in a massive way but in a very different manner than earlier times. Cities are asserting themselves more as autonomous entities and are positioning their identity irrespective of the state and the country much more now as sites for investment. This is a critical stage in the development and imagination of cities as they are personified as having a strong presence in the national and global network of economy. This shift has resulted in a curious technology embodiment and narratives in the city. The carriers of present techno narratives are infrastructure projects that symbolize flows of a fast moving economy; these are the spaces of flows (Castells 2009). International airports, fly over's, metro, wider roads, transit hotels, convention centers and such are the focus area of the six largest cities of India. The programmes for these projects are truly geared towards flows of goods and people. These projects mostly exemplify a certain "international" aesthetics that is often made to appear as the language of the particular technology like use of steel cables, glass facade and aluminum cladding and such. Unlike in the past, the state is more actively partnering with the private organization for creation of this infrastructure. The role of R&B and PWD is now reduced being that of a facilitator or coordination. Captain of the industry are part of the steering committee and there is an acute self-awareness of being world class in terms of matching with the best in the world. There are some interesting conditions that get fostered in the process.

The form of Indian Cities today

The above development of the last two decades leads us to believe that our cities as witnessing a historic times in term of sheer scale of transformation and also the dynamics that structures these changes. Moreover cities that are able to leverage their position in the global flow continue to grow at a phenomenon rate and remaining ones get left out. According to Saskia Sassen, seventy percent of the total global FDI is controlled by five cities of the world (Sassen 2006). Cities have emerged as command and control point for the global economies. We are seeing similar trends in India as well, as top cities of the country that are now part of the global economic network grow at a rapid pace. Cities such as Bangalore, Mumbai, New Delhi and surrounding, Hyderabad are now cities that owe much of their economic surplus through global trade and services. What is the form of these new cities and where are they headed?

Some Architects like Rem Koolhaas announced that the City of the past which had a coherent center, an active public sphere and a legible language, is long dead and

buried by the global forces of the capital. He says a generic city will be found all across the globe in near future. This prophecy assumes a city that now is ignorant of its context and following a universal international style. A lot of this is frighteningly coming true. We find the same style of restaurant interior, building facades, coffee shops, spa's and such in all major international cities. It is getting difficult to distinguish one from the other leading to a certain homogenization of at least the external style of building.

The urban form that seems to emerge out of this mode of production seems to be one of binaries. We increasingly find cities essentially divided into two broad categories; the gated enclaves for the rich and upwardly mobile and everything else (Shankar 2011). This is a post globalization phenomenon that has been noticed in practically all major cities of India. Cities that are now perceived as corporate entities must showcase themselves as attractive destination to do business and it is not surprising that public project of large scale (fly-over, large sports complex, Metro) are preferred by public authorities to project their cities as being "global" and "livable". In this race however quite a number of cities have shown immense practical sense and have invested smartly in public transports and other social amenities. But still the focus has shifted from pedestrian to cars, from small useable public spaces to grand public places, from socially heterogeneous housing to gated communities and from everyday market place to large departmental stores. It is not surprising the condition for the poor in cities of India remain pathetic. Presently 28% of the total urban population of India resides in slums (United). Car ownership is increasing by the week and investments in public transport are only beginning to come in now. The proposals for pedestrianization, footpaths and cycle tracks are generally rhetorical and like the talk of environmental protection seem to have become lip service by the administration with no serious initiative to bring about real change.

The form of present Indian city is not surprisingly one that is reaching a mammoth scale that is unprecedented in the past; cities within cities and ghettos within ghettos. There seems to be no clear and legible center anymore and city seems to be scattering into vast urbanity. It is still work in progress. Maybe the unified city is dead and from its ruins might emerge a new kind of a city which will be multi-nucleated like the city-sates in Greek landscape or perhaps with the present binaries becoming so strongly projected that it will divide the city neatly into two parts; the serviced and served!

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