Track 2
Beside the megacity and the role of other cities and areas: planning for balance

The Anti-city

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Today is a time of unprecedented growth — of shaping newer and ever changing environments around. Issues and shortcomings of rapid urbanisation offer opportunity grounds for architecture and planning, in this changing maze of activities. The paradigm shifts in the way how people see spaces, and how professionals see the same, are exposing and challenging the architect and urban designer to current harsh realities.

India has been home to the earliest of civilisations and growth. Its intense engagement with the other continents have shaped and reshaped its culture and political ideas. With ginormous populations, extraordinary cultural mixes and rising economies, some of its regions are sites of intense action. This stage of intense fluctuation and turbulence demands reflection on how they have shaped (or are shaping) our relationships, societies and human exchanges. One is also forced to ask questions as to whether the existing knowledge capacities are enough to help manage and intervene these situations.
Aim of research

• This research paper is an understanding and analysis of what happens around the mega/metropolitan cities — taking an example of Delhi, Guragon, and its surrounding villages

• The paper traverses along
  • the history and evolution of Gurgaon
  • pre and post liberalisation Gurgaon
  • case study and evaluation of 3 urban villages of Gurgaon
  • understanding/evaluation of “service villages”
  • what now/next?
Urbanisation in India witnessed a drastic change in the late 1900’s, post independence.

Liberalisation and globalisation gave birth to ‘world cities’ (*Patrick Geddes, 1915*) that brazenly allowed transnational business interests to eat them up.

New York, London and Tokyo models infected our cities and social styles to change in an uncurbed manner.

The new urban landscape has fallen prey to late global capitalism with zero connect to context or people.

We are thus in and around *anti-cities* that highlight the differences and not similarities among its lot.
• The images of America, Shanghai and Dubai haunt our bigger cities – the watered down version of which will soon start hitting the smaller ones

• Planning of the capital city of New Delhi and the dream city of Chandigarh were on-ground realisations of a vision which initiated a new wave of city planning and development in the country

• The act of mimicry they followed is clearly evident from how our cities are being viewed since then with a top down approach, blanketed by master plans

• Design and development of many contemporary cities in India are active examples of this phase of liminality; Gurgaon being a perfect case for investigation
The oldest record of Gurgaon is in Mahabharatha (the ancient Hindu mythology)

Since then, it has been under different kingdoms namely the Maurya Empire, Harsha Empire, Gujara-Pratiharas, Tomara dynasty, Delhi Sultanate, Rajput empire, the French and finally the British

The proximity of Gurgaon to the imperial capital (Delhi) played a major role in shaping its destiny. In 1803 The East India Company took control over Gurgaon, and in 1816 the town became its administrative headquarters
• Following independence in 1947, the Punjab Province was bifurcated to East Punjab (India) and West Punjab (Pakistan)
• In 1966 when the state of Haryana was formulated Gurgaon was designated as one of its districts, with an agro-based economy
• The potential evolutionary prospects of Gurgaon were noted by the authorities during the preparation of the first master plan of Delhi
• Gurgaon remained a small farming village while Delhi emerged as the political capital of India
• 1970s: The town of Gurgaon expanded initially juxtaposed to the old colonies of Gurgaon
• Residential and industrial sectors were realised
• Expansion started encroaching upon the agricultural land of the villages surrounding Gurgaon
• With the establishment of HUDA (Haryana Urban Development Authority), more villages were acquired and converted to residential sectors in the 1980s
• The implementation of Haryana Urban Development Act in 1981 was a gateway to the entry of private developer groups like DLF and Ansals
Post-liberalisation Gurgaon

- The sectors built after 1990 were largely built by private developers
- New Gurgaon experienced a job centre boom in late 1990s which resulted in more people moving into the city
- Several multi-national companies like American express, IBM, Microsoft, Infosys, Ericson, Oracle, Bank of America, Nokia, The Coca-Cola Company, and many more chose to locate their offices in Gurgaon during the late 1990s
- The sudden demographic changes and cultural changes gave the city a new identity
• Various jurisdictional changes in the period of 1991-2001, where many rural villages merged to form municipal corporations or tehsils in and around Gurgaon.

• 2018 September Hindustan Times newspaper: The villagers of 46 villages claimed that land rightfully owned by them were transferred illegally to Municipal Corporation of Gurgaon (MCG).

• It was also mentioned that since the inception of MCG in 2008, all their lands were brought under the jurisdiction of MCG, all local panchayats were disbanded, and plot lands worth crores of rupees were transferred illegally.
Urban village/city?

- Post-independence, Gurgaon got absorbed into the ‘new plan wave for future cities’
- The 1970’s saw Gurgaon falling on the track of accelerated urban growth and development – enormous population influx post liberalisation caused the growth rates to shoot up in the 1990’s
- The way in which Gurgaon started pulling in people like a hungry magnet is a marker to a subtle new trend of city growth dominated by private players
- The villages Jharsa, Sukhrali and Sarhol were studied for an understanding of the trends (Source: Author, Ashin Thomas, Venna Sri Hari Kanth – M.UD Batch 2019, SPA Delhi), which revealed a fascinating picture of the past and present conditions of these villages
In the early 1800’s Jharsa village was more important than Gurgaon for trading and agriculture due to its favourable geographical conditions.
• The village witnessed influx and outflow of people after partition in 1954 leading to changes in settlement patterns and housing typologies

• There was thus a major shift from agriculture to service sector during the 1960s

• When HUDA acquired land in the core city, people started moving to outer villages like Jharsa, Sukrali, Patel Nagar, Dhankot and the like

• As the city had more and more to offer to its people and outsiders, many more in-migrated to the city and surrounding villages
- Cyber Park constructed — Medicity Hospital construction begins
- Village gets approached by the workers and migrants who came for the new job opportunities in cyber park — few find stay in the then G, G+1 buildings in the village

Source: Author, Ashin, Venna
With Medicity hospital and cyber park fully operational, huge migrant population from other cities and states approach Jharsa for accommodation due to cheaper rentals.

Construction of newer floors and buildings to accommodate the new working population – appropriation of village to absorb the migrant working class.

Source: Author, Ashin, Venna
More and more buildings were constructed to house the working population.

Real estate and rental business boom in the area.

Newer developments along the periphery.

Source: Author, Ashin, Venna.
Growth of Jharsa into a service village

Source: Author, Ashin, Venna
Live-work patterns

Who goes where?

To Medicity
- Doctors
- Nurses
- Service class
- Patients

To Gurgaon
- Young professionals
- Service class

To Maruti Udyog
- Service class

To Cyber Park
- Office class
- Service class

To Cyber Hub
- Service class

Source: Author
The villages Sukhrali and Sarhol were also studied, and the comparison presents striking similarities in the present character of these 3 villages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Urban Village</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jharsa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place of residence</strong></td>
<td>• Most prominent attribute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Huge rental business run by Jat communities that accommodate the service and working population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mix of cultures and ethnicities</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commercial space</strong></td>
<td>• No major commercial magnets – therefore does not entertain outside population</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural node</strong></td>
<td>• Living population has little cultural association to the place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Resident population unaware of the history of the place</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No major festivals or procession routes in the village – culturally passive zone</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Industrial area</strong></td>
<td>• No major industries in the village and therefore do not provide any job/service opportunities to the outsiders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional area</strong></td>
<td>• Medicity in close vicinity – provides job for various working classes</td>
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</tbody>
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*Source: Author*
Sukhrali Village

Source: Author
Emergence of a new village type?

How do our cities normally grow?

- Inner core formed
- Develops outward – nucleus type development
- Core remains intact and of high prominence
- Development of all historic cities over the world

How do service villages grow?

- Peripheral magnets of the millennial city
- Changing edge conditions – transformation of edges
- Gradual inward transformation to the inner core
- Possible eating up of inner core
- Loss of core – loss of history and identity

Source: Author
All of the villages studied here, though have their respective history and evolution patterns, however today fall perfectly into the category of such service villages that could be identified with a common equation
The lack of connections they have with their past identities, and the similarities in their current profiles and growth trajectories presents us with a plausible future where each of these villages could be replaced in space and context with any other, and it wouldn’t make much of a difference. These ‘cities of non-cityness’ further strengthens the argument that our cities today are traversing a path of anti-growth.

Source: Author
Conclusions

• Today, being in Gurgaon means something. The cosmopolitanism that the shifts have brought to these villages is worth mentioning; whether it is or not by choice is however a point of further discussion and debate

• The transforming neighbourhoods due to accelerated urbanisation in Chiang Mai (Thailand), the historical urban patterns and socio-cultural identities challenged by development pressures in Ho Chi Minh (Vietnam), the contingent socio-urban reforms giving way to gentrification in Philippines — are all indicators to the emergence of such privately planned cities all over the world. (The Southeast Asia Neighborhoods Network)
What can we as a profession do about this?

- The approach should primarily be bottom up – using the lessons from ground reality rather than from constructed imagery.
- Urbanism and architecture – like art and cinema – should engagingly explore the idea of subjectivity and self-empowerment.
- Initiatives like UDRI (Mumbai), COSTFORD (Kerala) and Auroville (Pondicherry) could help us re-invent our profession to cultivate meaningful and efficient patronage for now and the future.
- One should be able to address his city and its people, and should be able to wade his way out of social inequity and corporate fascism.
Food for thought:

*Is the projected future of redundancy of such cities and villages a fact; or a mere perception, too adamant to accept the new base layer these cities have become for newer divergent layers to be added on and grow forward?*