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AND MATHEW A. VARGHESE

URBAN UTOPIAS

EXCESS AND EXPULSION IN NEOLIBERAL SOUTH ASIA

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Urban Utopias

Excess and Expulsion in Neoliberal South Asia

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Dedicated to All Expelled

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Urban Utopias—Excess and Expulsion in Neoliberal India and Sri Lanka

Tereza Kuldova and Mathew A. Varghese

For most of its independent national history, India has envisioned itself as the nation of villages; these villages were conceived of as the heart and soul of the nation, as the very essence of India and of its authentic 'Indianness', and as a source of cultural pride (Mukherjee 2006; Mohsini 2011; Kaur 2012; Greenough 1996; Favero 2013; Parry et al. 2000; Mines 1988; Dumont 1970; Marriot 1989), symbolically immortalized in the image of Gandhi and *khadi* (Jodhka 2002). The village was the national utopia. Even in academic writing, until the 1980s, the 'urban' was more or less a marginalized category of analysis in India (Prakash 2002). While the urban ethnographies represented by the Rhodes Livingstone Institute focused on industrial spaces, encouraged by people like Max Gluckman, and attempted to distance themselves from the colonialist 'tribalizing'

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tendencies, the Indian strand tried to distantiate itself from Africanist anthropology. In the process, works like that of Jonathan Parry invested much in the rural–urban connections as well as what they perceived as 'distinct' Indian character. Much of the work stood short of considering the 'urban' as a category in itself.

The Rhodes Livingstone ethnography was a major turning point and paradigm shift with a focus on the structural impacts of the then global processes like colonialism. Urban economy was no longer abstract but firmly shaped by social and material relationships within historical contexts. Workspaces, spaces of flows of capital and people, migrant networks, marginalities, spatial segregation, and conflicts as well as the globalization and transnationalism have further developed the urban fields of reference since the 1990s (Ong and Nonini 1997; Caldeira 2000; Prato and Pardo 2013).

But it was first when the first National Commission on Urbanization was constituted in 1985, that urbanity was slowly becoming a topic in regional academia. Today, the village is still idealized and romanticized, along with the Gandhian narrative, in particular by the middle classes and elites, as a space of tradition and rich cultural heritage, and yet, it is considered as backward, as the very opposite of contemporary modern and urban India; in the imagination, it is thus firmly positioned within the past of the nation and has no place in the present or in the utopian future. What survived from the Nehruvian narrative of 'really existing villages' in India seems to be solely the idea of their backwardness, only this time around they are excluded from development, as development becomes concentrated in selected urban enclaves. The idealized village thus exists as a positive and nationalist model only in so far as the 'living past' has become effectively commodified for the consumption of the upper strata; even *khadi* has become a glamorous object displayed on fashion ramps (Kuldova 2016). At the same time as the cultural heritage and tradition are being commodified for the consumption of the select few, often with added 'ethical value' (protecting cultural heritage, supporting poor artisans, and displaying patriotism), the future is envisioned as purely urban and exclusive (Kuldova, ibid.). The villages and their craftsmen are thus on one hand essential to delivering the commodified and packaged idea of India to the well-off urbanites, who can then proudly display their belonging to the ideal nation located somewhere in an imaginary authentic traditional village, but the actually living 'oh so authentically

Indian' producers of these commodities are not to be incorporated into the future India; they are expelled from the vision of the future India, to use Saskia Sassen's term (Sassen 2014), and only included as an integrated reject—as a commodified, and thus also sublimated, version of the really existing structural expulsion. And yet, this adornment in symbols of a desirable social utopia has little to do with the elite's actions and their often socially and economically divisive (corporate) politics (Kuldova 2014, 2016). However, constraining the social utopia (often one of secular nationalism or harmonious cohabitation) within the 'essence' of the branded commodity precisely restricts its potential; it closes down its possibilities and transforms it into a banal next hot thing in town. It appears that the more a social utopia is commodified, the less capable it is of structuring actual social relations within the city. The social utopia is robbed of its power by the market pressures, penetration of corporate and international capital, neoliberal policies, and the rise of divisive politics and 'muscular' Hindu nationalism (Kuldova 2015) that transform it into an inconsequential personal status symbol. An idea of inclusion is sold today 'freely' in the market and yet as such in practice affordable for few. Within the marketplace, the utopian idea of inclusion and communal harmony is turned into a privatized feel-good practice of exclusion. This in turn leads to urban spaces without urbanity, from which the majority of the public is excluded (Kuldova, ibid.), all at the cost of proliferation of 'privatopias' (McKenzie 1996). This also leads to a process of bifurcation of India into *seemingly* parallel worlds—the world of the rich and the world of the poor, the formal economy and the informal economy, materialism and spirituality, modernity/future and tradition/past, and the 'new' versus the 'real' India (Kuldova 2016). Both are alternatively cast as either good or bad, depending on context and interest. The business elites can be either despised as the greedy rich or become the only thinkable philanthropic saviors of India—the same quality, greed, is transfigured into benevolence and thus legitimate power (Kuldova 2017b). The poor can be alternatively perceived as backward masses that drag the country down or as the noble poor, idealized as the spirit of the Indian nation—both precisely because of their poverty. Academic discourse, too, often reproduces this illusion of a split India consisting of two parallel worlds that do not meet. The characteristic ways in which the parallel worlds of the seemingly opposed (formal–informal, extremities of wealth and deprivation, and legal and the illegal) normalize orders have often been subjects of recent academic

enquiries (Prato and Pardo 2013; Busà 2014; da Silva 2013), which have shown that authenticities are paradoxically often generated and imposed in globalizing contexts (Pezzi 2013), while in the process excluding people who actually live in these places. We can read that once we exit Gurgaon's gated world-class amenities where the rich reside, we are '"back in India" as it were' (Kalyan 2011, 39) or that those living in the gated luxury spaces are said to aspire to live 'as though one were rich and lived in New York, London, Paris, Frankfurt or Amsterdam' (Mani 2008, 53). This split is constituted along the lines of class and caste, which correlate with the tendency to position the privileged part of the population into the present and future of postmodernity and the other into the past and unbreakable shackles of tradition—both praised and resented depending on interest. However, in reality there are no two Indias (Kuldova 2017a); instead, this fantasy of the split is actively (re)produced and serves crucial ideological functions that are crucial to understand in order to be able to discuss urban development and the utopian visions that drive it in the first place.

Futuristic Visions of Urbanity and Socio-Economic Expulsions

Tara van Dijk critically analyzes in this volume precisely the social fantasies that support the idea of the 'two Indias', that is, the fantasy of the split between the 'world-class cities of the future' and the slums and that sustains the profoundly impossible neoliberal utopia of a 'world-class slum-free city' (ibid.). She argues that the proposed neoliberal remedy for the so-called malevolent urbanism (McFarlane 2012) is precisely what has caused it to emerge in the first place and that we need to reject the fantasy of the two Indias in order to be even able to imagine an alternative future for India beyond the ruling disastrous neoliberal utopia. The future has become urban but is paradoxically also lacking urbanity at the same time, as it increasingly excludes public rather than including public and as internal borders within a society proliferate rather than diminish. This development has been exacerbated by the neoliberal restructuring of the economy since the 1990s, marked by rising inequality and hence also proliferating exclusions. As Kuldova remarks in this volume, only the good consumer- and investor-citizens have a guaranteed place within this urban future without urbanity (ibid.). In order to capture this particular neoliberal utopia, Kuldova coins the term 'luxotopia', pointing directly to the excessive and exclusive character of this neoliberal utopia; she invites

us to the spaces of gated communities and luxury fashion shows to contemplate how this utopia is materialized because only in its materiality can an ideology be effective (Althusser 1971) in terms of mobilizing subjects and their affects (Lordon 2014). She argues that the Indian urban luxotopia is a very particular one, namely one that 'on the outside appears global and modern, with its emphasis on technology and sleek design, but on the inside, at its very core, is traditionalist and neo-feudal and it is this core that provides it with assumed strength and superiority over similar luxotopias in other parts of the emerging economies, as well as in the West, which is imagined precisely as lacking this moral anchor and thus as driven solely by profit and greed. Indian greed, on the other hand, is imagined increasingly, as a cultural good, precisely because of this perceived moral anchoring materialized in the aesthetic of the inner space of the luxotopia—the Indian billionaires, inspired by traditional scriptures and engaged in philanthropy, are imagined and hailed as national saviors' (ibid.). In this case, it is clearly to be seen that those excluded become an integrated reject, they become the symbols of traditions that provide the elites with superiority, and yet in their physical presence they need to be sanitized and pushed into invisibility, their slums bulldozed, and their land sold to builders capable of attracting international capital.

It has been precisely this shift in utopian thinking toward one that expels the majority of population that has motivated this volume. But something else struck us as well, namely the observation that as opposed to Western utopian or rather increasingly dystopian narratives about the future of collapse and civilizational rebirth, utopias in South Asia not only tend to be localized in the cities as heartlands of civilization and of future superpowerdom but also tend to be overfilled with hope of a better future, a spectacular future of excessive wealth. The rising gross domestic product (GDP) has become a particular national obsession, a cult of the 'factish' god of GDP, as Latour would have put it (Latour 2010), a god that perfectly captures this profound neoliberal hope for a better future. Irrespective of how neoliberal this hope is at its core in this case, the general hope that the future will be something better than the present, that the future generations will live in a better world, appears to have been lost and abandoned by the West somewhere in the 1980s or 1990s (depending on where), along the path to this neoliberal future as hope was replaced by impoverishment, discontent, resignation, and disillusionment. Even popular culture testifies to this utopian mood in India. Bollywood cinema has to our knowledge never produced an apocalyptic

movie ending in a full-blown destruction of the world. To the contrary, it churns out enormous amounts of movies that cast India as a global superpower, as a hypermodern high-tech country with a bright future, full of pride for its achievements (Kuldova 2014); Bollywood movies are full of escapism but still loaded with hope for a future *within* the current system. Shiju Sam Varughese has analyzed the Bollywood movie *Love Story 2050* in this volume, a movie that travels to the utopian technoscientific future of Mumbai in 2050 and shows how it reveals both the desires and anxieties pertaining to the experience of the neoliberal city as the movie in effect rehearses the cultural imagination of neoliberal future. In line with what Kuldova has argued in respect to the contemporary nature of the luxotopias that materialize themselves in city development and on fashion ramps, Varughese's analysis of the movie reveals that the spectacular embodiment of the neoliberal future of Mumbai, reduced to being merely one of the booming nodes of the global network devoid of brown bodies and cultural specificity, becomes 'undesirable (and uninhabitable) because of the lack of its "Indianness"' (ibid.). While Tara van Dijk has argued for the impossibility of achieving the neoliberal world-class slum-free city, Varughese shows that even in the cinema the 'futuristic city, as a sanitized, technoscientific autopoetic system, (…) is unachievable' (ibid.).

Impossible or not, utopian visions of spectacular economic growth and innovation keep on materializing in one imperfect version after another across South Asia, often at high human and environmental costs, as the chapter by Kenneth Bo Nielsen and Solano DaSilva shows (ibid.). Analyzing the struggles and resistance surrounding the emergence of new growth infrastructures and an airport in Goa, they show how these developmental projects materialize not only the utopias of the ruling political and economic elites but also global power relations, while taking into account the expulsions in which they result, such as dispossession. In the process they look at the ways in which the symbolic and hyperreal construct of 'New India', also already critically analyzed in the chapter by Tara van Dijk, manifests itself in the materiality of new growth structures, arguing that the 'New India' cannot be simply ignored as mere elitist myth-making but instead needs to be taken seriously, if only because of its power to mobilize affects, aspirations, and identities of people and thus also pushing them into action. The authors argue that the utopian ideal of the 'New India', even against the expulsions it incorporates and inequalities that it exacerbates, presents itself as a collective dream and aspiration

for all. Forms of exclusions can as a result ensue, in addition to top-down impositions, through bottom-up aspirational demands (Scotti and Sacco 2013). Moreover, it is also fascinating to observe that the airports themselves are to be developed according to the model of an airport city, a mixture of a special economic zone, and a gated community, in line with the notion of 'luxotopias' coined by Kuldova (ibid.).

Special economic zones, the GDP-centered developmentalism, the corporate state, the liquidation of public spaces, and the increase of the spectacular and excessive can be all seen also as the signs of the materialization of exclusions. These exclusions often operate in carefully crafted regimes of exceptions, thus complicating the terrain even further. This is most visible in the mega-urban conceptualizations, such as the smart cities, which have begun to (re)structure everyday lives' normative orders. Mathew A. Varghese illustrates in his chapter in detail these processes resulting in different forms of loss, expulsion, and excess but also development in the name of capital accumulation (Varghese, ibid.). He does so by presenting cases from regions in the south western Indian state of Kerala, where the assemblage of neoliberal choreography works through rhetoric of future and protocols of 'smartness'. He shows that in the process of trying to achieve the goal of 'smartness', everything becomes sacrificed to this vision, ultimately even smartness itself (see Pfaller, ibid.). Not only people, but also geographies must become smart in order to be included in the discourse of utopia. Ironically, however, the inclusions usurp the utopias and literally eviscerate places, and there is very little smartness to be found around such processes.

Urban Megalomaniac Visions and Heritage Utopias

Alas, hope still lives in places like India and that is why it has such a plethora of utopias, as we came to find out and it is precisely this interest in hope, against all odds, and perhaps also against the very hope destroying the potentiality of a better future, that binds this volume together. In the process of putting this book together, we realized that we cannot deal only with the futuristic visions of urbanity and the related socio-economic expulsions, which we have discussed here so far and which fall within the Part I of this book. Instead, in order to address the actually existing urban utopias, we had to broaden the spectrum of possibilities. Firstly, as has already become partially visible in the chapters by Kuldova, van Dijk, and Varughese, there is always the 'trouble' with the imagined traditional

other and hence also the trouble with the past; the past is often idealized, imagined as golden, and as a utopia in itself that would like to see itself projected into the future. These imagined golden pasts have a particular tendency to be excessive and megalomaniac, and it is not uncommon that certain political leaders but also business elites succumb to the idea of recreation of such golden ages, projecting them into the future. Alternatively, the past is manipulated or at least re-adjusted to fit the future needs of the city, to position the city on the global map of world. With the rise of Hindu nationalism, we have seen not only the intensification of neoliberal policies but also increased concerns with protection of tradition, as with claiming cultural superiority (Kuldova 2014). In order to capture the multiple ways in which megalomaniac visions of grandeur and the notions of heritage play together, and apart, the Part II of this book investigates multiple cases that illustrate these dynamics. The second part thus goes further in revealing the double dynamics of these urban utopias: on one hand, the impulse to hide and ignore the squalor, violence, inequality, and oppressions from sight, already discussed previously, but on the other hand, the capacity to manufacture panoramas of utopia precisely out of what is otherwise meant to be kept hidden. The real needs, scarcities, the so-called backwardness, as well as deprivations become often presented as new entrepreneurial possibilities (Roy 2011), as new possibilities. Commodification of heritage or even of, for instance, the 'living tribal culture' (Kuldova, ibid.) is the reverse side of the same coin. However, another feature connected to the golden ages, and to visions of megalomania, is the revival of neo-feudalism and creation of a global elite that imagines itself as a version of superior aristocracy (Kuldova 2016, 2015) and, as Øivind Fuglerud shows in his chapter from the Sri Lankan context, of authoritarianism, which more often than not utilizes military force and corruption to achieve the desired utopia. Slavoj Žižek has talked in this sense of the rise of 'authoritarian capitalism' (Žižek 2009) and the way in which capitalism, far from being the 'natural bringer of democracy' as the ideology of spectacular capitalism would like us to believe (Gilman-Opalsky 2011), thrives much better under authoritarian conditions (preferably accompanied by high levels of corruption). Even in Colombo, the largest city of Sri Lanka, the rulers desire a world-class slum-free city, much in line with what Tara van Dijk has described in this volume for the case of India. Again, many have to pay price for this and face expulsion. Fuglerud describes forced evictions of people who have occupied commercially viable land in the center of Colombo, an eviction not only to remove the slum but also to create a new

visual regime of the city. 'Aesthetic governance' (Kuldova, ibid.) comes of age in Colombo as well, as urban development is placed into the hands of private-sector actors who are given a central role in planning of cities. The megalomaniac visions are sustained by the greed and hunger for power of the corrupt leaders, in this case in particular Mahinda Rajapakse, matching his authoritarian rule that has been supported by the militarization of society and by creating monuments to oneself, that is building airports, harbors, cricket stadiums, and so on, all bearing the name of Rajapakse. The strength of Fuglerud's contribution lies in its fearlessness in revealing how corruption, hotch-potch neoliberalism, and authoritarianism work together, sustained by the utopian visions of world-class future. If Rajapakse is the megalomaniac of Sri Lanka, the former *dalit* (untouchable) Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Mayawati was his counterpart in India. But Mayawati, as Melia Belli Bose goes to show, did not only create larger-than-life monuments to herself all over Lucknow but also commissioned numerous architectural and sculptural memorials commemorating prominent social reformers. As such, she has envisioned and materialized inclusive *dalit* (untouchable) utopias. Irrespective of the obsession with her own greatness, Mayawati has tried to re-create the public space so that it would include those previously marginalized and excluded. Within this context of a highly visual and performative political assertion as well as invocation of ancient ideas of empire (and casting herself as an emperor), Belli Bose's chapter talks about how communities can be imagined anew around alternative and monumental logics. While Lucknow has been a city known for its golden ages, and even for its utopian golden age of communal harmony (Kuldova 2017c), the *dalits* were often excluded even from the most inclusive utopias of the time. Identity politics, as we will see later as well, tends to have its own utopias, which it wishes to mark on the urban space in order to achieve inclusion, but even among the *dalits*, as Belli Bose shows, there is a particular desire for the royal affiliation of Buddhism as opposed to the subaltern one due to which they have been stigmatized. This desire for the royal affiliation is not only a question of status, but within the current system it becomes also a way of acquiring cultural capital through claiming superior heritage and belonging. Cities have increasingly the same ambition to cultivate their cultural heritage and cultural capital in order to commodify themselves for touristic consumption. Here we can yet again see commodified utopias reemerge, much like in the construction projects of gated communities or on the fashion ramps (Kuldova, ibid.). As Rachel A. Varghese shows in this volume, organizing

international art biennales is one way of acquiring such necessary cultural capital and capitalizing on local cultural heritage, while luring in international financial capital (Varghese, ibid.). However, for such an event to become successful, a unified narrative of the city has to be created and cultivated. In this case, the narrative of historical communal harmony and happy cosmopolitanism has been selected, precisely in order to project an image of the same onto the desired future of the city, only this time largely in order to attract foreign capital rather than to actually create such a utopia. Moreover, as Varghese shows, such a narrative can be created and sustained only through a series of exclusions and reappropriations that play with the temporal and territorial notions of Kochi's past and through selective privileging of spaces. The past is here intentionally projected onto the desirable future in order to make the city itself desirable.

Heritage has also become a buzzword in Jaipur, the popular tourist destination in Rajasthan, where the former royalty has turned their palaces into luxury hotels catering to local and global rich. And there has been a tension building up between the further heritization of the city for the touristic consumption and the ideal of the world-class city, which has come to the fore, as Garima Dhabai's chapter reveals (Dhabai, ibid.), with the controversial construction of the metro rail in Jaipur. Here the registers of 'heritage' became directly confronted with the registers of 'development'; the strength of Dhabai's chapter is in dwelling upon the micro-dynamics of power and contestations that shape the 're-production' of the *old* city in the *times* of 'world-class' urbanity, both being at the same time postulated as utopian ideals onto themselves and both demanding that certain narratives and certain people are expelled in the name of purity of the utopia; the past and the future is in the process often re-adjusted to fit corporate and state desires.

Urban Queer Utopias and Bodily Expulsions

While we have already touched upon those excluded, even in the marginalized communities such as the *dalits*, when investigating urban exclusions as well as the proliferation of utopias within the urban context, we have realized that the neoliberal city is also often envisioned as a site of sexual liberation, inclusiveness, and anonymity which provides a space to breath and the possibility to live one's life according to one's desires. This is not too surprising considering that the city itself is often imagined as a space of freedom (especially freedom from the pressures of community and related moralities) but also because the 1990s have been both marked by intense

neoliberalization as well as by identity politics. What is interesting here is to follow how this unfolds in the context of urban India, where sexual liberation and the ability of even sexual minorities to live a liveable life or, even better, 'a life worth living' (Pfaller, ibid.) become an object of intense hope and of utopian ideals. Since these everyday struggles of the queer inscribe themselves into the cities and urban structures and since they form a particular demand for inclusion, which can easily be also universalized, we have decided to devote the last Part III of the book to urban queer utopias and bodily exclusions. These utopias are interesting also because they are sites of intense struggle not only between the marginalized and the majority but also within the marginalized themselves who are often themselves divided by class membership. Rohit K. Dasgupta and Paul Boyce take the readers to a small town in West Bengal and contemplate the nature of the utopia that emerges directly from discontent and dissatisfaction. They argue that 'queer perspectives on futurity have accented the unrealizable conditions for queer life-worlds in the present. A queer utopian view might emerge in these terms as an affective attachment to a better life, even if that life remains out of reach, this perhaps being the condition of its projected romantic existence' (Dasgupta and Boyce, ibid.). And they ask an interesting question, namely—what does it entail to be queer and hence also to be to an extent a physical materialization of a phantasmatic futurity, at the same time embodying the contemporary socio-political struggles? The chapter goes on to engage with everyday life of several informants and shows what utopian hopes they themselves project onto the city, as opposed to what the realities of living in the city as queer entail, potentially even disrupting the queer neoliberal progress and resisting neoliberal and normative subjecthood. Being sex/gender dissidents in the neoliberal urban 'New India' is also the subject of the further enlightening analysis provided by Caroline Osella, who has been doing fieldwork in Kerala since 1989, a place back then sex-gender conservative, but since 2010 hosting Kerala Queer Pride, and who carefully investigates the changes most visible in the public space and in the discussions about the public space. For instance, the courtship and romantic encounters have been in the neoliberal era pushed from courtship in the parents' home toward enjoyment in the urban public sphere of consumption, as a means of socializing proper neoliberal subjects and consumer-citizens, something that queer or sex/gender dissident subjects can both easily fall victim to as it offers new possibilities but can also be something they can particularly effectively resist, refusing the cynicism, nihilism, and the despair of the present.

Bangalore, which has been nicknamed as India's Silicon Valley, and Mumbai are the sites of Jacquelyn Strey's investigations into the urban and queer geographies of the cities. The themes of the neoliberal city reappear for the last time in the book, as does the 'brand India', the 'New India', only this time to be investigated both from the position of the largely privileged middle class and from its members who self-identify as queer. This has put the subjects of the study into an uneasy position of having to choose between being queer or middle class or claim both, which may not always be equally easy. Citizenship reveals itself here as based, in practice, predominantly on consumption habits and heteronormativity; however, as Strey points out, queer subjects are not always resistant and avant-garde; instead, they too become incorporated into the hegemonic structures and that too often when on the first sight appearing as if resisting them. At the same time, however, Strey argues that queer women actively participate in creating new spaces that reflect their desire for a life worth living. The queer women have shown Strey that it is the small steps toward creating of the utopian and optimistic future that matter and that we should also try to understand and learn to cherish rather than always look for a radical break or fully anti-normative subjects. Strey also invokes the problematic idea of the 'New Indian Woman', a utopian figure in itself, one that, as Kuldova has argued in this volume, also coincides with the aesthetic of the inside of the luxotopias which are meant to contain the source of proud 'Indianness' correlated with home and femininity, vis-à-vis the masculine and muscular smooth surfaces of the high-rises world-class city (Kuldova, ibid.). Thus, this chapter reveals, through the engagements with individual subjects, that the dramas that the first part of the book has mapped onto the city and urban infrastructure at large, and the masses of expelled, are mirrored within discourses, practices, and everyday negotiations of the individual subjects within the city and the public space. The last part of the book thus supplies us with a plethora of ambiguous narratives about exclusion and discontent on one hand and utopian possibilities within urban spaces on the other. What it teaches us very clearly is that we have to insist on the 'right to the city', as David Harvey would put it (Harvey 2003):

> the right to the city which (…) is not merely a right of access to what the property speculators and state planners define, but an active right to make the city different, to shape it more in accord with our heart's desire, and to re-make ourselves thereby in a different image. The creation of a new urban commons, a public sphere of active democratic participation, requires that

> we roll back that huge wave of privatization that has been the mantra of a destructive neoliberalism. We must imagine a more inclusive, even if continuously fractious, city based not only upon a different ordering of rights but upon different political-economic practices. If our urban world has been imagined and made then it can be re-imagined and re-made. The inalienable right to the city is worth fighting for. 'City air makes one free' it used to be said. The air is a bit polluted now. But it can always be cleaned up. (Harvey 2003, 940–941)

But as Robert Pfaller in his manifest-cum-epilogue at the very end of this volume argues, we must not only insist on the right to the city but also on a life worth living within such a city (Pfaller, ibid.).

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PART I

Futuristic Visions of Urbanity and Socio-Economic Expulsions

CHAPTER 2

The Impossibility of World-Class Slum-Free Indian Cities and the Fantasy of 'Two Indias'

Tara van Dijk

Introduction: World-Class Slum-Free Cities

The time I spent discussing urban development with government elites, developers, and members of the new middle classes in Mumbai and Delhi (between 2005 and 2013) disclosed the widespread grievance that India *should be well on its way to its own Shanghai by now, but it is not.* After sharing with my interlocutors that I had spent a year working in Shanghai, I was often asked, 'How can Mumbai become like Shanghai?' or 'Why isn't Mumbai more like Shanghai?' Shanghai causes anxiety for many urbanites and policy makers because it shows that world-class cities are possible in Asia. Reference to Shanghai, along with Singapore, Seoul, Hong Kong, and Tokyo, creates and feeds the desire of many middle-class and elite Indian urbanites for world-class slum-free cities of their own (Roy and Ong 2011). The question on their mind is: 'why should other Asian countries enjoy these and not them?'

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An Internet search, or perusal of English language newspapers in Indian metros, shows that promotional materials for urban policies, real estate development projects, and apartments are awash with 'world-class city' rhetoric. Municipalities in the mid-2000s hired consultants to produce mandatory City Development Reports for Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission funds from the Government of India. Regardless of what a municipality's socio-economic situation, and the level of serviced and serviceable urban land, these reports all stated the desire of becoming world-class slum-free cities by 2020. Political campaigns like India Shining, Make in India, Brand India, and Modi's winning election slogan 'good days are approaching' all imagine and require modern, well-ordered, high-tech, and aesthetically pleasing cities conducive to consumption and capital accumulation. For civil society and government elites, the main agents of this process are the new urban middle class and corporate elites or 'cool capitalists' (Chakravartty and Sarkar 2013; Fernandes 2000, 2004, 2010). The combination of well-educated and aspirational professional class and philanthropic-minded corporate elite, with a sufficiently freed market, is envisioned to lead to economic growth, which then self-organizes into world-class slum-free cities that will rival Shanghai and Singapore. In short, world-class slum-free cities are a neoliberal Indian urban utopia. Neoliberalism posits the free market as the natural and best way of organizing societies. Domains as different as leisure, education, or cities in general function best as marketplaces. This ideology constitutes people as rational individual market actors and encourages them to invest in their human capital and to make all decisions based on what will best increase the market value of things—themselves included (Brown 2015). This social imaginary that Indian cities can, should, and will become world-class slum-free cities, in part, explains why such excessive signs of urban inequality, such as Antilia (Mukesh Ambani, Chairman of Reliance Industries, one-billion-dollar private residential property in Mumbai), are not politicized.

Neoliberalism began in India in the early 1990s. So far, it has failed to produce world-class slum-free cities. There *are* millions of urban Indians who have achieved a middle-class lifestyle and who seem to *enjoy* neoliberalism. One does not have to look only at pictures or films of Singapore to imagine what Mumbai can become if it wants to. One can go and have lunch at the Mumbai Grand Hyatt and enjoy the grounds, if allowed entry. If denied entry, one can gaze upon it with those that (when I last visited in 2012) live on the pavement less than 500 meters away. There is an

archipelago of enclaves that could be described as world-class, but there has been no tipping point. Looking at how much of a city is hooked up to the sewage system attests to this. Also telling, is how many middle-class developments, branded as world-class in the sales office, are unable to defend their built environments from being undermined by the status of basic services that (variably) reach their perimeter. Despite objectively poor results, the desire for world-class slum-free cities via market and middle-class-focused approaches remains dominant (Roy 2014; Ghertner 2015; Shatkin 2013). Why is this? This question calls for an ideological critique.

Žižekian Ideological Critique

Slavoj Žižek carries forth Louis Althusser's theory of the symbolic efficiency of appearances and directs our attention to how ideology is not only conceptual, but also exists in social practices and their material consequences. Belief is a secondary or emergent phenomenon (Žižek 2003). Again, there are places in Indian cities that look and feel 'modern' (orderly, sanitary, aesthetically cosmopolitan, much to consume, and spaces to leisurely dwell). Further, while many government officials in private discuss how a focus on world-class infrastructure and big real estate developments does little to address poverty and inequality, at work, they act *as if* they believe. Many openly (but informally) admit that policies are, in practice, never really about empowering the poor, for example:

> *These [rental] housing policies like all the others are never about the poor really. They are about developers and landowners. The poor are pawns for the real estate market, the land mafia and the government.* (Informal discussion, Mumbai Metropolitan Development Authority, Urban Planner, April 2011)

However, again, they continue to act *as if* they are.

A conceivable story (middle-class aspiration + free markets) and some actually existing places and people that corroborate it are not enough to explain why neoliberalism endures despite failing to deliver on most of its promises. Slavoj Žižek argues that in addition to the symbolic efficiency of appearances, that viable social fantasies are necessary for an ideology to feign off entropy and alternative fantasies (Žižek 1989). Social fantasies are ideology's defense mechanisms. In the case of world-class slum-free cities, they both stage a reason India does not yet enjoy them and stoke the desire for them. Ideologies repress or deny that

social reality is radically contingent (Žižek 1993). Failures and contradictions can lead to re-politicizing and denaturalizing of market-based solutions to urban issues and profit- and revenue-driven urbanization in general, and thus must be warded against. To do so, fictions (fantasies) of present or future cohesion between the idea, for example, that markets are the best way to organize human relations and the experiences and empirical evidence that can call this belief into question develop. For neoliberal urbanism to continue its hegemony in the policy sphere, it must provide an antagonist and a pathway to defeat it—that leaves its core tenants in place—unquestioned.

Fantasies comprise imaginary images, forces, and agents that hold the Real of social reality at bay (Žižek 1993). The Real is a Lacanian term Žižek leverages to cover both that which cannot be accounted for or represented sufficiently within a socio-symbolic order and to index the void of any symbolic order, which is indicated by its contradictions. No symbolic register (i.e., language and culture) can account for everything sans contradiction and not everything can be contained within a symbolic order. For example, take a street by street tour of Mumbai, and no doubt you will come across many things, and have many experiences that are at odds with world-class slum-free city plans and visions. In a Žižekian framework, these ill-fitting, or disturbing people, activities, places, and smells belong to the Real of the city. These empirical confrontations resist being symbolized and put strain upon the goal of world-class slum-free cities. It is not possible to speak of, or for, 'the city' and not engage is some degree of symbolic exclusion or utopian thinking (Marcuse 2005). Any representation of 'the city' will be a failing representation. The Real, in its positive and negative forms, insists. We always feel that something is missing, off, or 'not right', that we are individually or collectively 'not there yet' (Žižek 2002). The Real causes anxiety and thus indexes the ever-present potential for change. However, changes in the symbolic rendering of 'the city' do not progressively extinguish the Real; there is always an empirical remainder and a conceptual void. This ontological lack that marks everyone and every aspect of social reality makes us desiring subjects who enjoy (get some sort of rush or thrill tinged with affect) both from trying and failing to fill the lack that never goes away. Excesses and voids tickle the status quo and subjects (Žižek 2000).

The *socio-symbolic order* refers to language, discourses, cultural norms and social institutions, and other things that can signify (such as systems of exchange, forms of dress, and comportment). Many social sciences use the

covering term 'structure' to represent what Lacan refers to as the symbolic register and what Žižek normally refers to as socio-symbolic orders. At any rate, it refers to the constructed reality that preexists us, which gives order (incompletely) to the perceptual world and sets the coordinates of meaning, practice, and utility for the subjects and objects constituted within it. It contains whatever gives meaning and order to the world by bringing things into the realm of visibility, knowledge, and thus greater controllability. It is through the symbolic register that we, and everything else included in social reality, undergo a process of being contingently fixed, interpreted, and thus objectified or subjectified. The symbolic is a precondition of social reality and identities, but the content is contingent. The symbolic posits me (as an appearance of a fixed subject) and 'the city' into social reality. Nonetheless, it remains external, opaque, and powerful over me. This is why Žižek, following Lacan, refers to it as the 'Big Other'. People do not live in material situations mainly of their own making, nor mentally exist within symbolic orders of their own making, any more than they live in histories of their own making. At the level of the individual, every human pays a price when entering the symbolic register; they become alienated (split), lacking subjects always vulnerable to their desire being structure and their enjoyment economized (Žižek 2000).

The *imaginary register* produces fantasies (or utopian scenarios) of a life or, in this case, a city without lack—a world-class slum-free city. At the individual level, the *imaginary register* is the domain of ego. Here we can imagine versions of ourselves that are complete and desirable to others and the 'Big Other'. However, lack (the Real) is ontological, we are perpetually vulnerable to how others treat us, and to discourses that fail to capture all of our being. The anxiety we experience because of lack—that which keeps us from being desirable, or good subjects, of world-class cities, for example—is universal and interminable. Lack prompts us both to identify with subjectivities (and thus their associated mandates) and to endeavor to make up for our lack, or our city's lack, through acquiring the things (such as shopping malls and sidewalks without hawkers) and attributes (aspirational, forward-looking, and self-reliant) available subjectivities encourage us to desire. The *enjoyment* (jouissance) we experience by acquiring (or failing to acquire) an attribute, space, or identity never lasts, and we find ourselves desiring again (Žižek 1993). Crucially, one can enjoy something, psychoanalytically speaking, without liking it. Complaining is perhaps one of the most constant sources of enjoyment (Schuster 2016). The feelings and bodily responses we experience when embarrassed also

are a type of enjoyment. Desire is structured and enjoyment economized by *object-causes of desire* constituted within social fantasies. An object-cause of desire is anything that once obtained, overcome, or defeated is staged as a filler (or remedy) of a lack. In other words, the object-cause of desire is some stolen, or missing, enjoyment that will return. In this case, world-class slum-free cities are an object-cause of desire, and the obstacles and steps toward achieving them are as well. Social fantasies offer our desire targets, pathways, awards, and condemnations. In other words, fantasies structure amorphous desire and economize enjoyment in ways that block our attention from the contingency of social reality and the failures of ideology (Žižek 2000).

Žižekian ideological critique focuses on desire and enjoyment. Žižek pushes us to look at how ideologies grip us by administering our enjoyment through structuring desire. He pushes us to look at libidinal investments in an ideology to shed light on why people hold onto what objectively suppresses, exploits, or fails to deliver. The thesis is that people bond with ideologies through the enjoyment we get from the subjectivities, practices, and material consequences associated with them. To make the distinction and relation between ideology and fantasy more clear, let us take the example of a non-governmental organization (NGO) organizing trainings in a slum. The ideology functioning is the narrative that in order for economic growth to be inclusive we must focus on the capacities of the poor, mainly the latent capacities they are believed to already have. A particular ideal type of 'poor person' is universalized, currently an industrious, suppressed entrepreneur, who (with the help of social capital, micro-credit, and some training) can be the agent of her development that she already always was. This is the fantasy that supports ideology-as-discourse and it is the identity or the 'call' poor need to answer for them to experience the necessary desire for development. NGOs and development projects and trends come and go, but enough people answer 'the call' and endeavor again to desire, at least at the level of appearances, the type of development the 'Big Other' seems to want for them. Why does a poor woman living in a slum sign-up for every development program or project that comes along, when her social and economic standing remain largely unchanged? What is the payoff; what is the lure? There are the occasional success stories that ideological fantasy casts as universally possible, but in addition to that, there is the enjoyment she experiences from trying, but failing, to achieve what she is encouraged to desire (van Dijk 2016). Žižek's

Lacanian infused argument is that this woman would not continue trying to be a 'subject of development' if there was no enjoyment. Further, this enjoyment qua failure stokes the desire for development, if the fantasy of future fulfillment (development) holds.

Social fantasies support ideologies by offering reasons for why promised outcomes have yet to arrive and to suggest pathways for addressing obstacles in ways, and this is crucial, that leave the necessity, obviousness, or superiority of the ideological edifice intact. For example, the standard antagonists in neoliberal fantasies are those who think the state needs to regulate markets and limit what can be commodified in the interest of the 'public good'. This instigates interventions that limit state regulation and encourage privatization. Power relations, such as those between and within capital and labor and debtor and creditors in processes of capital accumulation, are shielded from critique. In other words, class struggle, contradictions of liberal citizenship, and how economic growth both creates and resolves social and spatial antagonisms are blocked from a shared field of vision and from the domain of policy-making.

Most social fantasies have a two-dimensional structure: the horrific and the beatific (Glynos and Stavrakakis 2008) or more plainly: worst case and best case scenarios. This variety of fantasy offers a culprit to lay the blame upon for why things are not yet how they should be. A libidinally effective ideology must 'positivize' the irreconcilability between the Real and the symbolic with an imagined (fantasized) threat or obstacle. Žižek (1989) often uses the example of the Jew in Nazism to highlight the fantasy component of ideology:

> Anti-Semitism is an ideology which contains a filler in place of a structural impossibility, while simultaneously disavowing this impossibility. … The (anti-Semitic figure of the) 'Jew' is not the positive cause of social imbalance and antagonisms: social antagonism comes first, and the 'Jew' merely gives body to this obstacle. (pp. 75–76)

Clearly, the 'Jew' was the imagined agent that was scapegoated for the ills of Germany during the Third Reich and the imagined Aryan culture and genes were fantasized as the purifying agency that needed to be protected and strengthened for their utopian vision to come to pass. The important takeaway here is that fantasies can be recognized by their structure (horrific and beatific) and their content (misrecognized contradictions and positivized lack).

A Žižekian approach brings the following questions regarding the desire to have world-class slum-free cities in India. How is lack, or the gap, between this vision and discourse and our experiences being conceptualized, positivized, and addressed? How is desire being structured and enjoyment economized by visions and policies toward world-class slum-free cities? What and who is being blamed or resented both publicly and privately? How is the overcoming of these obstacles or problems being staged? The rest of this chapter will leverage Slavoj Žižek's ideological critique to explore how the impossibilities of neoliberalism leading to world-class slum-free cities are contained by focusing on the fantasy component of this ideology—the common motif of 'Two Indias'.

The Fantasies of Two Indias

In addition to images coming from other Asian countries stoking desire, the beatific force of economic growth harnessed by the beatific agents, the new urban middle class and cool capitalists are viewed as being on the frontlines of modernizing and beautifying India's cities. Ideologically, economic growth affirms that once a certain level of growth is achieved that social antagonisms and disorderly cities will fade away. Neoliberal urbanism addresses our cognitive dimension. It structures and orients us toward urban development via actions of deregulation, privatization, consumption, self-reliance, entrepreneurialism, and nurturing real estate, finance, insurance, and high-tech sectors. The focus, or fetish, of economic growth casts poverty, inequalities, and injustices as external and fleeting issues, rather than as immanent symptoms of contemporary neoliberal capitalist urbanism in India. The state—its regulation of the market and its power to limit what can be commodified and to regulate when use value trumps exchange value—is a common culprit. The state is the entity denying us the enjoyment of neoliberalism. However, culturally and civically, there is another culprit who is often staged as blocking India's world-class slum-free cities. There is another India who is cast as the lead in the horrific, or worst-case scenario, side of neoliberal urban fantasies. The trope of 'two Indias', one the protagonist of modernity and economic growth, and one the non or anti-modern 'backward' antagonist, is common in government, journalistic, academic, and everyday accounts of why India struggles to achieve a Shanghai or Singapore to enjoy.

'Other India as Political Society and the Survival Economy'

Partha Chatterjee's (2004) 'political society' argument places the civic politics accessible to the urban poor (whose livelihoods and modes of spatial production are illegal and/or unsettle the vision of modern and orderly cities) as a separate practical and epistemological domain that sits in contradiction with civil society (where citizens whose livelihoods and residences conform with laws and modern norms can operate through rights-based liberal institutions). Chatterjee theorizes a polarized civic domain with two parallel meta-modalities of local politics. One populated by 'citizens' adhering to norms of 'modern civil society' and a rule of law local state and one containing 'populations' adhering to informal institutions and secret clauses of 'political society' with a compromised local state. Later (2008a), he connects his political society and civil society division to Sanyal's (2007) resonant division of the Indian economy into the corporate capital and non-corporate capital survival economy. Those governed by, and who make claims within political society, are those that work within the survival economy. The economy dominated by low-skilled to no-skilled day laborers, the self-employed, and petty commodity producers who have not been absorbed within organized sectors of India's economy. Here the gap between the state of India's cities and the vision of world-class slum-free cities is positivized by the urban poor and near poor's political arrangements (political society) and economic practices (survival economy). Other scholars focus on how this 'other India' is exploited and ignored by the modern one. For example, Colin McFarlane (2012) argues that:

> Here [Mumbai], the political and economic elites—with some exceptions—literally step over, ignore, exploit, dispossess, punish, and take from the poor. The poor are punished for sanitation poverty through demolition and other processes […] it is also the case that many elites simply do not care, or choose to ignore, or have become inured to severe sanitation inequality, and know little of the commoditisation of water, the charging of users for toilets, the particularly dire provisions and higher costs for women, and the torment of daily sanitation illness and disease for those often characterised as 'dirt'. Such sharp juxtapositions of material wealth can only be sustained through capitalism joined to an architecture of malice that I'm calling here malevolent urbanism. (p. 1288)

Gidwani and Maringanti (2016) focus on how the 'other India' contributes to capitalist urban development through their infra-economy and infra-structural labor:

> By infra-economy what we mean, on the one hand, an economy that is denied recognition by state and civil society (and is seen only at moments of crisis, as an object of condemnation or reform) and, on the other, an economy that is vital to the production of urban space such that it is conducive for capital accumulation. Correspondingly, we characterize the labor of waste transformation—recycling, repurposing, and reprocessing—that is undertaken in places like Bholakpur as infrastructural labor. Waste objects of diverse provenance (household, commercial, industrial, and postconsumer) and with disparate material and temporal properties are converted into reusable forms through a complex repertoire of techniques and tasks, performed daily by thousands of poorly compensated workers. Their infra-structural labor repairs and renews the city, continuously recreating the conditions of possibility for urban life and capitalist enterprise. (p. 113)

While McFarlane focuses on exploitation and exclusion and Gidwani and Maringanti on contributions, both focus on recognition to help remedy the problem. For McFarlane, it is the culture of malice and blindness to the plight of the urban poor that need to be addressed. For Gidwani and Maringanti what needs to be recognized are the contributions of the urban poor's economic activity and the hazards they face. The do not directly challenge the social relations of production and exchange, nor share of the surplus. The basic tenants of neoliberal urbanism remain untouched by these arguments and pragmatic proposals.

'Other India as "Leash"'

> There are two Indias in this country. One India is straining at the leash, eager to spring forth and live up to all the adjectives that the world has been showering recently upon us. The other India is the leash. One India says, give me a chance and I'll prove myself. The other India says prove yourself first and maybe then you'll have a chance. One India lives in the optimism of our hearts. The other India lurks in the skepticism of our minds. One India wants. The Other India hopes. One India leads. The Other India follows. But conversions are on the rise. With each passing day more and more people from the other India have been coming over to this side. […] An India whose faith in success is far greater than its fear of failure. An India that no longer boycotts foreign-made goods, but buys out the companies

> that makes them instead. History is turning a page and one India—a tiny little voice at the back of the head—is looking down at the bottom of the ravine and hesitating. The other India is looking up at the sky and saying, it's time to fly. (Amitabh Bachchan's, "India Poised" promotional video)

> It can be argued that India today is a tale of two countries—one bold, exciting, and dynamic, plugged into the global grid of the high tech economy; the other, backward-looking and shackled by official corruption, poor infrastructure, and poverty. (MacDonald 2006)

Amitabh Bachchan's promotion for the India Poised campaign offers a different answer to the question of why India doesn't have world-class slum-free cities. In this scenario, it is the 'other India' of political society and the survival or infra-economy that is blocking those who want to live in modern cities and compete in the global capitalist economy. The 'other India as a leash' is what keeps them from enjoying a Shanghai or Singapore of their own. Neoliberal pathways to world-class cities need a scapegoat onto which to transfer the structural impossibility of India achieving world-class slum-free cities within the coordinates of global capitalism. Is it not the case that 'the other India as leash' is *not* what is stopping India from rising or shining, but rather what gives substance to this lack? The beatific message of this fantasy is that once enough 'backward' Indians embrace modernity and market society, then all India will get to enjoy full development in the form of world-class slum-free cities. The focus, or fetish, of 'the leash' effectively externalizes the theft of urban development to those global capitalism renders as redundant: those people and places not valued as either consumers, labor, or real estate (cf. Gidwani and Reddy 2011; Fernandes 2004). The antagonists become the urban poor and corrupt politicians, and the protagonists become 'cool capitalists', enlighten bureaucrats, and the new urban middle class. Critically, the pathway remains neoliberal urbanism; the structure of desire and economy of enjoyment supporting neoliberal urban development policies and visions are emboldened by the fantasy trope of 'Two Indias': one India that aspires and one that acts as a leash on modern, self-reliant aspirational India. Further, failing to achieve world-class slum-free cities, within this story line, provides regular enjoyment via complaining about corrupt politicians and resenting the 'other India'. This regular dose of enjoyment makes desires for neoliberal world-class slum-free cities resistant to fact-based arguments or appeals to rational self-interest.

Many self-described middle-class urbanites complained that their cities are being 'overrun' by poor migrants with no 'civic sense' and whose 'encroachments' are enabled by both 'corrupt' local politicians to increase their 'vote-banks' and greedy municipal bureaucrats who accept bribes to look the other way. Several complained that migrants are coming and 'turning the city into a village'. This fantasy of the 'other India' places those with means and ambition as the victims. Their success thwarted by the poor and by those that buffer the poor from making the necessary shifts in personality and lifestyle. The way low-cost labor, commodities, and services that are found in the informal economy and labor market, and the way those accustomed to doing without contribute to the wealth they enjoy and to aggregate growth is disavowed. Rather, they are cast as a tether holding back the vanguard sectors and captains of business.

Following Žižek, ideologies convey meaning and necessity to social-symbolic orders; however, all orders fail to consistently deliver what is promised (1989). In order to transfer this failure, or impossibility, onto anything other than the ideology itself, an outside culprit is needed. In addition to the state, we have the 'other India', the backward, dependent, cowardly populations unwilling to take advantage of the opportunities of consumer society and globalizing capitalism. This 'other India' is catered to by venal local politicians and local bureaucrats. Both are staged as the main obstacles to India achieving its manifest destiny of developing a booming modern capitalist economy. But for these populations, and their minders and enablers, Indian cities would be 'bourgeois at last' (Chatterjee 2004).

This fantasy also has a beatific dimension: unity of purpose. This future unity hinges upon the notion that what is keeping India behind is a timid mind-set. Success in a globalizing capitalism is largely a choice, and that what needs to be done is to help the 'other India' foster their will to succeed. This is a fantasy. It collapses all the antagonisms that prevent this image of India from achieving this dream into certain populations and political practices. This covers up inherent contradictions running throughout society, which go way beyond embracing neoliberal subjectivity. Capitalism's inability to absorb sufficient labor, economic growth's hidden requirement of disproportionate sacrifice and structural inequalities, along with capitalism's ecological limits are eclipsed by a focus on the backward, corrupt, or dependent.

This fantasy also supports processes of development without, or despite, the poor, to take root in people, practices, and policy. Consider the following statements collected during my fieldwork:

> *While performance reflects the strength of the economy, it is also true that a large part of our population is still to experience a decisive improvement in their standard of living … too many lack access to basic services so they have not been empowered to benefit from economic growth.* (Personal Interview, Former Member of Planning Committee, February 2011)

> *Once India reaches double digit growth backward linkages [trickle down] begins and all those benefiting from growth in more formal high-skilled sectors will need more: drivers, peons, and domestics, and they will be able to support more of the venders/hawkers etc. in the informal low-skilled sector. Those left out of these linkages (Dalits, widows, abandoned women and children and Adivasi) will be propped up with government subsidies.* (Official at the Ministry of Urban Housing and Poverty Alleviation, personal interview February 2011)

> *I have been a civil servant for 25 years and the poverty projects are always the same, the words change, but the work is the same. We have to give something to the slum dwellers, like microcredit or school uniforms. Economic growth takes time and people don't want to wait. We need to put something in enough hands to keep them happy.* (Personal interview, Head of a municipal poverty cell, April 2011)

The programs referred to in the third quote are designed by people like the official quoted in the second. Here, the official ideology (first quote) is that the government *believes* that poverty can be alleviated through empowering the poor to participate in 'inclusive growth' via the common menu of social capital (self-help groups and participation in basic services development), micro-credit, and minimal educational subsidies (free books, uniforms, lunches, and training workshops). However, when conversing more informally, many government officials and staff exhibit little to no belief in the poor and marginalized being central to development. The fantasy that sustains their involvement in these seems to be the belief in economic growth, despite the poor, that will eventually reach their hands as well, however limited.

Discussion

The trope of 'Two Indias' that posits the backward urban dwellers and corrupts municipal government against modern middle-class urbanites and 'cool capitalists' is an ideological fantasy that covers over the current impossibility of world-class cities. It transforms a political economic impasse into a cultural issue (specifically, the backwardness of the 'other India'). The 'leash' is the problem. The solution then becomes disciplinary and pedagogical, and not distributional, or more radically, restructuring the political economy. Social, economic, and spatial justice become nonsensical when what is believed to be blocking world-class slum-free cities is imagined and propagated in these terms. The insidiousness of this fantasy is that it obscures how both formal circuits of capital accumulation and the archipelago of gentrified zones in Indian cities are possible because of the other India this fantasy casts as the 'leash'. The social fantasies found in Chatterjee, Mcfarlane and Gidwani and Maringanti's work stage political society and the survival or infra-economy as the victim or anti-hero of urbanization in India and call for a politics of recognition. These also, albeit to a lesser extent, minimize the impossibility of neoliberalism, even a neoliberalism that allows for a survival economy and tolerates political society to produce world-class slum-free cities.

Each version of this fantasy marginalizes how the large majority of residences in Indian cities are likely technically illegal, or at least legally ambiguous (van Dijk 2011; Zasloff 2011), and how upward of 90 percent of Indians work in the informal economy (Harriss-White 2010). These indicate that political society—if taken to refer to the informal politics, marked by ad hoc and contingent negotiations and arrangements with various local authorities around securing space, services, as well as occasional efforts to reshape urban space more extensively—is a circuit of civic politics that extends far beyond the 'other India'. In her 2009 article entitled 'Why India Can't Plan Its Cities', Ananya Roy argues that India's failure to produce modern and world-class cities stems from the informality prevalent in the state's regulation of land use and development. India has many planners but relatively little planned urban development. Plans, regulations, and codes are often unenforced (Bhan 2013). More than that, when we look at whose and which type of informality is unenforced, and how this changes over time, it becomes clear that violations are strategically and unevenly tolerated. This leads to an uneven geography and temporality of informality (van Dijk et al. 2016).

Thus, fantasies about 'Two Indias' are transversed by an 'absent presence' that needs to be rendered more visible and problematized. Namely, that coordinated law or rule-breaking and non-enforcement is ubiquitous across society. Perhaps this, much more so than the traits of the urban poor, is denying India world-class slum-free cities.

Conclusion: Escaping Neoliberal Urban Fantasies

Žižek argues that social reality is not possible without ideologies, and ideologies need fantasies that grab hold and structure our desire. This begs the question: what is the way forward for those committed to social and spatial justice? If the livelihoods and settlement practices of the 'leash' are the grist and tacit compromise that allow neoliberal capitalist urbanism to function at all in India, should we not be problematizing this and working toward mobilizing the 'other India' as class for itself to challenge the hegemonic aspirations of the new middle class and 'cool capitalists'. While not the explicit message of Chatterjee's (2008b), the prospect is there:

> With the continuing rapid growth of the Asian economies, the hegemonic hold of corporate capital over the domain of civil society is likely to continue. This will inevitably mean continued primitive accumulation. […] But most of these victims of primitive accumulation are unlikely to be absorbed in the new growth sectors of the economy. They will be marginalised and rendered useless as far as the sectors dominated by corporate capital are concerned. But the prevailing political climate makes it unacceptable and illegitimate for governments to leave these marginalised populations without the means of labour to simply fend for themselves. *That carries the risk of turning them into the 'dangerous classes'*. Hence, a whole series of governmental policies are being, and will be, devised to reverse the effects of primitive accumulation. […] The fact, however, is that the bulk of the population in most Asian countries still lives outside the orderly zones of proper civil society. It is there [political society] that they have to be fed, clothed, sheltered, and given work, if only to ensure the long-term and relatively peaceful survival of society as a whole. (emphasis added pp. 125–126)

The earlier excerpt from McFarlane gets at the inconvenient truths or norms of civil society, which he argues in combination with contemporary capitalist relations, are producing a 'malevolent urbanism'. The quote from Chatterjee is indicative of the inconvenient and publicly disavowed contradiction that India's variety of neoliberal urban development, which

currently takes the form of world-classing and slum-freeing cities and enabling the entrepreneurialism of the poorer classes, cannot deliver in terms of improved and more equitable and sustainable levels of well-being across the board. Presently, the discussion of slum-free cities, for example, circulates around what should be done to slums (i.e., demolish, relocate, in situ development, regularization, etc.) in order to have slum-free cities. This technocratic and administrative framing of the issue obscures how elite institutions of private property, liberal citizenship, and capital are constitutive factors of slums as well. The extent that slums, and what to do about them, are defined from the point of view of these current conditions that are constitutive of the 'malevolent urbanism' generating slums is another serious contradiction. The extent to which private property, liberal citizenship, and capital are to blame for slums and urban inequalities in general, the more problematic it becomes to design policies and programs based on the expansion and intensification of this type of political economy. As long as this contradiction remains disavowed, and various fantasies cover this up and mobilize desire toward fixing or blaming one of the 'Two Indias', our capacity to both critique current political, economic, and social relations and to imagine alternatives, remains blocked by various forms of neoliberal capitalist realism.

Žižek would encourage us to offer an alternative structure of desire and economy of enjoyment. To conclude, I will offer a suggestion. One can imagine one of the servants at Antilia telling Mukesh Ambani what Selina Kyle whispers to Batman in The Dark Knight Rises:

> There is a storm coming, Mr. Ambani. You and your friends better batten down the hatches, because when it hits, you're all gonna wonder how you could live so large and leave so little for the rest of us.

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CHAPTER 3

Guarded Luxotopias and Expulsions in New Delhi: Aesthetics and Ideology of Outer and Inner Spaces of an Urban Utopia

Tereza Kuldova

During my fieldwork in 2011, while studying the lifeworld of the upper segment of the society, I had for a few months moved into a high-rise in Greater Noida. This provided me with a first-hand experience of living in a *luxotopia* within a post-colonial city, a city sadly no less Manichean that the colonial city described by Franz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon 1963), a city segregated along the lines of class and community belonging, where economic inequalities, social divisiveness, and oppressions are all too visibly materialized in its neoliberal built structures. The gated *Emerald Court* high-rise settlement consisting of 17 towers in Sector 93 Noida where I have lived, and still under construction at that time, was being built by Supertech (est. 1988), a prominent developer in National Capital Region (NCR). The company described it as an 'architectural masterpiece', 'a confluence of luxury, class and convenience' built under the popular imperatives of beautification, order, and world-classness, promising 'spell of living a magical lifestyle in these blissful

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homes' and priding itself on its 'state-of-the-art engineering techniques and use of top quality materials in construction projects'.[1] This construction project, like the majority being built across India today, promises a luxurious utopian living, a 'gated romance' (Brosius 2009) for the upper middle classes and elites, and a life in a safe space within an enclosed enclave protected by gates, guards, and latest security systems, with food stores, gyms, golf courses, banks, and post offices within and shopping malls only a short car drive away. The outer surface of the luxury utopias, which separates them from the dirty, polluted, and undesirable outside, is defined by an aesthetics of hyper-modernity, of high-tech connected smart cities, and of smooth globalist and futuristic surfaces and is modeled upon the surface impressions of cities such as Singapore and Hong Kong. But the inner, as we shall see later, is infused with Indianness, tradition, and pride in one's cultural heritage. This interplay of the outer and inner, which will form our object here, is not coincidental but instead reflects the dominant ideology of contemporary neoliberal India. But first, let us look more closely at urban developments taking place under the hegemony of this luxotopian ideal (Fig. 3.1).

Fig. 3.1 A view from my balcony at Emerald Court, Sector 93, Noida, image credit: Tereza Kuldova

Luxotopias as a Form of Aesthetic Governance

While the aesthetic of high-tech luxury at the core of the majority of current urban construction projects in India is certainly important, we must not underestimate that what this luxury also consists of and what is being sold here is not only the aesthetics of luxury flats but also the aesthetics of belonging to a certain occupant profile deliberately tailored by the developers—be it through specific price points that exclude unwanted members of aspiring classes or through promotional campaigns directed at particular religious communities, castes, or professional identities. Hence, while luxury in the Indian real estate market is indeed very much about the actual material features of the flats, condos, or farmhouses, it is even more about the neighbors and the status of the people who inhabit together a certain locality; it is about belonging to the right class of people, about interacting and making friends only from within this class, and about indulging the shared classed aesthetics that is posited as a generalized aspiration. Builders often attempt to artificially create prestigious and aspirational locations by luring in just the right buyers; in this quest they imitate more traditional elitist localities, such as Delhi's Lutyens Bungalow Zone, Golf Links, Jor Bagh, Shanti Niketan, or Sunder Nagar and create aspirational locations such as Delhi Land & Finance Ltd. (DLF) luxury housing Magnolias in Gurgaon. Such construction projects not only sell the visions of a bright future but also predict that such a future will be an exaggeration of the present, namely an exaggeration of violent urbanization that purifies the city of the disposable and increasingly criminalized bodies of the poor, of dust, pollution, noise, and ultimately, of urbanity and public space itself. The visions of the urban future that companies like Supertech sell to the upwardly mobile and wealthy are dependent both on violent expulsions and, paradoxically, on the labor of those expelled. Hence, the only thing such projects offer in return for these expulsions are commercialized, privatized, and purgatorial 'non-places' (Augé 2008) built according to the paradigm of a shopping mall and available only to the top layer of society. This utopia is driven by a dream of aesthetic purity, of glistening surfaces touching the sky, as also popular culture reveals (*see* Varughese in this volume). The poor, living on the streets and in the, to the middle and upper class, aesthetically disturbing slums are within this utopian city planning considered as part of the environmental problem (Bhaviskar 2003); their removal falls within the slogan of 'Clean Delhi, Green Delhi', a campaign launched in 2003 and followed up recently by the 'Clean India' campaign of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. As of now, with enough disposable

wealth one can move in between air-conditioned consumer spaces in an air-conditioned car, glancing at the beggars from behind the car window. In the utopian city of the future, so it is hoped, even such encounters will be avoided. However, the expelled Other comes to haunt the utopia of excess and luxury, precisely because this utopia cannot even exist without him; it is existentially dependent on the expelled, on their labor as much as the (re)production of their expulsion. This sensed omnipresent feeling of dependence, which reverses the manifest power relation, is a source of anxiety for the elites. The fear of the poor rising up and taking down the rich was not only a persistent trope of anxiety among my own Indian business interlocutors but also recently expressed by the Johann Rupert, the boss of Cartier,[2] when he said that what keeps him awake at night is the fear of the masses of poor claiming their right to a good life and their 'right to the city' as David Harvey might put it (Harvey 2003).

And yet, the desire of the urban luxury utopia is often expressed not only by the elites and middle classes but also, paradoxically, by slum dwellers themselves, who, as others have argued (Ghertner 2011; Roy 2011), often resist concrete construction projects while dreaming of being part of this futuristic 'world-class city'—an ideological vision that interpellates them, too, as subjects. This broadly shared utopian hope and vision of an achievable future of a hyper-modern purified world-class urban environment is one thing that distinguishes India from the West, which appears as paralyzed, having lost such hopes for a better future. This hopeful relation to the future can also potentially explain why even marginalized subjects willingly and even passionately embrace an ideology against their interest. If we are to judge by popular culture and Hollywood productions, the imagination of the future in the West is dominated by the trope of a human made apocalypse, an apocalypse that at the same time appears as the only solution to the current problems of humanity and the Earth, since only a catastrophe can provide a neutral space, a new beginning for humanity at large currently trapped within a seemingly unchangeable system. Bollywood cinema, on the other hand, has to my knowledge never produced an apocalyptic movie ending in a full-blown destruction of the world. To the contrary, it churns out enormous amounts of movies that cast India as a global superpower, as a hyper-modern high-tech country with a bright future, full of pride for its achievements, as much as pride in its superior cultural heritage (Kuldova 2014); Bollywood movies are full of escapism but still loaded with hope for a future *within* the current system.

'By 2040, you won't see any of these people on the streets, it will be cleaned up. We have already done it, to a degree, in Delhi for the

Commonwealth Games in 2010. So why not clean up all Indian cities like that, on a massive scale? We need to be more consequent. India will be the best country in the world within two decades, mark my words',[3] thus spoke one of my informants, a Delhi-based businessman, while driving near the Yamuna river, a site from which more than a quarter of a million people were forcibly removed and their homes bulldozed (Ghertner 2011; Bhan 2009); they were told they posed a security threat and that they did not fit into the image of a 'world-class' city, and the idea of a 'shining India' (Kaur 2016; Bhan 2009), which the government so desperately wanted to project. Since late 1990s, the slum clearance schemes have become a prime governmental strategy of creation of 'world-class cities' implemented increasingly through judicial rulings in the name of 'public interest' (Ghertner 2011; Bhan 2009), something that clearly shows that only certain people are imagined as belonging to the public and as being worthy citizens, namely those good consumer- and investor-citizens (Kaur 2016; Lukose 2009; Fernandes 2004). Today, public imagination is captured equally by the ambitious private–public partnership construction project of the Delhi–Mumbai Industrial Corridor, funded jointly by the Indian and Japanese governments, under the 'Make in India' campaign.[4] It envisions the construction of a world-class infrastructure including 8 smart cities, 24 industrial regions, 2 airports, power projects, rapid transit systems, and logistical hubs.[5] The projects promotional video opens with a proud male voice speaking to the viewer from the year 2040:

> It is 2040 and I am the citizen of a new India, the world that I live in now is a direct consequence of an initiative that started three decades ago. It transformed the future and created a new paradigm of development in India. (…) Citizens of the present, do you see the magnitude of this vision, do you realize the endless possibilities to deliver sustainable prosperity for the citizen? (…) Your present is brimming with optimism, there are vast opportunities to be tapped. (…) We shall meet again, in this future, in this new India, a future that owes much to the current initiative, the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor.[6]

Luxotopia as a Developmental Paradigm: The Loss of Urbanity and Security

All these utopian landscapes are by design exclusive and exclusionary; 'expulsion', to use Saskia Sassen's concept (Sassen 2014), with its proliferation of internal boundaries in society, is firmly built into this mode of utopian city development. These urban utopias can only be labeled as

luxotopias—they are elitist and promise luxury to selected few while having nothing whatsoever to offer to the majority of the population—beyond an escapist aesthetic phantasmagoria—even worse, they are too often built on land snatched away from the millions of dispossessed, whose homes become by a whim of a judicial ruling illegal (Bhan 2009). Luxury should not be taken lightly here, as Christopher Berry has shown; luxury is always a political question—it reveals the way in which we imagine social order or even an ideal society, it reveals what we consider good or bad, necessary and superfluous, excessive and legitimate, or even just (Berry 1994). The obsession of the current government under Narendra Modi with planning hyper-modern high-tech smart cities from which the poor are expertly photoshopped (Kuldova 2014), as documented in this volume by Mathew Varghese, is the same luxotopia merely on a larger scale. The poor have no place in a luxotopia; the stories of land grabs, brought to attention by activists and writers such as Arundhati Roy, are all too famous (Roy 2014) and testify to the fact that these people have indeed no place in the future, they are to be eternally stuck in the past, in the 'old India'. Fritz Lang's urban dystopian movie *Metropolis* (Lang 1927) comes to mind; the poor workers toil underground, operating machines and running the city of high-rises from below, pushed into invisibility.

Paradoxically, in the process of striving toward an urban luxotopia, two of its crucial selling points, which it tries to pursue with utmost vigor, are sacrificed at the same time: urbanity and security. Urbanity can be understood as a respectful and civilized space, a space of a shared urban culture marked by a polite coexistence with the multiplicity of others irrespective of their background and by enjoyment in such a public space. This urbanity is increasingly a victim of the same developmental projects that proclaim to foster it. Current urban construction projects encourage the opposite, namely segregation by creating luxury community based enclaves. We can think here of the paradigmatic *Gulistaan Golf View Heights*, 'dream homes for elite Muslim Brotherhood'[7] featuring a mosque and a madrasa, at the outskirts of New Delhi, catering to the aspiring well-off Muslim community wishing to move into a better neighborhood or a Brahmin-only luxury community township in Karnataka—*The Vedic Village*—[8] where homeowners can only be Brahmins (but of course not the servants, as the construction company itself pointed out—there are just some things a Brahmin would never do, such as cleaning his own toilet). *Vedic Village* features a temple complex, library, bank, community hall, children's play area, police station, old age home, residential complex for priests, *ayurvedic*

hospital, center for alternative living, cowshed, *yajnashala* (ritual space with sacrificial fireplaces), and finally a walking path that runs through the whole complex in the shape of the sacred syllable 'Om', which lights up in the night and can be seen from the sky. Or we can just think of Mumbai, known for its purely vegetarian housing complexes, largely aimed at high-caste Hindus and Jains, which deliberately exclude the meat eaters, that is, the low classes, castes, and Muslims. *Emerald Court*, where I have lived, was no different in this sense; though the rules appeared to be unwritten all occupants appeared to be Hindus (if I were to go by the signs on the few occupied flats), of course except for myself, who got the chance to inhabit this space only through a private connection to a Hindu businessman, exploiting my white foreign professional privilege. There was also no single Muslim to my knowledge among the security staff, maids, and other service personnel. The former British colonial masters who, as David Cannadine nicely showed in his book *Ornamentalism* (Cannadine 2002), greatly admired the social hierarchies of the Indian subcontinent would certainly congratulate these builders to such an effective (re)production of hierarchies and inequalities. Such gated echo chambers produce the precise opposite of urbanity. David Harvey has widely criticized this rise of exclusionary communitarianism driven by identity politics, corporate profit hunger, and greed (Harvey 2000, 163). McKenzie has along similar lines analyzed the rise of the 'privatopia' (McKenzie 1996) and the accompanying loss of urbanity. In a recent interview, the Austrian philosopher Robert Pfaller nicely brought to the point what is actually being lost when urbanity starts disappearing:

> The Italian city had a refined set of mechanisms for bringing about urbanity. They had promenades, central squares, and even 'loggias'—spaces that could serve either as stages (for example, for juridical courts) or as places for observation. In this sense, one could define urbanity psychoanalytically: as something that provides individuals with the feeling of being seen, even if they cannot tell by whom exactly. This can also be described as 'triangulation': you feel seen not only by the people you know or see, but also by some anonymous, third agency. This agency is, as I have pointed out, to be understood as a 'naive observer' that only cares for appearances, but not for intentions. This is why urbanity brought people to care for the appearance of their behavior, their costumes and their language. A lack of urbanity, on the contrary, occurs when this gaze is lacking; when people, like in small communities full of intimacy, know each other too well and only care for intentions but not for politeness or for being civilized. When cities today,

> under neoliberal conditions, tend to become too beautiful, or too proper, or gentrified, then the 'triangulation' gets lost. We are, then, just among similar folks, and there is no need anymore to satisfy the anonymous third gaze that improved so much our appearance and our pride. (Pfaller 2016)

However, it is not only urbanity that becomes lost and sacrificed in the name of urban development but also the so celebrated security of the luxotopias, an increasingly popular ideal in a world of constant fear-mongering. In 2014, Supertech was facing a demolition order of two towers within *Emerald Court* with 875 apartments (600 sold at that time); the court stated that 'builders, by joining hands with the officers of the development authorities, openly flout every conceivable rule, including building regulations. The builder is always under the impression that once the frame of the building is illegally constructed, the court can be persuaded to take a sympathetic view and permit the construction even though in total breach of legal provisions'; the counsel for the petitioner further argued that 'by adding extra towers, the basic safety norms of the other building blocks were being compromised. Fire tenders could not cross between the two buildings. Besides, vital needs such as proper light and air were being blocked and the parking space was also being violated'.[9] Till date, the case has not been resolved, but what it goes to show is that even the promised luxotopia of security is being actively sacrificed in the name of profit that pays only lip service to security. Or is it rather that the promised security is contained within the idea of a gate, a separation from the bodies of the low classes, a separation from the expelled Other? Only carefully screened low-class bodies can enter the luxury compounds in order to clean, repair, and work on the construction. Even when you enter in your car in the night, a flashlight will be pointed at your face; if you are resident you can pass, but if you are a visitor, your car will be checked for bombs and your name and the flat number you are visiting will be carefully noted down in a visitors' book. This exaggerated manufacturing of the outside, of the public space, as singularly dangerous and threatening, creates more fear rather than a feeling of safety. More importantly, it creates certain bodies as an existential threat and as an internal security threat. This bifurcation of the urban space then creates the shared feeling among the rich of the inside being haunted by the outside. Not the least because of the inside's all too visible guilt of the expulsions it creates and the knowledge of the insider's existential dependence on those cast out.

Such a luxotopia quickly turns into a dystopia of excessive fear, one excess turning into another. It is not a coincidence that contemporary Bollywood horrors, as Ghosh has brilliantly analyzed (Ghosh 2014), are mostly set within luxury high-rises and gated farmhouses. Popular cinema casts these urban structures as the paradigmatic haunted places, but these movies are closer to reality than one might think. Describing Vikram Kumar's movie *13B*, Ghosh notes that 'almost every one of the numerous elevator sequences includes a shot of the elevator machine that acts of its own accord, even as the electrical circuits wreak havoc on the family. And in the middle of the film, a doctor self-consciously speaks of the body as an organic machine, whose circuitry inter-faces with other machines in a high-tech environment. The nervous jolt, then, is connectivity gone awry' (Ghosh 2014, 70). On one hand, this can be read as the dystopia of a hyper-connected world-class smart city but on the other hand also as a not-so-inaccurate rendering of the lived experience in these, on paper, 'state of the art' luxury complexes. What is haunting is both the technology and those expelled or better, reading such movies we could say that those expelled are haunting those living inside through the technology. Living in *Emerald Court* felt very much like living in a haunted space—three bathrooms in a flat—one with Jacuzzi with an electrical contact so close to the bathtub that just the thought of switching it on arouses immediate fear of death by electrocution, another bathroom so badly isolated that one can feel the electric current when the water touches one's fingers, which leaves one semi-functional bathroom, where the toilet keeps breaking every week; the walls and balcony have already many cracks, while the neighboring high-rises are still under construction; the elevator is out of order at least four times a week, which leaves one climbing up the stairs and noticing that the majority of flats are uninhabited and one may have at most ten neighbors (this does not mean the flats have not already been sold; many were but being pure investments, they may never be inhabited; at the same time, NCR has the highest levels of unsold residential units, around 250,000[10] and the majority above 1 crore[11]); the promised gym exists but there is never anyone to be seen exercising on the machines behind the enormous glass windows; the grocery store, promised to cater to all your refined tastes does not even stock toilet paper (the very mark of class distinction in India), not to mention basic food stuff beyond Magi noodles (the only close food market is outside the gate, with vegetable vendors sitting on the ground displaying their produce, but most insiders use their maids to haggle the lowest possible prices for them, only to

not think about where their ingredients come from); the swimming pool has no water in it and the last time it has seen children playing there was when they were shooting the promotional video; the electricity in the flat is prepaid, which means it has to be continually recharged before your budget runs out; the machine starts beeping mercilessly in the whole flat demanding more money—the opposite of a luxury feel; and even if you would wish to offer your maid a place to sleep in your extra room, as has been customary for middle-class families, you cannot, because people of this class are not allowed to stay after dark so she has to live in a temporary shed on the road just opposite the wall and the gate so that all those privileged inside can sleep 'safe' (this is a common development; even the servant flats in the South Delhi's New Friends Colony, as elsewhere, are being turned into budget studios for the aspiring class—the expulsion becoming complete.) The increased gating rather than creating a feeling of security paradoxically decreases the feeling of safety, as the idea of potential threat is materialized in multiple ways in the everyday environments; urbanity is non-existent, community feel remains only on a promise on a billboard. Fear is built into the walls of these communal luxotopias, the fear of the low Other upon which the elite depends for its survival.

This aesthetics of purity and world-classness, incorporating at the same time certain, increasingly particularistic notions of Indianness (such as in the case of the *Vedic Village*), materializes the ruling ideology of the day. As Asher Ghertner argued, 'the making of world-class cities is not instantiated solely (or even primarily) through an economic calculus of cost–benefit or through a juridical redefinition of property; rather, it also takes shape through the dissemination of a compelling vision of the future—(…) a world-class aesthetic—and the cultivation of a popular desire for such a future—the making of world-class subjects' (Ghertner 2011, 281). Ghertner makes a nice point when talking of what becomes considered as legal and illegal construction projects; *appearing as if* these projects were planned (even if not planned) becomes the key criterion of their legality. As he notes, 'according to this aesthetic mode of governing, (…) widespread in Delhi today, if a development project looks "world-class", then it is most often declared planned; if a settlement looks polluting, it is sanctioned as unplanned and illegal' (Ghertner 2011, 280). In psychoanalytical terms, together with Robert Pfaller, we could argue here that the only one who is meant to be pleased here is an observing instance, so called anonymous 'naïve observer' (Pfaller 2014; Pfaller 2003), who judges only by appearances and hence could have thought, based on this

appearance, that they are legal; in effect this becomes an 'objective illusion', in which no one actually believes and yet one structuring the social world. But we have also seen that actually living in the fantasies built to please this 'naïve observer' can very quickly turn dystopic, maybe precisely because the whole point of such luxotopias is to fool a naïve observer who would be easily impressed by these people living in such wealth, style, and luxury, an observer that would be fooled, judging by the aesthetics of the spectacular urban development plans into thinking that indeed India is a rising superpower; all these plans appear as being realized precisely in the name of this illusion. It is clear that aesthetics, and in particular the aesthetics of luxury, becomes extremely powerful in shaping dreams, aspirations, and visions of the future of a society, as much as the politics of its present. But this luxotopia, as suggested earlier, does not only have an outer aesthetics of globality and world-classness but also, as the ramps of the couture weeks and the production of leading fashion designers and interior designers reveal, an inner aesthetics which is the precise opposite of the globalism of the outer aesthetic.

Fashionable Luxotopias and the Sources of Pride of the Neo-Aristocracy

The ideal inside of an Indian luxotopia is at show yearly at the *India Couture* Week, a style extravaganza organized in New Delhi by the Fashion Design Council of India which showcases the work of the leading Indian couturiers, typically featuring around ten shows over a four-day period. Unlike the regular fashion week shows, it is known for its spectacular and theatrical stage design, often featuring dancers or singers in addition to choreographed models walking the ramp. Even though different couturiers are behind these theatrical stage sets and fashion designs, they all share one single dominant aesthetic, namely one that I have labeled elsewhere as 'royal chic' (Kuldova 2013, 2014, 2016b), an aesthetic that signals the pride to be Indian and embraces 'artistic nationalism' (Kuldova 2014, 2016b; Ciotti 2012). The inside of a luxotopia is proudly Indian and mirrors the current rise of Indian nationalism and Hindu nationalism in particular (Kuldova 2014, 2015). The motto of the Indian business elite could be summed up as follows: 'be Indian first, at heart, and then you can be truly global, a member of a global elite'. Indian fashion and interior designers have learned to cater to this desire for Indianness to

this hunger on part of the native elite to show off their cultural heritage, identity, and their roots. The fact that it is the inside of the luxotopia that is created as a realm of tradition is nothing surprising considering that women, traditionally bound to the domestic space, have always been considered as bearers of tradition in India (Desai 2010; Banerjee 2003), as guarantors of morality as opposed to men, who have been for decades constructed as modern subjects within the public space, thus men mirroring the outer aesthetic of the luxotopia, while women the inner aesthetic. This Indianness (Kuldova 2017a), coming from within of the luxotopia, is also constructed as a source of strength and a source of moral and cultural superiority vis-à-vis the demoralized and frivolous West, which is imagined as failing, both economically and culturally, precisely because of its perceived lack of values or rather its lack of insistence on the values it at one point might have had, such as its Enlightenment universalist values. 'Royal chic', which I have analyzed in more detail in my previous work, distinguishes itself by its embrace of a heritage extravaganza; it reworks Indian aristocratic fashions of the past, merging them typically with royal fashions from other locations—such as Spain, in the 'The Maharaja of Madrid' collection by J.J. Valaya presented *Aamby Valley India Bridal Fashion Week* 2013, or Russia in the latest collection 'Kehkashaan' (Galaxy) by Rohit Bal presented at the *India Couture Week* 2016, a collection that merged the opulent Indian and excessive Russian royal aesthetics, in what Bal labeled as the 'harmony of luxury'. This trend thus creates an aesthetic of contemporary, largely business, neo-aristocracy, the Indian, and yet global, 1% on the top. The theatrical stage sets built for these luxury spectacles reflect this logic; they typically mirror the architecture of Indian royal palaces merged with slight modernist elements; the inside should look royal and traditional, while the outside modern and global. For his latest collection, 'The Last Dance of a Courtesan' presented at the *India Couture Week* 2016, Tarun Tahiliani created a palace-like structure with a massive crystal chandelier in the middle[12]; the stage was opened by a traditional *kathak* dancer, followed by a parade of expressionless models in heavily embroidered and ornamentalist costumes. Another show at the same couture week, by Manish Malhotra, Bollywood's fashion darling, was called 'The Persian Story', invoking the princess-like opulence of Persian royal courts and their role in India's history; the stage set for this show was a merger of an architectural luxotopia and an ecotopia, the stage being decorated with beautiful plants and colorful flowers. Manav Gangwani presented a Mughal-inspired collection, a repetitive inspiration that is across

the high-end fashion field, 'Begum-e-Jannat' (a high-ranking Muslim woman in paradise), a collection that was a tribute to his friend Zainab Nedou Patel, who recently passed away, and was inspired by Narendra Modi's Make in India campaign, celebrating yet again proud Indianness. Anita Dongre's collection was finally inspired by a tribal aesthetics, presenting a generalized idea of 'tribal', not particular to any actual Indian tribe, and yet playing still with the royal theme, being fittingly entitled 'The Gypsy Princess'. Tarun Tahiliani's SS'16 collection 'Kutch Tribal' was equally inspired by tribal aesthetics reworked into a classy royal look. We could go on enumerating examples of this pervasive aesthetic dominating the fashion ramps, but the point here is what they have in common, namely (1) the shared aesthetics of the inside of a luxotopia, vision of a lifeworld where the theatrical stage set will become a generalized lived reality and (2) the dependence of these luxurious opulent lifeworlds on the labor of millions of impoverished craftspeople. Artisans are on one hand celebrated for their skill and for imbuing the garments with a mysterious quality of Indianness—they are often labeled as the very 'soul of India', its essence, their poverty being their purity, and the source of their authentic Indianness—while on the other hand, they are treated as disposable second rate citizens (Kuldova 2016b, 2016c), as 'skilled but not knowledgeable' (Venkatesan 2009) and hence as never belonging to the contemporary knowledge economy of the elites. Artisans exist only to be patronized through random benevolent acts and philanthropy (Kuldova 2017b). And yet, the fact that by the elite the desired quality of Indianness depends on their labor is something that haunts the elite, reminding it yet again of its own paradoxical dependence (Kuldova 2016a), a source of anxiety mentioned earlier. Without them, no 'Make in India' campaign that imagines India as a manufacturing powerhouse would be possible, and yet, at the same time, they are expelled from the luxotopia; in effect, such a luxotopia can exist only if they have no access to it but if they dream of one day being within it. It is both a source of hope and a source of despair.

Conclusion: Haunted Luxotopias

The current hegemonic mode of development in urban India, as we have seen, is driven by a particular luxotopia. One, that on the outside appears global and modern, with its emphasis on technology and sleek design but on the inside, at its very core, is traditionalist and neo-feudal, and it is this core that provides it with assumed strength and superiority over similar

luxotopias in other parts of the emerging economies, as well as in the West, which is imagined precisely as lacking this moral anchor and thus as driven solely by profit and greed. Indian greed, on the other hand, is imagined increasingly as a cultural good, precisely because of this perceived moral anchoring materialized in the aesthetic of the inner space of the luxotopia—the Indian billionaires, inspired by traditional scriptures and engaged in philanthropy, are imagined and hailed as national saviors (Kuldova 2017b). And yet, the urban luxotopia always appears as haunted, the urban space loses its urbanity as it manufactures internal security threats in the form of the bodies of the dispossessed and as such at the same time manufactures insecurity. The spectacular heavily embroidered royal garments are at once a reminder of the power of the elite over labor power and, simultaneously, of their dependence on the impoverished artisans for this so desired quality of 'Indianness'. Even the garments are haunted by their expelled makers. In the end, only the invisible and anonymous 'naïve observer' judging by appearances could be fooled into believing that India will be a superpowerdom by 2040.

Notes

1. See http://www.supertechlimited.com/common/about-history.asp and the promotional video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_yjPH3LG-PeY (accessed 3 May 2016).
2. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/cartier-boss-with-75bn-fortune-says-prospect-poor-rising-up-keeps-him-awake-at-night-10307485.html (accessed 12 August 2016)
3. Personal conversation, June 2011, New Delhi.
4. For details about the Make in India campaign, see its official website: http://www.makeinindia.com/about (accessed 10 August 2016)
5. http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/infrastructure/make-in-india-delhi-mumbai-industrial-corridor-to-invite-first-anchor-investors-in-august/articleshow/51015748.cms (accessed on 6 March 2016)
6. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lriM1hImS14 (accessed on 7 August 2016)
7. https://next.ft.com/content/62e72d98-39a3-11e4-93da-00144feabdc0 Muslim apartments highlight housing segregation in India, Financial Times, 5 October 2014 (accessed on 5 May 2016)
8. http://www.vedicagraharam.com—the official website of the construction project (accessed on 4 May 2016)
9. http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/city-others/allahabad-hc-orders-demolition-of-two-illegal-highrises-in-noida/ (accessed on 2 May 2016)

10. http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/wealth/personal-finance-news/delhi-ncr-has-highest-unsold-housing-inventory-assocham/articleshow/52121835.cms (accessed on 6 May 2016)
11. 1 crore = 10 million INR = 150 000 USD
12. The show can be watched at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAT9PbGiyac (accessed 10 August 2016)

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CHAPTER 4

Golden or Green? Growth Infrastructures and Resistance in Goa

Kenneth Bo Nielsen and Solano Jose Savio Da Silva

In 2014 the newly elected Indian National Democratic Alliance government, led by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its charismatic, pro-business Prime Minster Narendra Modi, launched its 'Make in India' programme. Promoted as a major national programme designed to transform India into a global manufacturing hub, the 'Make in India' programme promised to provide global recognition to the Indian economy, facilitate investments, foster innovation, and build best-in-class infrastructure (Government of India, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion 2015, 3). Indeed, in terms of investment opportunities, the development of the so-called growth infrastructures is one of the cornerstones of the programme, with 'top visionary projects' worth a whopping USD 34 billion to be developed over the next five years (ibid., 11). While India's new 'smart cities' are perhaps the most iconic manifestation of such new growth infrastructures (Datta 2015; see also Kuldova, this volume), the broader bundle

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of growth infrastructures also includes seaports, roads, highways, power generation, industrial corridors, railways, and aviation, all designed to take economic growth and innovation to new global heights. The planned, rapid development of new growth infrastructures is thus the key not only to the 'Make in India' programme but also to 'making' India into a globally recognised, innovative, world-class nation. New growth infrastructures, in other words, will provide the material basis on which what Kuldova (2014, 17) calls the 'utopian visions of India's rise to power' can rest and be realised.

This chapter examines infrastructure development and the utopian visions infrastructures materialise and embody; their generative links to other utopias and counter-utopias; and the expulsions that new growth infrastructures necessitate. Informing the analysis is a view that holds that while infrastructures are certainly technical in nature, they are much more than that. Infrastructures hold the capacity for doing such diverse things as making new forms of sociality, remaking landscapes, defining new forms of politics and resistance, and reconfiguring subjects and objects (Jensen and Morita 2015, 82–83). They are, in other words, infused with social meanings and reflective of larger priorities and attentions (Howe et al. 2015, 2). While this may be said to be the case for all infrastructures, from roads (Harvey and Knox 2015) to water pipes (Björkman 2015), the materiality of India's new growth infrastructures is additionally defined by its designed capacity for facilitating circuits of capital—by allowing for the exchange and circulation of goods, ideas, waste, power, people, and finance—*as well as* by its power to conjure up new aesthetic and affective desires and possibilities, and to fundamentally reconfigure relationships with land and resources by moving people away from agrarian mores and alternative possibilities for development (Sampat 2014, 103). It is in this sense that we locate growth infrastructures at the nexus of utopia and expulsion.

We use the aviation sector as our infrastructural point of entry. In terms of investment potential, aviation is a small sector, but in terms of enabling rapid connectivity and the speedy movement of goods and people, it is an important one. It is also a controversial sector insofar as greenfield airport development in particular will tend to entail a significant measure of expulsion through dispossession and displacement of the kind that has in recent years triggered a spate of 'land wars' (Shiva et al. 2011) that have by now become 'the most significant obstacle to capitalist growth in India' (Levien 2015, 156). The concrete materialisation of growth infrastructures in the guise of new airports thus brings into play contested utopias concerning what tomorrow's India ought to be and for whom.

Empirically, we focus on Goa, where a planned greenfield airport in Mopa in Pernem *taluka* in the northernmost corner of the state has been pushed through with massive political and financial backing, while also spawning considerable resistance and deep political divides. By also looking at plans for a new golf resort in Tiracol as well as related developments elsewhere in Pernem, we analyse the utopias and counter-utopias generated by new growth infrastructures. While we here limit ourselves to the Goan context, we believe the analysis resonates with the broader Indian experience as covered elsewhere in this volume.

We proceed to briefly locate the emergence of new growth infrastructure as drivers of economic development in the broader context of economic liberalisation and, more importantly, in relation to the symbolic and discursive construction of what Kaur (2012) calls a hyperreal 'New India'. In light of this, we analyse how and why airport development has emerged as an important component in India's overall strategy of using infrastructure development as a key means to usher in robust economic growth in the years ahead. We then turn to Goa where the proposed Mopa airport and related plans have become important sites for the articulation of contested utopias about what tomorrow's Goa will look like. One utopia, which we call 'Golden Goa', envisions Goa as a booming tourist and real estate economy and an ideal leisure destination for the domestic and global middle class; its counterpart, which we call 'Green Goa', sees the proposed airport and its associated developments as the final nail in the coffin of an environmentally sustainable and humane 'Green Goa' that should be preserved.[1] Preserving 'Green Goa' has, however, increasingly become a utopian mission insofar as Goa's development over the past many decades has come from 'the destruction of land, not from the careful use of it' (Newman 1984, 444) through rampant, often illegal mining (de Souza 2015), unregulated real estate development, industrialisation, and mass tourism (Goswami 2008). In the conclusion we present some preliminary reflections on the relationship between growth infrastructure development and the formation of contested utopias in the context of contemporary Goa.

Growth Infrastructures and 'New India'

The story of India's economic liberalisation and its increasing embrace of pro-business policies over the past three decades has been told and analysed at length (see for instance Corbridge and Harriss 2000; Sanyal 2007;

Chatterjee 2008; Ruparelia et al. 2011; Kohli 2012; Kennedy 2014). We will not retell this story here, but will instead focus more narrowly on one particular aspect of India's neoliberal turn, namely the emergence of the powerful, symbolic, and hyperreal construct of a 'New India', and examine its relationship to the materiality of new growth infrastructures.[2] As we show later, this construct has also provided an important, new framework for the rearticulation of, and alignment with, discourses and images of Goa as 'Golden Goa' that have a much longer genealogy.

'New India' at one level refers to the socio-political and economic realities that characterise India today after more than two decades of liberalising economic reforms and the increasing consolidation of capitalist markets of commodity production and consumption (D'Costa 2010, 2). There now exists a considerable scholarly literature that has carefully deconstructed the 'newness' of this 'New India' to bring to light not only the continuities with the 'Old India' of the past but also the persistent socio-economic inequalities that 'the Wall Street version' (D'Costa 2010, 7) of 'New India' glosses over (see e.g. D'Costa 2010, Kohli 2012, Corbridge and Shah 2013). While one could thus legitimately dismiss 'New India' as little more than elite myth-making, we here draw inspiration from Kaur (2012) and Kaur and Hansen (2015) by locating the significance and aspirational force of 'New India' precisely at the representational level, that is, as an ideational and symbolic construct that mobilises particular identities, desires, and aspirations.

To Kaur and Hansen (2015, 266), 'New India' denotes 'a new world of enterprise, techno-mobility, consumption and fresh market opportunities' as embodied in the country's globally renown IT and ITES industry; its impressive rates of economic growth during the first decade of this millennium; its global soft power spearheaded by Bollywood and its film stars; its long strides towards attracting corporate praise and investment; and not least its rapidly emerging consumer-oriented new middle class. As D'Costa writes (2010, xi):

> There is a striking optimism about the emerging India. The country that only had a past is beginning to be seen as a country with a future. The land of scarcities is being thought of as a land of opportunities. The land of snake charmers is now considered a land of fashion designers. The land of traditional crafts is increasingly perceived as a land of information technology. The land of bullock carts or steam trains is beginning to be seen as a land of automobiles or jet planes … the mood is contagious and the images are larger than life.

A distinct feature of this version of 'New India' is its claim to represent a collective dream and aspiration, even when a major part of the population remains outside of it (Kaur and Hansen 2015), superfluous to it (Kaur 2015, 319), or expelled from it (Kuldova 2014), as several chapters in this volume amply demonstrate. Yet 'New India' is more than just a myth propagated by 'sections of the elite masquerading as the "common man"' (Kaur and Hansen 2015, 270). It is a 'hyperreal' construct insofar as it aspires to 'make the real', seeking to make the real coincide with itself, even as it precedes the real (Kaur 2012, 619). Much of this 'making coincide' takes place at the discursive, visual, and aesthetic levels and seeks to produce 'an *exaggerated* reality that seeks to subsume and *replace* all other realities' (Kaur 2015, 318, emphases added) that resonate less well with the hyperreal 'New India'. We argue that the development of new growth infrastructures can be seen to constitute an important material equivalent to this discursive and aesthetic work of 'making the real coincide with New India'. In other words, the bundle of new and ostensibly world-class growth infrastructures is what will provide the hyperreal 'New India' with the material foundations it needs in order to subsume and replace what went before it. In the context of Goa, but also elsewhere, airports form, as we discuss next, an important node in this bundle of new growth infrastructures.

Promoting Airport Development

India's early phase of recent airport expansion focussed on the development of new international 'world-class' airport infrastructure in, for example, New Delhi and Bangalore. Thus, when the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh inaugurated the new terminal 3 at the airport in New Delhi in July 2010 he tellingly described it as signalling 'the arrival of a new India, committed to join the ranks of modern, industrialized nations of the world' (cited in Lalchandani 2010). While these airports are still upheld as successful examples of what public–private partnerships (PPPs) can achieve in the field of aviation, contemporary airport development is increasingly attuned to upgrading existing domestic airports to international airports, while also developing the so-called no-frills airports—envisioned as little more than upgraded railway stations in terms of services—in India's tier II and tier III towns located some distance from the urban metropolises. Airport development in India thus mixes the creation of new, utopian elite leisure, lounge, and travel spaces with

the more mundane ambition of enhanced regional connectivity between the centres and the peripheries for the benefit of the upwardly mobile *mofussil* classes.

The strong emphasis on aviation and airport development in Indian policy-making circles is, as mentioned, evident in the 'Make in India programme', but also in strategic plans from the Ministry of Civil Aviation (2010) and in a recently circulated new draft national civil aviation policy from the same ministry. Indian aviation has been a chronically loss-making sector, best exemplified by the spectacular collapse of Kingfisher Airlines in 2012 at a time when it was India's second largest domestic operator. But several Indian airlines are currently posting profits, and the present policy aim is 'to take flying to the masses' (Ministry of Civil Aviation 2015, 1) and to reach 300 million domestic ticketing in 2022 and half a billion in 2027 (ibid., 2), up from a modest 70 million in 2014–2015. In line with our analysis of the link between growth infrastructures and 'New India', the guiding idea behind the current policy is to use airports to attract investments and act as drivers of regional economic growth. This is to be achieved either by improving some of the existing approximately 400 Indian airstrips/airports that do not have scheduled operations (ibid., 4) or by building new greenfield airports such as that planned for Mopa. Airport development is thus intended to develop a region's hinterland economy, rather than waiting for the regional economy to grow on its own to the level where the construction of a new airport would immediately be economically sound. This approach is justified in the Ministry of Civil Aviation's (2010) strategic plan for 2010–2015, where the linkage between the civil aviation sector and economic activity and its catalytic impact on general development is said to be 'well recognised': USD 100 spent on air transport produce benefits worth USD 325 for the economy, and 100 additional jobs in air transport result in 610 new economy-wide jobs, it claims.

In sum, the expectations associated with airport development are massive. As one report states:

> It has been observed that the airports and especially International airports have become the catalysts for local economic development. Experts in the field are of the opinion that airports will shape business location and urban development in this century as much as seaports did in the 18th century, railroads in the 19th century and highways in 20th century. (Government of Goa 2015, 106)

The development of greenfield airports is currently possible with 100 per cent foreign direct investment under a PPP set-up, thus making greenfield airport development—including the so-called non-aeronautical revenue from, for example, retail, advertising, vehicle parking, security equipment, hospitality, and other services—a potentially lucrative sector for private investors (Ernst & Young 2014, 26–27). The potential for huge profits is projected as, indeed, almost utopian: While India is currently the world's tenth largest aviation market, it is the fastest growing, and it will be among the largest in the world if the projected ticketing targets indicated above are met. According to the President of India, the government plans to invest a full USD 120 billion in the development of airport infrastructure and aviation navigation services over the next decade (cited in Phadnis and Majumder 2016), and the recent draft civil aviation policy's so-called regional connectivity scheme includes a slew of subsidies and concessions—such as viability gap funding, VAT at one per cent or less, free land, and the provision of multimodal hinterland connectivity—to attract developers and operators (Ministry of Civil Aviation 2015).[3] In addition, Indian airports are encouraged to adopt or emulate the 'SEZ Aerotropolis model' under which 'airport cities' can include hotels, golf courses, amusement parks, aviation training schools, or IT parks to enhance revenues. Airports thus not only facilitate the transportation of goods and people; they also pry open new spaces of accumulation and enable new forms of conspicuous consumption of branded goods, and new forms of leisure and entertainment that are increasingly associated with 'having made it' in 'New India' (Kaur and Hansen 2015).

Mopa: Redefining 'Golden Goa'

> 'Mopa airport will generate tourism and hence the income for the state; Mopa is a golden opportunity for the state of Goa'. (Sandip Fulari, convenor of 'People for Mopa', cited in *Times of India* 2013b)

The trajectory of the new greenfield airport in Mopa is illustrative of how airports have recently emerged with force as a priority area for Indian governments: Plans for establishing a new international airport at Mopa have been around for more than 15 years, but actual—and very rapid—progress has only been made over the last few years.

In 1999, a Congress-led state government had approved the Mopa project, and land acquisition proceedings for a whopping 80 lakh square metres (800 hectares) of land were initiated in 2003. The land acquisition

was never completed, mostly because the proposed airport encountered stiff resistance from south Goa where a key worry was that the building of Mopa would eventually lead to the closure of the existing international airport in centrally located Dabolim. The potential closure of Dabolim would mean that all tourists arriving by plane would land in Mopa and would therefore be more likely to head for the nearby beaches in the north, thus hurting the tourist industry in the south.

This early controversy over Mopa coincided with a phase of intense popular mobilisation against illicit land conversions under Goa's Regional Plan 2011 in late 2006 and, in the following year, the implementation of the highly unpopular policy of establishing special economic zones (SEZ) for industrial production in the state (Abreu 2014; Bedi 2013; Da Silva 2014; Sampat 2013). These campaigns brought popular concerns over environmental destruction, water depletion, land scams, and pollution to the top of the political agenda, forcing the incumbent government to withdraw the regional plan, scrap the SEZ policy, and put Mopa on the backburner. It was not until mid-2008, when things had calmed down, that fresh land acquisition notifications were issued for Mopa. But the actual acquisition progressed slowly and was not declared to be complete until late 2013.

By then, the state had a new government, led by the BJP and the current Union Minister of Defence Manohar Parrikar, who had risen to become Chief Minister in 2012. Parrikar hails from north Goa (Bardez). So does his party compatriot and current Chief Minister Laxmikant Parsekar, who succeeded Parrikar in late 2014 and who hails from Pernem itself. In addition, the former speaker of the legislative assembly and current state forest and environment minister—a crucial ministry in terms of obtaining project-related clearances and permits—BJP's Rajendra Arlekar, is elected from Pernem constituency. Both Chief Ministers have been strong backers of the Mopa project, and it is under their dispensations—and in the broader Indian context of prioritising growth infrastructures as outlined above—that the project has been carried forward at full speed.

Depending on audience, Mopa airport has been discursively promoted by its backers in two complementary ways. On the one hand, they have claimed that the state was badly in need of a new airport insofar as the existing one at Dabolim was reaching saturation and could not, for technical reasons, be expanded.[4] And without a new airport, there was a real danger that the crucial tourism industry would suffer irreparable damage in the years ahead.[5]

Yet more importantly, Mopa has been construed in utopian terms as not just a simple necessity, but also as, as the quote above illustrates, a 'golden opportunity' that will revive Goa's economic fortunes, fortify its position as India's dream holiday capital, and set in motion the transformation of the state's backward northern areas into new leisure spaces. In 2012, Chief Minister Parrikar had said that the state would raise its annual tourist arrivals from 2.6 million to 6 million in just five years (*Indian Express* 2012); by the time the first phase of Mopa airport would be completed, in 2020, it alone would cater to 2.8 million arrivals per year; by 2045, when the fourth and final phase had been completed, that number would have risen to a full 13.1 million (Government of Goa 2015). Not only would this generate considerable revenue—it would also lead to the development of ancillary inductees such as hotels and tourism infrastructure. And the addition of air cargo operations would shift the current ground-based movements in Goa and attract air operations currently conducted outside the area (Government of Goa 2015, 2). This would have a 'positive impact on socio-economic environment due to development of infrastructure in the area, growth of secondary and tertiary sector businesses and subsequent enhancement in the standards of living of the local populace' (Government of Goa 2015, 97).

Yet the full vision for Mopa was much larger. The proposed airport would be equipped with five-star hotels; eco, adventure, and wellness resorts; a shopping plaza; office and exhibition spaces; an amphitheatre; arts and craft workshops and displays; a large auditorium; a VIP lounge; and even a cultural museum (Government of Goa 2015, 108–109); and, in anticipation of a boom in the Indian convention industry, it would have a 1000 delegates convention centre spread over 5 hectares (ibid., 108–110). In all, 381 out of the 2271 acres acquired for Mopa were reserved for 'commercial activities' according to the 'Request for Qualification' document. Mopa airport would thus not, as airports are otherwise often described, be a quintessential non-place (Auge 1995) through which people pass without dwelling; it would be a site for leisure, recreation, spending, and experiences.

The role of Mopa as an infrastructural nodal point for realising a larger utopian vision becomes even more apparent if we lift the gaze and survey related developments elsewhere in the state. Not only has Goa for some time been home to a, albeit limited, number of offshore casinos that offer the wealthy an opportunity to fritter away their money in luxurious surroundings; there are also recurring plans for setting up new marinas to

cater to the clientele of Indian 'bankers, industrialists, corporate houses, and several high-net worth individuals in the country' who have yachts but nowhere to park them (Sequeira 2015). Yacht owners and casino goers of course constitute an important social segment in 'New India', and bringing them to the state would help transform it into something much more aspirational than just a compulsory stop on the hippie trail, or a favoured destination for Russian charter tourists.

More importantly, in Pernem *taluka* itself, vast tracks of land surrounding the planned airport have already been bought up by real estate developers, politicians, and businessmen in anticipation of an impending real estate boom. Although the use of middlemen or strawmen makes it notoriously difficult to trace the actual buyers of the land, it is well documented that, for example, organised crime groups, politically linked 'syndicates', and the politicians' black money routinely play important roles in the land and real estate market in cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, and Kolkata (see e.g. Weinstein 2008; Björkman 2015; Kaul 2015). Indeed, to Sampat (2014, 148), the real estate economy in Goa is endemically corrupt and discloses a free-for-all grab of land and resources by the political and economic elite. What is important for the present discussion, however, is how the real estate economy more than any other sector powerfully draws upon ideologies of 'waste' and 'value', and 'backwardness' and 'modernity' (Sampat 2014, 147) to develop what is routinely projected as wasteland or idle land for accumulation. Some real estate projects are already under construction, such as the B&F Countryside Estates' farmhouse project, where people can sit on the porch of their luxury bungalows and 'marvel at the beauty of the flora and fauna under endless blue skies … or just awaken to the call of peacocks in the morning' (B&F Realty n.d.). The most spectacular of such new luxury projects is undoubtedly the hotel-cum-golf resort proposed for Tiracol located right on the northern border with Maharashtra. In 2011, the Goa Tourism Department granted approval to the Shiv Jatia-owned Leading Hotels Ltd. to develop a PGA standard golf course and resort in Tiracol, located only 20 km from the site of the proposed Mopa airport. The village is in fact an enclave of Goa and is separated from the main landmass by the Tiracol river. It covers an area of only 1.38 square kilometres and is home to just 48 households.

Claiming to have secured ownership of more than 90 per cent of the village through market transactions, Leading Hotels said in a press release that it envisaged setting up an 'iconic resort, wrapped by a golf course perched on a rocky elevation' (*Herald* 2015). Golfing great Colin

Montgomerie was roped in to design the course which would sprawl over more than 560,000 square metres and have two artificial lakes. The resort would, in turn, be built by Leading Hotels but would thereafter be managed and operated by high-end hotelier Four Seasons. According to the site plan the entire resort would cover an area measuring close to one square kilometre (nearly all of Tiracol) and would have 153 villas ranging from two to six bedrooms.[6] The project also includes a marina and a signature bridge which would connect the resort to the Goa landmass. The project also proposed that the area where the inhabitants of the village reside would be developed into a 'model village' through the provision of 24-hour water supply, continuous electricity, sewerage systems, health care, a primary school, and internet and banking facilities, all of which would be paid for by the company as part of its corporate social responsibility.[7] In addition, the project claimed it would generate local employment and create opportunities for medium and small enterprises (*Herald* 2015).

What is conjured up in the project visions for Mopa, B&F Countryside Estates, and Tiracol are, we suggest, a version of 'Golden Goa' rearticulated within the discursive framework of 'New India'. The idea of Goa as golden, as *Goa dourada*, originated as an idealised image of Goa conceived by the Portuguese colonisers, conjuring up the idea of a *sossegado* lifestyle characterised by affluence and leisure (Tichur 2013). This 'Golden Goa' image has been a remarkably persistent, if malleable, feature of the face Goa shows to the outside world (Newman 2001, 107), and its seamless appropriation into discourses of tourism has long been noted (e.g. Siqueira 1991). Its present rearticulation within the framework of 'New India' similarly continues to conjure up images of prosperity and leisure, now made possible by neoliberal economic reforms rather than mercantile trade under Portuguese rule. However, it is now more unequivocally attuned to the presumed aspirations and desires of the high-spending new Indian elite. In other words, just as the prosperous and leisurely lifestyle extolled in the classical *Goa dourada* genre of poetry and literature was always the *landlord* lifestyle (Newman 2001, 106), the rearticulation of Golden Goa with 'New India' extols an *elite* lifestyle that is reserved for the few. And, just as the colonial version of *Goa dourada* elided the fact that it was built on the exploitation of tenants and labourers (Tichur 2013) and a rigid class and landowning system backed by Portuguese colonialism (Newman 2001, 106), the 'New India' version of Golden Goa seeks to elide the dispossession or displacement of tenants and other land owners

that underpins its realisation in Mopa and Tiracol. Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, the materialisation of Mopa and Tiracol has been hotly contested as resistance has emerged both from dispossessed people who fear that they will find no place in such visions and from social activists and environmentalists across the state. The opposition has, in turn, invoked their own counter-utopias as part of their strategic politics of representation that we analyse below.

'Green Goa'

> We have our fields, *kulaghars* (plantations) and *devasthans* (temples) here. We won't leave our *devasthans* … even if they plan to rehabilitate us, can they rehabilitate God? … There are so many different species of plants and animals including the tiger living here. Cutting down such a large part of forested land can lead to a repeat of the natural calamity (a devastating flood and landslide) that recently occurred in Uttarakhand. (Sandip Kambli, Covenor, Mopa Vimantall Piditt Xetkari Samiti, cited in *Times of India* 2013a)

Struggles over land in contemporary India are often framed in terms of displacement and dispossession. But neither Mopa nor Tiracol involved much direct displacement: Tiracol was sparsely populated while few people resided *on* the Mopa plateau itself, something which is not unusual for plateaus rich in aluminiferous bauxite where cultivable land on the hilltop is scarcer than what the case is on the plains below, or on the forested slopes (Oskarsson 2017). Perhaps for this reason, the resistance to the land transfers occurring in these two sites has invoked a different register of protest that focussed more on environmental and sustainable livelihoods issues, both recurring tropes in popular mobilisations in Goa. The Mopa airport opposition has come from local tenants facing dispossession, or otherwise affected by the land acquisition, who organised under the Mopa Vimantall Piditt Xetkari Samiti (association of farmers aggrieved by the Mopa airport), but also from citizens' groups and NGOs from other parts of the state, most notably Goans for Dabolim Only, the Federation of Rainbow Warriors, and the umbrella organisation Goans for Sustainable Development, all predominantly based in south Goa. This broader coalition has made use of a diverse repertoire of contention and styles of framing, and has actively and creatively struggled against the airport in both civil society and legal arenas. While the resistance strategies of the Mopa opposition are thus clearly not reducible to the strategic projection of

a 'Green Goa' threatened with annihilation, this trope, we suggest, has been an important one as they have sought to unravel projected images of 'Golden Goa' as outlined above.

The differences between 'Golden Goa' and 'Green Goa' in the context of Mopa are perhaps nowhere as evident as in the radically different ways in which they conceptualise the plateau on which the airport is to be built. To the proponents of the airport, the plateau epitomised 'waste' waiting to be turned into 'value'. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report prepared at the behest of the Government of Goa described it as little more than a rocky, barren patch of land without habitation, residents, or permanent structures of any significance: 'The land is largely non-cultivated due to an out cropping of lateritic soil and no residential and water bodies are found within the project location except few houses', it claimed (2015, 11), adding that 'vegetation and trees are sparse'. Eighty-five per cent of the acquired land was, it said, either 'land with scrub' (55 per cent), barren rocky/stony waste (22 per cent), or scrub forest (8 per cent) (ibid., 11). The EIA report did acknowledge that the airport would have a 'medium impact' on the local biological environment insofar as it heightened the risk of animals being killed in increased car traffic or falling into open construction pits or trenches. But apart from that, placing a new international airport on top of the plateau would have very little impact on the local land, water, and socio-economic environment.

The project's opponents begged to differ. At a controversial public hearing on the EIA report which took place on top of the plateau itself on 2 February 2015, they spent considerable time deconstructing this view of the plateau as barren wasteland. Prior to the hearing, activists had organised an environmental study of their own to counter the official EIA report. To the project's opponents, the plateau's location close to the Western Ghats made it an intrinsically eco-sensitive zone almost on par with the Western Ghats itself, second only to the Amazon in terms of biodiversity. The plateau, they claimed at the hearing and elsewhere (Gokhale 2016), was home to a plethora of flora, fauna, and wildlife, including 174 species of birds, 41 reptiles, and 37 mammals, including endangered species such as leopards, gaur (Indian bison), and pangolins. As one environmentalist argued, this exceptional concentration of life on the small plateau was the result of the destruction of ecosystems elsewhere (cited in Gokhale 2016), in effect making Mopa the last refuge of animals on the run.

The laterite plateau itself, along with the more than 40 surrounding perennial springs, performed an indispensable function in terms of ground water percolation and recharge, acting as a giant sponge that stored and released water throughout the year, thus providing water for thousands of people and countless ecosystems. A groundwater expert enlisted by the activists estimated that the plateau recharged more than six million litres per day, or more than two billion litres every year. Hence, if the plateau was destroyed to make way for the airport, its crucial role in the wider local hydrology would be disrupted, leading to repercussions far beyond the plateau itself. A wrecked hydrology would destroy not only cultivation on the slopes of the plateau, and on the nearby plains below, but also the fisheries in the nearby Chapora and Tiracol rivers.

It was also found that cattle and goats grazed on the plateau, and that agriculture was practised across the area, including extensive cashew plantations on the slopes that generated an annual turnover of as much as INR 50 *crore*, and which enabled the production of the locally popular cashew-*feni*, a strong liquor produced from the cashew apple. Several sacred groves (and a Buddhist-era cave) would be lost if the airport came up, including the Barazan on the very top of the plateau, a grove comprised by 12 trees at which important rituals were carried out yearly. For the same reason, one activist group consistently referred to the plateau as the 'Barazan', and not the Mopa plateau, so as to underscore its importance in an ancient cultural and socio-economic order that was now fast disappearing.

The resistance to the Tiracol golf project again presents an interesting parallel example of how the project proponents and opponents have invoked radically different ways of conceptualising the character of the land. On 31 May 2015, the Goan paper *The Herald* carried a full-page, front page advertisement by Leading Hotels, promoting its project in Tiracol. Tellingly, the advertisement was titled 'The Treasure of Tiracol Displayed to the World: From Barren … to Beautiful', underscoring how—as in Mopa—the targeted land was little more than barren wasteland waiting to be transformed. Again, the local opposition begged to differ.

The opposition to the golf course and resort is mainly led by members of the St. Anthony's Tenants and Mundkar Association which was formed in 2010 and mainly consists of agricultural tenants who have not surrendered their tenancy rights to Leading Hotels, the project developer. While claims that Leading Hotels have illicitly circumvented Goa's strict

tenancy laws when buying up land for the project has been a key argument for villagers opposed to the project, they have also argued that such a project—which, it will be recalled, covers the entire village—will lead to extensive environmental damage to lands that are far from barren. In an interview with journalists, community locals Agnelo Godinho and Sarto D'Souza stated that apart from denuding the village of its natural cover, the felling of cashew trees will impair the livelihoods of many of the villagers who are dependent on the cashew orchards (Video Volunteers 2015); others point out that setting up a golf course would involve the diversion of large quantities of water, with village resident Cyril D'Souza alleging that the government will divert the Tillari project—an inter-state hydro project intended to supply water for irrigation, municipal, and industrial purposes—to the golf course (Video Volunteers 2015). It is also feared that the use of fertilisers and other chemicals in the golf course will leach into the fresh water table and into the estuary, which would negatively affect drinking water and fish breeding, respectively. Two separate petitions have also been filed before the National Green Tribunal, one arguing that Leading Hotels has felled large numbers of trees on the plateau without obtaining the requisite permissions under the Goa, Daman and Diu Preservation of Trees Act.

Francis Rodrigues, a member of the tenants association and a leading figure in the local resistance, says that till date, even though the government has not provided any jobs to the villagers, the people of Tiracol have still managed because, thanks to earlier land reforms, all the tenants have had houses and agricultural land in their possession (Video Volunteers 2015). While acknowledging that in recent times many youngsters from the village head to other parts of Goa, Mumbai, and even abroad for work, Rodrigues opines that if the villagers were to set up a cooperative and develop a small-scale ecologically sensitive tourism project, like a 20-rooms ecotourism project, they could both arrest the outmigration of youngsters while also preserving the ecology and pristine beauty of the village.[8] By thus focussing on the claimed, actual, or potential importance of land, agriculture, and the environment in both Mopa and Tiracol, the project opponents have drawn on a particular 'moral economy of agriculture' (Münster 2015) that articulates ideas about what is just, fair, and sustainable, and which draws attention to a particular ethics of care for land and soil embedded in local communities, and fundamentally incompatible with large infrastructural projects.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have located popular discourses on India's new growth infrastructures at the intersection of utopia and expulsion, focussing predominantly on greenfield airport development in Goa. It is often said that infrastructures go unnoticed and only become visible when they break down. But in the context of India's growth infrastructures in the making, maximising visibility and public attention is of crucial importance. The purpose of growth infrastructures is, after all, primarily to attract investments and stimulate enhanced economic activity. As Björkman (2015, 13) writes with reference to contemporary Mumbai, large-scale infrastructure projects are often conceived first and foremost as a way to signal and perform world-class character to investors. Such 'prestige infrastructures' (Howe et al. 2015, 5) therefore construct a particular vision of the future—a spectacular one, filled with possibility (Gupta 2015) along the lines of 'New India' or 'Golden Goa' as outlined above. As Harvey and Knox (2015, 6) argue, this may be particularly the case in 'development settings' where infrastructures are aspirational and carry great promise. As nodal points for flows of capital, goods, and people, airports are embedded in larger utopian visions for transforming geographies and economies through, in our case, luxury estates, golf resorts, and marinas, thus creating new, aspirational spaces for both accumulation and leisure. They are, in other words, important in conjuring up new aesthetic and affective desires and possibilities that draw on hyperreal ideas about a 'New India' in the making. In Goa, this has allowed for a powerful rearticulation of the long-standing idea of 'Golden Goa' that speaks to increasingly hegemonic elite desires in the context of neoliberalisation.

Yet growth infrastructures also carry threats of unwelcome change, of destabilisation and increased vulnerability, thus combining 'integrative promises and disintegrative threats' (ibid., 74). As Datta has argued for India's new smart cities—the stellar example of India's new phase of 'utopian urbanisation' (Datta 2015, 6)—social fault lines are built into such infrastructural utopian imaginings, which prioritise urbanisation (and related infrastructural developments such as airports) first and foremost as a business model rather than a model of social justice. Infrastructures evidently produce contradictions and unevenly felt consequences in the lives and places they contact (Howe et al. 2015, 3), and the powerful discourse of a 'Green Goa' threatened with annihilation that we have shown informs environmental activism in Goa can, we suggest, be seen as expressive of popular anxieties over the looming 'disintegrative threats' and uneven consequences that accompany large-scale infrastructure development.

While growth infrastructures—in the guise of new airports—thus bring into play contested utopias and counter-utopias concerning what tomorrow's India ought to be and for whom, the issue of temporality deserves particular attention. Strikingly, plans for a new airport at Mopa have, as mentioned, been around for nearly two decades without actual construction work ever commencing. As Gupta (2015) argues, this 'suspension' between the early start of an infrastructural project and its conclusion needs to be understood not so much as a mere temporary phase but as a particular condition of being. While the construction site may be said to be the ideal typical embodiment of such 'a temporal space between the hopes pinned upon future infrastructures and the actualization of that promise' (Howe et al. 2015, 7), the cumbersome, contingent, and often contradictory political, social, and legal processes that have underpinned the various stages of planning, design, and implementation of the Mopa project have, in effect, created a different kind of space—a temporal discursive space that enables contestation to play out, visions and counter-visions articulated, and discrepant utopian or dystopian meanings assigned to such infrastructures in the making.

Notes

1. We stress that those who have opposed the Mopa airport, and the golf resort at Tiracol, have done so for a complex and nuanced set of reasons, and have worked hard in civil society and legal arenas to stop these projects. We do not mean to trivialise these dedicated efforts by pointing out that ideas about a lost 'Green Goa' utopia have also informed their opposition.
2. Our discussion of 'New India' draws on Nielsen and Wilhite (2015).
3. The policy also covers areas such as aviation training, and maintenance, repair and overhaul facilities, and more.
4. See Nielsen (2015) for a short overview of the technical–legal challenges associated with expanding Dabolim.
5. The Goan economy has suffered over the past few years due to a total ban on mining, one of the state's most important industries. To offset this loss, the performance of the tourist industry has become much more important.
6. Site plan submitted to the Town & Country Planning Department dated 25 February 2013.
7. In the mid-1990s, a comparable project, the 'Japanese Village Project', had been proposed for Paliem, a short distance south of Tiracol. The project would have required around 300 hectares of land but was eventually cancelled.
8. Francis Rodrigues, personal communication, 2 October 2015.

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CHAPTER 5

Vikasanam: The Expansionist Choreography of Space-Making in Kerala

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This chapter is based on fieldwork carried out from the years 2006 to 2016 in the newly urbanizing regions of Ernakulam District in the South Western Indian state of Kerala. The territorial emphasis had been on regions identified as the sites of—or adjacent to—new urban projects and programmes of development. Edachira and Kakkanad lie in contiguously located Local Self-Governing Institutions (LSGIs) on the east, while Vallarpadom and Moolampilly are coastal villages towards the west of the district. I sought to understand how people in these places relate to each other through time and space, and how they constitute themselves in their social habitat in terms of historical relationships, institutions, and other linkages.

Smart City activities at Edachira exemplify how logics of legitimation and consent are generated by new models of neo-liberal processes, where the far-reaching implications remain disguised. As distinct from the familiar urban processes, these trigger off imagination on an extravagant scale. People imagine the prospects of similar 'cities' coming up, so much so that any designated space may turn 'smart'. The name *Smart City* comes from the *Smart City (Kochi) Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd*. It pre-dates the current (2015–2016)

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comprehensive Smart City plans[1] of the Govt. of India. Smart City in Kerala conjoins the historical linkages with the Persian Gulf, expatriate capital, and billionaire retailers, with new protocols of 'smartness'. The admixture of sanctions, compromises, and controls is tailor-made to/by segments that wield power. Urban orders are entrenched modes of power that are materialized ideologies rather than abstractions. An abundance of capital deployed as grand urban plans and real-estate projects is set off against meagre welfare allocations in localities. This translates into a dominance of nostalgias and utopias of the future (one devoid of history and the other devoid of material) over realistic reflections or conceptualizations of the present. The domineering language of transformation manifest in the local version of development is known as *vikasanam*. The Malayalam word roughly translates as 'expansion'.

Like Smart City plans elsewhere (*EIB* 2012/Rodríguez-Bolívar 2015), the authors initiate and corporatize urban spaces and re-imagine people as stakeholders who ought to bear the necessary risks (without exception!). This analysis of the regional context of *Edachira* investigates the broad discourse of *vikasanam* and the particular exceptionalities of cities in the making. The ethnography suggests that there are no abstractions; rather, 'smartness' has protocols which leave their material impression/impacts on region and life.

Orders in Search for Cities: A Take from *Edachira*

Two decades ago in *Edachira*, local men often swam across the *Kadambrayaar* River that flowed down the valley past a *toddy* shop (vending local liquor made from coconut). Here, they had their regular gatherings and inebriated discussions in the evening sun. Then, a long green fence came up, extending from the spot all the way down the valley, along the line of the river. Uniformed officers of a private security agency stood guard to prevent people from entering the 'Smart City'. Within months, the human ecology was breached by spaces that could not be 'trespassed'. In no time, the *Kadambra* River turned into a catchment of dirt and debris from construction and migrant labour settlements around. After the liminal phase, by the year 2015, the river was co-opted by tourism projects run by the state and private agencies, effectively alienating it from the region. The entire space has now been reconfigured into assemblages of IT zones and amusement parks.[2]

A plethora of living spaces (high rises, gated communities, and villas) were projected as attractive options for the elite during recession (2008–2009). Construction of site hoardings started appearing and there was much talk

on real-estate options. More and more land, in effect, got cordoned off. Local stories, like the one about a 'film actor' who purchased land owned by the 'spiritual guru' and swindler Santosh Madhavan,[3] appeared. Local interest was confined to human-interest-stories of illegalities embodied by 'breaking news' or gossip, such as the lurid details of an *ashram* where a *swami* (male spiritual teacher) molested young girls. The emphasis seemed to be on the 'necessary' anarchy that accompanies *vikasanam*.

The neo-liberal effluence of the state trickled down to localities in the form of small negotiations and petty contracts people entered into[4] with construction projects.[5] Unlike elsewhere in India, where the state remains an alien entity, in Kerala people make meticulous use of provisions like *right to information*[6] before they enter negotiations. They enter into dialogues with the state and bureaucracies in several forums (legal/informal/appellate committees). Edachira and the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) regions in Ernakulam were structurally and geographically entrapped between the neo-liberal corporate predicament[7] and welfarist notions of the political public sphere. Urgency clauses[8] invoked for evictions, and the serving of legal notices, added to the confusion during phases of transition.

By 2008, heavy load-bearing trucks were rumbling along the roads from Kakkanad to Edachira. Vacated homes, already crumbling, flanked the roads. Only a handful of small run-down retail shops remained. Trucks, expensive cars parked by the vestigial tracts of farmland, the conversations on the street, and new road signs, all bore evidence of transformation. The land had been flattened for high-rise apartments. Billboards announcing market baits like 'Green view' or 'River-View' proliferated. The hills had been razed, water tables depleted, and piles driven into the ground; the region was split into distinct 'smart spaces', as they were called. The idea of the Smart City dispersed into all activities. From the local river, more than a hundred thousand cubic feet of water was being pumped out every day to the project sites and information technology parks. An offshoot of the river called *Edachira Thodu* physically divided the space for 'Smart City' from the state-run 'Info Park'. The two zones became a single zone, alienated from the region, with the erection of a private bridge.

Following the credit relaxations by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government in 2001, there was a burgeoning marketing for real estate. Land was transformed into 'sites' in the peripheries of Ernakulam, on the strength of the rhetoric of futuristic development and employment growth. Until 2009–2010[9] building norms in Kerala had been more lenient than elsewhere in India. In 2007, following certain accidents, the

government had reviewed the 1999 building rules. It was found that the laws were much too lenient on provisions of basic security and accessibility. The proposed amendments (2009) were opposed by building lobbies (*The Hindu* reports opposition by organs like *Kerala Builders Forum* throughout 2009).[10] Barring a few interventions following accidents, the state had seldom intervened. Thus, with effective non-intervention, and supply of credit, thousands of projects took root in Edachira/Kakkanad. Massive increase in property prices followed. Low interest rates triggered borrowings and acquisition. Material costs skyrocketed and it was not easy to get small building contracts. It became virtually impossible for an individual to build a house, unless one belonged to the upper class or had agricultural land to dispose of (which many had in Edachira).

Billboards of the 'coming urban life', with landscaped exteriors, blocked aerial view all across the district. Visualizations of better life got sold out before their materialization could begin. Repositories of feudal-cultural capital (like *taravaditham*—good family lineage) became market add-ons. The instance of *kavala* or small junctions brings out the new spatial logic. The junctions, with small shops and verandahs, had been meeting places and discussion arenas. *Kavalas* got rescaled in tune with the emerging utilitarian logic. A prominent advertisement glorified the *Western Union Money-Transfer* office (global money transfer firm) that had replaced the 'idle chats' at the *kavala*. The message was clear: the entrepreneurial youth needed to transact less in ideas and more in 'cash'.

Land brokerage emerged as the major preoccupation at the *kavalas* and *chaayakkadas*[11] frequented by the young and old. These spaces had once been part of the political public sphere during the communist movements and land reforms (1940–1970s). The public had constituted themselves against the social structure in concrete opposition to different forms of interpellation. The social structure had been reciprocally shaped by the public, demanding new legislations. Conversations that invariably interrogated the everyday had given way in tone and tenor to speculative conclaves on possible land deals. Land brokerage as such is nothing new. What were special in its new incarnations were the multiplying levels of participation as well as the ramifications that complicated the processes of brokerage. The routines have undergone major transformation during the last five years. Noticeably, there has been an influx of large number of youngsters in brokerage that had earlier been the domain of the middle aged, the retired, or the uneducated. The reference here is mainly to the local transactions (not the more formal metropolitan brokerage firms). The people involved

get implicated in land and credit markets that extend beyond the local. Following the land boom post 2000, most of the agricultural land had been parcelled into 'plots' and 'sites', ready for the market. More money came in with the credit release and expatriate investment. The *kavalas* in effect became the road-show version of globalized capital implanting smart spaces of exception. People engaged with utopias of *vikasanam* because of the impending need to address any perceived lack (of consumables, of gated communities, of private educational institutes, of costly medical care, and of mobility). If not, tensions would stem in from apprehensions of getting severed off or excluded from imageries of exceptional life. Class comparisons have been redefined by overwhelming participation in conspicuous consumption (Lukose 2009), even if through credit.

Bribery, nepotism, and loopholes in the legal system took newer dimensions in the march towards utopian futuristic possibilities. I argue that these were rational reactions to irrational and decontextualized possibilities. Sand and earth mining, exploitation of ground water, felling of trees for timber, filling of lakes and rivers, dumping of waste, and the changing of rules governing coastal zones massively degraded and eviscerated the environment. Privatized activities and profit-hungry ventures ate away the commons. In the face of an overwhelming futuristic rhetoric, nothing could be perceived as illegal or disruptive.

The facilitating spaces for Information Technology (IT), together with new living spaces, must cater to the protocols of the Smart City. Elitist educational institutes with exorbitant fee structures and networks of retail outlets have mushroomed. Plenty of inhabitants have already moved out from the village after selling land at inflated prices to builders. Those who lived within the proposed Special Economic Zones have been served official notices of eviction or summoned before special Land Acquisition officers.[12] A makeshift tent was erected by those who resisted evictions, near the Edachira Canal. Here, a woman talked about land owners, with political clout, who initiated projects and planned 'anticipated' gated zones and 'investors' who made phenomenal land purchases, though *benamis*.[13] The complex chain of proxy buyers made all such deals shady. She claimed that information became classified. On the one hand, the everyday was getting mired in uncertainties, and on the other people were being surrounded by the rhetoric of 'knowledge societies'.

One of my informants, Kareem, had been part of the continuous campaigns against forced acquisitions since the erstwhile Export Processing Zone started (2003). Such pressure was inevitable to enter

into negotiations with the Kerala Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (KINFRA) or the statutory authorities. Though there was no provision for forcible acquisitions or evictions, the industrial policy[14] as well as the modified SEZ policy allowed acquisitions by the KINFRA for 'the greater common good'. Their idea of 'good governance' streamlined resources for projects. At Edachira, the majorities of the campaigns have not been against the project *per se* but have been to demand fair compensations. People seldom take position against *vikasanam*; the utopia of expansion has its seduction for all involved. Thus, even if they resist, they abide by the new protocols and expectations. The SEZ policy has been designed in such a way that the developers seldom go bust. Developers everywhere show interest because of the cheap land that is often made available. Elsewhere, in the case of the *Adanis* with the *Mundra* Port SEZ in Gujarat state, the land requirements for industrial purpose had been overestimated and claimed to serve as buffer. There are similar stories after 1995, from the Bangalore–Mysore Infrastructure Corridor Project in Karnataka state. In Uttar Pradesh, state-owned land was given to Reliance Energy Generation on a renewable lease for a period of 99 years. In most such cases, unlike in Kerala, the resistance has been absolute and state responses violent[15] (Jenkins et al. 2014; Sangvai 2006; Greenfield 2013).

Special Economic Zones (SEZs), through the dominant paradigm of *vikasanam*, created new urban protocols and discourses. While there are significant deviations from postcolonial modern developmentalist trajectories, we should not imagine absolute rupture in the mode of developmentalist thinking. The context of SEZs in India has not been as prolonged and sophisticated as in China, where such a zone is part of a one-nation-two-systems policy and the development of economic subregions (Dirlik 1993). Rather, as part of post-financial liberalization (end of 1980s), there was a sudden push towards expansion of telecommunications and computer sectors. The emergent middle-class entrepreneurs in IT got immense public infrastructural support (Upadhya 2004). Thus, well-qualified workforce became suddenly deployed as 'human resource'. The image of the democratic state, on the other hand, conveyed an equilibrium state of consensus. Major restructuring was always presented through abstractions like 'national progress'. The postcolonial social contract continued to be invoked, though most of the welfarist policies had already been fossilized. Instead, futuristic protocols devolved for the populations to abide with.

In SEZs, impediments like land ceilings and labour laws were done away with by an act in 2005 (*The SEZ Act 2005, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India*). A provision of free trade in Export Promotion Zones (EPZs) became statutory through the SEZ act. The elite could suddenly enjoy a graduated reduction in bureaucracy. The single-window policy was created to circumvent bureaucracy through a provision of what could be conceived of as a 'legal fiction', namely one of a foreign territory within. Unlike the EPZs that specialized in goods, the SEZs were oriented towards services. Services are mainly information technology-mediated outsourced activities that employ people on the supply side of global capitalist production networks (as productive labour pools). The superabundant or excessive activities around exceptional zones are modes of governance that are segmental. It is in accordance with the depth of authority over urban modes/models. The controls designed to allocate people in accordance with the requirements of special zones and markets are what Ong (2002) refers to as graduated sovereignties. These are assemblages of state, capital and forms of life that produce new social configurations.

Kochi Smart City was a joint venture company formed to develop the project in the Edachira/Kakkanad region in the district of Ernakulam. Government of Kerala and TECOM Investments, a subsidiary of Dubai Holding, were the main investors. There is a possibility that the project would link up with the current (and more comprehensive) Smart City plan as well as the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)[16] of the National Democratic Front (NDA) government. The particular project, *Smart City*, emerges as a dominant theme—a formidable master signifier with which people engage and produce the contemporary social situation replete with unprecedented disparities. Smart City in the context also becomes a regional situation that delineates how the conceptual boundaries of state become altered by people securing survival, and wanting to be incorporated. The gamut of exceptionalities within the SEZs becomes the rule through exemplary vehicles like the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM),[17] the more contemporary AMRUT, or the constitution of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). There are parallel processes on the ground like the informalization of labour, new forms of living such as gated zones/villas, or investments in security. The transformation of social relations (capital) as raw material (productive capital) for the entrenchment of global capital in regional settings like Edachira exemplifies the above and points towards a significant spatio-temporal reordering.

Across Kerala, the idea of a city is essentially about redeployment of 'region'. There are similar instances of regions with entrenched capital (like Bombay) and those (like Hyderabad) into which surplus capital flowed in from agrarian zones (Kennedy and Zérah 2008). A place close to a designated Special Economic Zone (SEZ) becomes completely re-imagined. Communities in such adjunct places transact with futuristic promise, discussion, development, and processes that take place within. The aspirational environment has material effect on existing social configuration; the virtual has real ordering effects. Chief Ministers have started attending economic forums, like the one in Davos in Switzerland. Till the 1990s, economic forums of the scale had been attended only by prime ministers of the respective nation states. These are signs of rescaling and reterritorializations. What ensue are city-to-city arrangements, sister-cities projects and emergent data repositories and credit-rating of cities. There are certain ideal types/prototypes for the urban as with cities like New York or Shanghai, emerging as command centres. In order to understand neoliberalism, the expansionist logic of *vikasanam*, or cities that turn 'smart', we need to work more through the processes on the ground than evaluations based on preconceived ideal types (Dear 2002; Soja 1989). How and why do people buy into whole assemblages of processes that constitute neo-liberal urbanity? This is where the ethnography has to work its way through abstractions like emergent, hubs, autonomy, informalities, cities or the characteristic assemblage of everything into *vikasanam*.

Yahiya of Edachira

Yahiya was 44 and hailed from the Edachira region. When we first met, he was already married with two school-going kids and a toddler. We stood on an eight-acre plot that belonged to someone originally from *Thrissur* (75 kilometres North of Edachira), who got rich through the infamous teak-mangium investment scheme. He ran a company that lured many into investing in teak-mangium plantation projects through promises of extraordinary returns in a short span. In the 1980s, many lost money through such investment frauds. Later, there was an official crackdown on such companies. However, the 'get rich quickly' mode had not abated by the end of 1980s, rather, it took different garbs from goat farms that offered windfall gains, Internet-based frauds, *nagamanikyam* (elusive stones with mythical qualities) and similar magical pursuits, to the lure of the land market. The cases of magical pursuits had underlying

commonalities. They were, above all, a contemporary manifestation of 'desire'. The state of poverty has been shown to result in unique forms of such adaptations that manifest even as characteristic behaviours/subcultures [Lewis 1996 (1966)]. Others talk of these as complex recognition of capitalist processes and crisis of the status quo (Taussig 1980).

Yahiya's grandfather was once a manual labourer with an old Syrian Christian[18] landlady by the nickname *Vakeel Ammachi* (lit. trans. 'advocate granny' only approximates the power this lady wielded in the region). They were originally from Edapally and in those days those who held land in Edachira region were largely based at Edapally further west or Pallikkara. His grandfather had moved first to Edachira and later got a few cents of land to settle down, near what is known as *Edachira thodu*, a rivulet that flows from *Kadambrayaar* and eventually joins *Chitrapuzha* on course to the backwaters at Thevara. Downriver, he used to take time off watching huge country boats called *kalluvallams* that plied regularly from the narrower parts near to the place called *Pallikkara*, through the broader stretches of the placid waters of *Kadambra*, into *Chitrapuzha*. From there, these boats moved to the backwaters at *Thevara*, following the tidal turns. *Kalluvallams* were stone-laden vessels that regularly transported 'red stones' (*kallus*) to the then urbanized Mattancherry. Betel leaves were also transported likewise, starting from the Wednesday markets of Pallikkara to the Bazaars of *Mattancherry*. The trades-people brought back non-local commodities, like certain hill spices, that arrived at the bazaar. Yahiya's father was born here and he began rearing ducks. His children took flocks to the paddy fields that surrounded the rivulets. The land, for all practical purposes, was the commons. This was some years before the civil station; government quarters and other state bureaucracies were located in the nearby region (Kakkanad). The region soon began to host a motley population from across Kerala, employed either in the state bureaucracies or in the local entrepreneurial ventures like a film studio. There was a mixture of activities. Those like Yahiya's family pursued an agrarian mode of life. They took the duck eggs to the market at Ernakulam and got back to Kakkanad with wheat and duck feed. Paddy was abundant and in fact the region had its own varieties of crop that grew on the hill sides as well as the valleys.

During his childhood, a bazaar town was still alive in Mattancherry and the new town of Ernakulam was taking shape across the lake on the mainland. It later overshadowed the old colonial port town of Kochi and the bazaars of Mattancherry, as the prime commercial zone in Kerala. The

port, as well as retail business, defined Ernakulum's growth as commercial space. As he grew up, the boats became far and few between, but the rivulets were still animated with ducks, water birds, and fishes. It remained a major source of rich food.

By 2000, the land was bound on three sides by high rises, one of them standing on ground zero of a hillock. On the other side of the plot was the zone designated for the second phase of the Smart City project. Once the political issues over free holding rights to a rivulet (until then commons) as well as the status of single SEZ (that will encompass the rivulet) got settled in favour of the Dubai-based corporate investor,[19] the construction activities started in full swing. Yahiya and I were questioned at the gate by security officers and were told that we are not allowed to take pictures. They informed us that this region was under surveillance.

Edachira region was physically turning flat and homogeneous. Muddy waters and rivulets crossing prime zones of real estate and SEZs had dried up. Exceptions were the rule here as signified in the blatant violation of wetland acts (*The Kerala Conservation of Paddy and Wetlands Act* 2008) through single-window clearances and selective de-bureaucratization. The locals said that in some years the place would transmute into a 'self-sufficient city'. Moideen, who had a leg amputated, ran a provision shop and a hotel nearby for the burgeoning migrant labourers from north Indian states. Labourers regularly had lunch here. Moideen had now more liquid cash, but was ever more dependent on construction labour. His chances of owning new land because of inflated prices had grown slim. Locals like him had been alienated and effectively eviscerated from their localities. They also could never meet the standards of living, touted by the elite gated communities. They were caught betwixt and between (Turner 1967).

People had been trapped between promises and pressures. Yahiya's house was not yet plastered. The work got halted a couple of years back when he ran out of cash. The gold he possessed had already been encashed to meet the burgeoning costs of living. Otherwise, the gold would have easily funded the construction. Now, he was indebted and could never hope to finish the work. Part of the house had been rented out to employees in the state-run IT Park. Yahiya had three young children and he had to sell off his rickshaw to meet the demands at the private school as well as to service his debt. His age came in the way of possible government recruitment, neither could he get housing allowance as the land he held exceeded the limits. The local body on the other hand was flush with money from building tax from innumerable projects around. This made it

one of the richest LSGIs in the state. But at the same time, welfare provisions had been cut down and many like my informant had been relegated to an informalized habitus that had usurped the ground beneath their feet.

The present state of ecology is metaphorical of the condition of people like Yahiya. Water no more flows. The rivulets that bore the trace of inland commerce and agrarian order for hundreds of years have been blocked off, or tapped away. Priority zones have been 'beautified' for tourism. Environment has become the façade for a pre-packed de-materialized utopia that has increasingly become banal and restrictive (Kuldova 2014). Edachira has become a habitat from where inhabitants have been severed off. The available vocations (as brokers/drivers/suppliers/interior designers/house maids) are tethered to free-floating promises. Those once rooted in the region have metamorphosed into trespassers and hence subject to controls.

Others like the security guards and thousands of labourers from different parts of the country have also been expelled from their respective regions consequent to diverse causes: mining zones in Orissa, SEZs in Gujarat, *world classing* of cities like Delhi and Mumbai, land grabbing in West Bengal, famished regions in Marathwada, and indebtedness in regions of Andhra, Telengana, and Kerala (Desai 2012, Reddy and Reddy 2007, Das 2004, Dupont 2011). The labourers live in labour camps and bring unprecedented pressures on to the welfarist fossil and hollowed out ecosystems. In a decade, Edachira has become a hybrid terrain of actors—from northern Indian labourers to corporate investors based in Dubai along with the local lives, all caught betwixt and between. This is a dramatic transformation within a very short time span. But it is ever more doubtful whether the multitude would wield any form of authorship on any imagined future. The boundaries in the making and channels of capital are neither illegible nor amorphous. There are real fences that fractalize geographies and materialize as configurations of power. The facilitative spaces of exceptions root through contemporary cities, despite a region and its inhabitants, and draw much out of both.

In Edachira, agriculture and industry are no more viable options. There are no alternatives (TINA!) to information technology, tourism, construction, real estate, land transactions, gold business, water theme parks, super specialty hospitals, health care, self-financing educational institutions, goat farming, mangium, hardwood, or lotteries. The cornucopia of these activities produces urban effects. Corporatization of state involves break with ideas of collectivity often embodied in postcolonial contractual orders.

With *vikasanam*, the Hobbesian order persists and turns dystopian; sovereign power is transformed into pure control and surveillance, in the name of security.

The increasingly marginalized people in Edachira explain their everyday predicament through localized narratives, through portrayals of local geographies as remembered pasts, or expected futures and disengagements with the present, narratives characteristic of engagements in the spatio-temporality of the 'now'. They negotiate perceived changes with rationales generated in imaginary futures.

Vikasanam: The Contemporary Expansive Logic

The developmental model post 1990s in Kerala follows the discourse of '*vikasanam*'. The switch to this term marks a change in connotation from the earlier idea of '*purogathy*' (progress), in vogue till the end of the 1980s. This is not to suggest that transformations during progress did not already have expansive (or exclusionary) logic. On the contrary, there have been expansions and displacements of diverse kinds (Roy 1999). Without a comprehensive National Rehabilitation Policy, displacements did even have dire consequences especially with respect to major projects (like hydroelectric projects). In addition, the colonial Land Acquisition Act of 1894 (amended in 1984 and 2013; a bill introduced in 2015 proposed further exemptions to private entities), according to which the state is empowered to exclude and exempt to provide (anything but a cash compensation), often got invoked. Complex relationships to land were broken on the anvils of development.

Purogathy in postcolonial Kerala, with its background of land reforms (from a feudal order), communist movements and social reforms, did incorporate socially inclusive imaginations (unlike vikasanam). Accordingly, *purogathy* was also informed by the formation of food committees, committees in the fields of education and health, as well as fair price committees within the rigidities of the *Five Year Plans* and centralized budgets. The deliberative rights-based expectations persisted. Hence, there had been no large social disruptions till the 1990s, except in the context of progressive land reforms and educational reforms. These reforms had been vehemently opposed by the classes and communities that held power over land and institutions. They even pressured the central government to dismiss an elected leftist state government (1959) through the imposition of president's rule, invoking an exceptional clause within the constitution.

With financial liberalization (1990s), the state loosened its remaining checks and balances on private interests and corporate capital. Transnationally constituted Indian billionaires came back to wield ever more power over the state (e.g. *Vedanta* through massive futuristic coal investments, *Reliance* in the petroleum industry and price regulations with ripple effect on the quality of life) under the benevolent and supportive patronage of the state apparatus (ministry, military, paramilitary, *cobras*, etc.).[20] The neo-liberalizing Indian state had already been held captive (Monbiot 2000) predominantly by the corporate structures that empowered themselves during the latter half of 1900s (Tatas, Birlas, and Reliance). But post 1990s, the empowered elite broke out of any earlier contracts inbuilt in *purogathy*.

Places got rated on scales set by credit agencies with no bearings on any historical entrenchments or well-being. Offices of agencies such as CARE (Credit Analysis and Research), Fitch, ICRA (Investment Information and Credit Rating Agency), CRISIL (Credit Rating and Information Services of India Limited), and so on started working in urban local bodies (Vaidya and Vaidya 2008). The Ahmedabad Municipal Council of the Gujarat state became the best municipal council in India despite the communal violence and state-mediated ethnic cleansing that marred the region (Lobo and Kumar 2009, Bavadam 2011).[21] Places became autonomous, but precisely through severance from welfare commitments and contracts. Decentralized polities became obligatorily dependent on the barometers of global rating agencies. What is starkly visible, violent and overt in Gujarat gets more nuanced, less pronounced or even covert, in Kerala. The desired smartness can only arrive through re-networking of spaces and places to forces that are alien to the everyday life of people. This is what constitutes the contemporary rhetoric of *vikasanam*. Countering its tenets becomes a new form of 'blasphemy'! Any alternative plan, like that which allows LSGIs more role or that which proposes infrastructural improvements over more built structures, inevitably gets countered with the rhetoric of '*vikasana virodham*' (hostility to development).

Vikasanam happens only with transition in the mode of production. In Kerala, the capital that percolates the contemporary service or tertiary sector (hospitality, tourism, real estate, or education) comes as expatriate investments. In the newly constituted urban spaces, the predominant concern is to reduce risk for such private capital than any risk to people. ULBs come under the control and protocols of unbound market mechanisms. Welfare itself starts to connote investment. But if it comes with a cost, there should be mechanisms for full-cost recovery. Service in effect is a commodity on sale and a sink for investment; in other words, a mode of production that keeps capital in constant circulation.

Promises of autonomy, flexibility, choice and security, oft invoked in public rhetoric and media discourse, are imagined as autopoietic and do not tolerate any 'distraction'. This ideology of *vikasanam* goes hand in glove with real effects on the environment and generates the rationale for more reform (read neo-liberal corporate). A spectrum of, spatial discourses as that of Thomas Friedman (his *flat earth* logic), models like Bangalore, global-patriarchal personifications like Narendra Modi (used to be Manmohan Singh (prime minister till 2014)) and urgencies and aspirations of global incorporation offer virtual pegs. It is imperative for any serious thought to move beyond the bare virtual in order to understand real effects.

Often, the capital-intensive projects that get projected as the sine qua non of *vikasanam* have a story to tell. The *Vallarpadom* container transshipment terminal project was one such case from the region. In 2006, the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry issued notifications approving the setting up of a port-based Special Economic Zone (SEZ) here. Again, Dubai-based investments enjoyed all installation supports despite the negative feasibility reports. A major ecological devastation of the Ramsar treaty[22] protected fragile coastal zone and mangrove-dependent communities followed. The state's argument for allowing the project was that Vallarpadom is close to international shipping channels and would initiate large-scale development and employment generation. A gamut of mass transformations in the shape of roads built, railways laid, as well as dredging of sea floors (too shallow for ships that 'might' call in) followed. Subsequently, the harbour was handed over to *Dubai Port World*. Forced eviction, of the kind little heard of in Kerala, took place at Moolampilly. Those evicted from Moolampilly were eventually pushed to debt, no compensation came on time, and often the land provided was far away from anything familiar.

The transshipment terminal came in as a neo-liberal materiality, at the cost of and drawing from the commons/public infrastructure in Kochi. What is significant about neo-liberal materiality is that the cost incurred for any such activity has to be borne by the public. The land that was given on lease, in addition to the equipment that was used, was pledged as security, by the Dubai Port World's local subsidiary, *India Gateway Terminal Private Limited*.[23] The public rhetoric around the project boasted of the great number of ships that would call in at the terminal and of employment generation. But despite the huge public capital investment (25 billion rupees by the central government and 20 billion rupees by the state

government), the massive arrival of ships remained in the virtual realm. The virtual, though, did have real effects, as land acquired or as the gross ecological and livelihood transformations across the region.[24] The urban models from Edachira or Vallarpadom are replicated across Kerala. In a relatively egalitarian state, any place could get smart but of course with public risks and private profits.

All these models of development are embodiments of the strategic action plans of global organs like the World Bank or WTO. They facilitate smooth transition of states to corporations (Kapferer 2004). Urbanization projects across the world have gone further from the metropolises into moving the crisis around on a global scale (Harvey 2003). In Kerala, the heterotopias of new urban projects replete with mega constructions, migrations, new labour and dispossessions also articulate new class formations (Jeffrey 1992; Osella and Osella 2000; Lukose 2009). The materiality of urban processes is best exemplified in regional contexts and personalized narratives of inclusive exclusions.

In the contemporary 'Smart City guidelines', envisaged by the central government (2015) as well as comprehensive and total urban plans like AMRUT, a plan of 'governance' emerges. The new technology of governance imposes itself through the channels of financing. This is a major component of State Annual Action Plans. The central share comes with comprehensive conditionalities. The Cabinet has approved the Smart Cities Mission and AMRUT for 500 cities. This is with outlays of Rs. 480 billion (~7.1 billion $) and Rs. 500 billion (~7.4 billion $), respectively. Unprecedented responsibilities will be invested on the state governments and in effect there will be delegation of control as well as of responsibilities.

The urban spaces ironically employ the language of decentralization in order to delegate responsibilities. They ask for more power through provisions like conditionalities (for funding, in order to be selected as Smart Cities, of freehold rights, of single windows, of fast-track clearances, or exceptions). The logic is that they generate growth, employment and GDP, the obverse being stagnation. But the contemporary urban zones of *vikasanam*, in their expansive logic, as zones of information technology, economic zones or Smart Cities generate wealth by blatant accumulation by dispossessions (Harvey 2005). Thus, water and earth as well as *brokers* and *agents* become necessary resources. They usurp all spaces and expel the waste generated within, and demand more, out of the future.

Any non-availability or delays are portrayed as hindrances. Provisions like Environment Impact Assessments (EIAs) and social impact assessments

also become hindrances (the amendments to the 2013 land act proposed in 2015). The present plan ensures that land is available and no work initiated unless all clearances are obtained. An individual state such as Kerala has to ensure the security of projects against disasters and resistances (over perceived exclusions or expulsions). 'Good governance' becomes comprehensive in Smart Cities, SEZs and urban plans. From the stage of State Level Improvement Plans (SLIPs), there are mechanisms of convergence with other schemes.[25] This is unprecedented centralization of capital-intensive urban development plans, continuously employing the language of decentralization and good governance (thus less government of the welfare type). The elected government becomes a total-management order focused on consumption and surplus generation. This is an arrangement that channels life into dominant processes. A gamut of regulations and protocols and complex standardization procedures network places into global conduits of capital (Centre for Cities 2014). As designs of restructured planning processes (Baud and De Wit 2009; Baviskar and Ray 2011),[26] 'Smart Cities' also set in place a relational network of actors. Th-9 had already been in the making in Ernakulam post 2000. Presently, the coordination of enterprises, institutions (schools, hospitals, NGOs, housing arrangements), and local governments have become comprehensive. The current urban governmentality apparatus creates exceptionalities within special zones and transforms these into general rules. One cannot opt away from the expansive language of *vikasanam*.

Conclusion

The Smart City of Edachira literally pops up from wetlands usurping the hillocks around, and submerging the water tables. Many in the region find their vocations in brokerage, equipment supply or material transport. The idea of the city gets planted through subject positions. Apart from such informal vocations, any promise of secure labour 'absorption' remains elusive. Neither is there any corporate responsibility to do so. The burgeoning input costs of agriculture and shortage of absorbable farm labour have closed down the remaining paddy cultivation. People get accustomed to technologies of growth and development, through controlled options the corporatizing states throw open. They become active participants or passive spectators (Debord 1983). There are progressively lesser exceptions to rule. The state is getting entrenched in newer formats. As Kapferer says (2005:17) 'populations are made complicit in their own domination and engage themselves in making choices that they have little opportunity

to avoid'. The expansions accumulate on dispossessions through consent. It has to be remarked that it is not the regions such as Kochi (earlier Cochin) or Kozhikode (earlier Calicut), with historical urban continuum (Das Gupta and Pearson 1987/Krishna Ayyar 1938/Abu-Lughod 1989), but the peripheries that are drawn into the expansive logic of *vikasanam*. The postcolonial developmentalist paradigm gets structurally annihilated in the new global context. A complicated palimpsest of past, present and future, in the regional contexts of South Asia as well as a spatio-temporal predicament wherein expulsion can both accommodate and eject, gets scrolled out. The problematic of excess takes shape through conspicuous consumption, world class-ness, credit ratings and Smart Cities. Utopias of excess are efficient technologies that modulate and choreograph power. *Vikasanam* abnormalizes aberrant voices and pathologizes resistance.

Notes

1. The Smart City Mission will be operated as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme. The Central Government proposes to financially support the Mission (Rs. 48,000 crores over five years, that is, on an average Rs. 100 crores per city per year). An equal amount, on a matching basis, will have to be contributed by the State/ULB. Nearly rupees one lakh crores of Government/ULB funds will be available for development. The project cost of each Smart City proposal will vary based on models as well as the capacity to execute and repay. The Centre and State will be leveraged to attract funding from internal and external sources (elected governments compete to attract funds!). There is the Special Purpose Vehicles' revenue model coupled with forms of comfort provided to lenders and investors. The Smart Cities as they are put forward in the state urban plan will include special investment regions or special economic zones with modified regulations and tax structures. The point is to make the zone 'attractive'.
2. This refers to the amusement park run by Kochauseph Chittilappally. He was awarded for this 'eco-friendly entrepreneurial project. He was once a local. The site used to be a rubber plantation.
3. He was arrested in charges of fraud, child abuse and molestations of underage girls.
4. The Special Tahsildar (L.A) Letter to District Collector (4/7/2006): Circumvents procedures such as Environmental clearance and invokes special clauses.
5. Minutes of the Meeting of the Appellate Committee (22/10/2005)/The *Vaduthala Janakeeya Samithi* (1/7/2006)-Letter to Revenue Minister, State.

6. Under the provisions of the Act (2005), a citizen may request information from a 'public authority' which is required to reply expeditiously or within 30 days. The act also makes information accessible to concerted corporate interests. In Kerala, the stakeholders have made most use of the act.
7. Cochin Port Trust to Chief Secretary, Govt. of Kerala (14/8/2006): Indicates how the state is caught between structural constraints and welfarist expectations.
8. Minutes of the Meeting of Chairman, CoPT with District Collector and Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (20/6/2006)
9. Amendments to the Municipal Building Rules 1999 were introduced in 2010 with stricter norms for building.
10. In 2013 following pressure from building and real-estate lobbies, the Cabinet effected changes in the Kerala Building Rules amended by the previous Left government in 2009 and 2010.
11. These are small village hotels often serving coffee, tea, and a regular set of snacks.
12. Form No. 4 C, Notice A3- 1231/09.
13. Approximately 'one without name' and in this case refers to proxy names under which the land gets registered. After a certain stretch of land is vested under many such proxies, the anonymous investor can wait for a conducive clause or a scheme under which the 'properties' could be registered in his name.
14. Industrial and Commercial Policy 2007: Department of Industries and Commerce, Government of Kerala (GoK).
15. The Uttar Pradesh Provincial Armed Constabulary, in 2006 often violently dealt with those who refused to move. More such instances are mentioned in Land Grab and 'Development' Fraud in India by Analytical Monthly Review, September 2006, http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2006/amr210906.html
16. Outlay of 50,000 crore rupees/encompassing 500 cities.
17. JNNURM was the Ministry of Urban Development's previous modernization plan (2005–2012). The major components of the initiative were Preparation of City Development Plans (CDPs) by respective cities with a 20–25 years perspective, Preparation of sector-wise detailed project reports by identified cities listing projects along with their financial plans, a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) to be signed between the central government, state governments and ULBs containing the time-bound commitment on the part of states/ULBs to carry out reforms in order to access central funds under the Mission/For more on the links between Urban Reform packages and Global monetary institutions, see *The Economic Times* and *The Hindu* reports (2007–2009) (e.g. Story titled 'World Bank's $1b loan for JNNURM to come with strings'. *The Economic Times*. Dec 10. 2009).

18. Or *Nazranis*, as they are called trace their history in Kerala part, to the first century AD, through proselytizations of Thomas, the Apostle.
19. Request of M/s. Smart City (Kochi) Infrastructure Private Limited for addition of land in the sector-specific SEZ for IT/ITES at Kanayanoor Taluk, Ernakulam District, Kerala (*Minutes of the 49th meeting of the BoA for SEZ held on 28th November 2011*).
20. More on the issues: 'Kolla Sarkar Othaashayode' (in Malayalam), by D. Sreejith, (Dillipost.in)/'He was removed after pressure from Reliance, says Medha Patkar' by Mahim Pratap Singh, *The Hindu*, 30 October 2012/Are we the enemy you fear? By Tusha Mittal, *Tehelka*, Nov. 21 2012.
21. In 2011, Ahmadabad was rated India's best mega city to live in by leading market research firm IMRB. More on Ahmedabad: 'Cheers Ahmedabad! City is racing ahead'. *DNA India*. 18 October 2010' 'Ahmedabad best city to live in, Pune close second'. *The Times Of India*. 11 December 2011.
22. Intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources (http://www.ramsar.org/vembanad-kol-wetland).
23. *Rashtradeepika*.
24. *Keraleeyam*, Vol 7/8, 16, 2015 July/August.
25. Smart Cities Mission, Swachh Bharat Mission, National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY), Digital India, Skill development, Namami Gange (a plan for river Ganges), or Housing for All.
26. 'PM Modi to unveil Rs. 98,000 crore Smart City, AMRUT projects on June 25'; The Indian Express; (http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/pm-modi-to-unveil-rs-98000-crore-smart-city-amrut-projects-on-june-25).

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CHAPTER 6

Cities of Neoliberal Future: Urban Utopia in Indian Science Fiction Cinema

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Indian science fiction cinema of the new millennium is surfing on a fresh wave with an increase in the number of films, as suggested by recent scholarship (see Kaur 2013; Lakkad 2014). Although many of these films have failed in the box office, there have been several successful blockbusters with Bollywood stars cast in the main roles, such as *Koi… Mil Gaya* (dir. Rakesh Roshan, 2003), *Krrish* (dir. Rakesh Roshan, 1996), *Krrish 3* (dir. Rakesh Roshan, 2013), *Ra.One* (dir. Anubhav Sinha, 2014), *Yanthiran/Robot* (dir. S. Shankar, 2010, Tamil/Hindi), and *PK* (dir. Rajkumar Hirani, 2014). Science fiction movies are produced by several regional industries in India, with majority of them coming from Hindi and Tamil industries. Though technologically imitating western science fiction, Indian science fiction cinema is unique in its themes and in the portrayal of cultural anxieties, ambivalences, and desires specific to the Indian context (Alessio and Langer 2007). While there is a fresh academic interest in the genre, most of the recent studies are preoccupied with the conflict resolution between science and religion and/or modernity and tradition (see, e.g., Alessio and Langer 2010; Basu 2011; Nandi 2011). Moving away from this dominant

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trend, in this chapter, I examine a utopian time travel science fiction film, *Love Story 2050* (dir. Harry Baweja, 2008), in order to understand the cultural anxieties about India's neoliberal future captured in the cinematic imagination of the utopian city.

Love Story 2050 is the first utopian time travel film of the Bollywood, although there are a few films that employ the trope of time travel such as *Aditya 369* (dir. Singeetam Srinivasa Rao, 1991, Telugu, dubbed into Hindi under the title, *Mission 369*) and *Action Replayy* (dir. Vipul Shah, 2010, Hindi). However, these movies express the desire to retrieve the golden (Hindu) past (*Aditya 369*) or to alter the course of history by intervening in the past through time travel (*Action Replayy*). In both cases the time travel is to the past. In the former film, there is a brief visit to the distant future (2504 CE). The romantic couple in the film travels to the post-apocalyptic world that has turned out to be highly non-habitable due to a nuclear war. Their travel to the dystopic future was but due to a technical glitch developed in the time machine. In sharp contrast to these time travel narratives, *Love Story 2050* embarks upon and narrates the journey into the utopian future. The future portrayed in the film is the near future of Mumbai in the year 2050 CE. The futuristic city appears similar to the urban landscapes of some distant planets in the *Star Wars* series (dir. George Lucas, 1977–1983), with automated houses, flying vehicles, and skyscrapers. The air-bound taxi-cars in the film resemble the urban traffic depicted in *Blade Runner* (dir. Ridley Scott, 1982) (Lakkad 2014: 114). This futuristic urban space exists in tandem with the city of the present, which is *not* Mumbai, but Sydney—the time travel is from today's Sydney to the future city of Mumbai, undertaken by the romantic hero, the heroine's teenaged siblings, and the scientist-uncle who invented the time machine. The urban spaces and cultures of Sydney and Mumbai are central to and are actively shaping the cinematic narrative. The city spaces do more than merely provide a backdrop for the characters' actions; these spaces actively participate in the narrative and shape the destinies of the characters, as we will see in a while.

As many of the science fiction films, *Love Story 2050* also failed in the box office, in spite of famous Bollywood actress Priyanka Chopra being casted in the lead role. However, the film's failure does not eclipse its significance for the Indian science fiction studies and urban anthropology, because of its unique theme and the dense visual depiction of the futuristic city. Since the Indian science fiction cinema is yet to emerge as a well-established genre with dedicated viewership, these failures can be read as stepping stones in the coming of age of the genre, as Anustup Basu (2011) has pointed out.

For him 'it is perhaps a cultural-industrial investment in the *longue durée*, one that is not expected to furnish immediate returns, but is set up with a "cross over", pioneering spirit directed towards breaking new frontiers in the world market' (ibid., 558). What is pertinent for the analysis of this film is its speculative production of the future Indian city and the ambivalences in that very imagination, a point the chapter elaborates in greater detail. Scholars have noted that science fiction itself is a cinematic genre that expresses the desire of Indian cinema to become a global brand by drawing 'energies from an overall horizon of a new "shining India" in a fast globalizing world' (ibid., 558). 'India Shining' was a marketing slogan used in the political campaign of the incumbent National Democratic Alliance led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) during the general elections of 2004. The campaign backfired, and the coalition lost power to the United Progressive Alliance led by the Indian National Congress. *Love Story 2050* is a production that tried to surf on this trend in its (failed) aspiration to be a blockbuster with marketing strategies such as producing a video game based on the film's theme, while simultaneously speculating a neoliberal future of the nation through the utopian portrayal of the global city of Mumbai. The film was the product of that dream, and the cinematic text an experiment in narrativizing the very dream; the film's failure in the market thus in itself becomes highly metaphorical, hinting at the crisis in actualizing the dream. *Love Story 2050* will be discussed here in order to explore how city as a futuristic technoscientific space has been imagined, and in order to uncover the ideological undercurrents that shape our cultural negotiations of this imaginary within the national popular in post-liberalization India. How does the film imagine the future of the Indian city? What are the cultural anxieties and desires expressed in imagining cities of the future? How does the trope of time travel help the film to explore the future of the family and romantic heterosexual relationship? What is the purpose of the time travel undertaken by the protagonist in the film? What are the conflicts, crises, and ambivalences portrayed in their travel to the city of the future?

Cityscape in Bollywood Cinema

City is a long-lasting obsession for Hindi cinema. As Gyan Prakash (2010) points out, the urban dystopic imaginations in cinema worldwide in the twentieth century has been deeply linked to the modernist depiction of the city as the abode of modern good life, fostered by the power of science and technology. Nevertheless,

> [t]he awesome promise of technology and planned futures was also terrifying. One way in which modernism expressed this terror was through the image of urban dystopia. Its dark visions of mass society forged by capitalism and technology, however, did not necessarily mean a forthright rejection of the modern metropolis but a critique of the betrayal of its utopian promise. The dystopic form functioned as a critical discourse that embraced urban modernity rather than reject it. (ibid., 3)

Indian cinema has been part of the urban experience and it predominantly depicted the city, as Ranjini Mazumdar (2007) has pointed out. By the 1970s, in the wake of the beginning of the end of Nehruvian developmentalist promises, Bombay cinema began to foreground the urban life (ibid., xx). The urban dystopic imagination finds its expression in a wide range of films and is often played with reference to the rustic. The rural is often represented in Indian cinema as the locus of innocence, simplicity and placidity, while the city is the abode of villainy and evil.

Science fiction films of the new millennium also tap the conventions of Bollywood cinema. Two major tropes employed in contemporary science fiction cinema in India/Bollywood are the visitation of aliens and the Frankenstein's monster. Science fiction films which employ the good-aliens-contacting-the-earth trope usually unravel in the village and highlight the good qualities of the rural folk. Films which employ the trope foreground the rural against the urban. Three recent cases in point are *Koi… Mil Gaya*, *Joker* (dir. Shirish Kunder, 2012), and *PK*. In *Joker*, the protagonist, who is a scientist, comes back from the USA to the underdeveloped village where he had spent childhood.[1] The villagers are represented in the film as simpletons who have been completely cut off from the rest of the modern nation/world. However, eventually, this village called Paglapur, literally meaning 'the village of insane people', turns out to be the site of contact with aliens. *Koi… Mil Gaya* is also set in a village in the hills, and follows a similar story line with the difference that the protagonist is the 'village idiot' who receives special powers from aliens in appreciation of the special care he has extended to a lost alien. As in *Joker*, the child-like qualities of the protagonist/the villagers facilitate the contact with the powerful aliens in this film too. In *PK*, the alien lands in rural Rajasthan, but gets mugged by a villager who has illicit connections in the city. In search of the lost remote control of his space vessel, the alien travels to New Delhi to expose the city's absurdities. The alien himself appears in the film as an innocent villager who fails to cope up with the pretensions of urban life.

Contrastingly, cinematic narratives composed around the trope of Frankenstein's monster, like *Enthiran/The Robot* and *Ra.One*, unfold in the city space. The cityscape faces destruction from human-made, technoscientific monsters, which disrupts the mundane order of the city. The threat posed to the city by the monster is often juxtaposed with the threat to the nuclear family of the protagonist, who is often the scientist-creator of the monster. The city in these films (Chennai and Mumbai, respectively) faces catastrophic destruction, and narrative closure is attained by the killing of the monster-villain and the restoration of the heteronormative.

It is true that urban dystopia continues to be the predominant theme of contemporary science fiction cinema in India, for the crisis of modernity continues in the era of neoliberalism. The advent of globalization and the emergence of mega/global cities have transformed the connection between Bollywood and the city, and this has given rise to revitalization of old tropes and genres, as well as the emergence of 'Urban Fringe' films such as *Dombivli Fast* (dir. Nishikant Kamat, 2005), *Being Cyrus* (dir. Homi Adjania, 2006), and *No Smoking* (dir. Anurag Kashyap, 2007), which distance from using conventional tropes of popular melodrama, and targeting niche audiences at the margins of Bollywood (Mazumdar 2010, 153). Revitalization of the gangster genre to accommodate the threat to the city paused by terrorists and new, technologically equipped transnational networks of evil also is worth noting. The fear and anxiety regarding the disruption of urban everyday life due to these dissipated networks of terror is portrayed in movies like *Qayamat: City under Threat* (dir. Harry Baweja, 2003), *Kal Kissne Dekha* (dir. Vivek Sharma, 2009), *16 December* (Mani Shankar, 2002), and in a different sense, *A Wednesday* (dir. Neeraj Pandey, 2008) that belong to the vigilante genre.

Love Story 2050 seems to be indicating a departure from urban dystopia, finally transcending our collective inability to imagine utopian/future (see Jameson 1982). That is, the film suggests the arrival of urban technoscientific utopian imagination in Indian cinema. Although it is too early to frame this as indicating a trend in Bollywood/Indian science fiction cinema, *Love Story 2050* marks the cultural production of a new set of desires, fears, and anxieties about the urban experience in the neoliberal era. Interestingly, the cinematic narrative adopts time travel as the trope with a potential to portray the future city we desire in the new millennium. Time travel is not a new trope for Indian science fiction cinema as I have noted earlier, in spite of being a less frequently used one. In *Aditya 369*, the only science fiction film the 1990s have produced, the time machine takes

the protagonists back in time to the capital city of King Krishnadevaraya in Vijaynagar. On the contrary, their time travel into the distant future shows human life in underground chambers in a post-apocalyptic landscape. In *Action Replayy*, the young son of an unhappy and quarrelsome couple travels back in time into the Bombay of the 1970s and engineers the couple's interactions with an aim to transform their present relationship into a romantic one. The primal scene fantasy narrated in the film (the son goes back in time to witness his parents' intercourse and hence his own conception) is present in many of the popular Hollywood films in the genre, such as *The Terminator* (dir. James Cameron, 1984) (for a detailed analysis, see Penley 1990). Other than *Love Story 2050*, there are two recent films which employ the trope of time travel in radically new forms—in *Krrish*, a super computer that has the capacity to look into the future replaces the time machine, and in *Aa Dekhen Zara* (dir. Jehangir Surti, 2009), a camera clicks images of the future (Lakkad 2014, 114). It is noteworthy that these films abandon the *novum* (the central techno-scientific idea/artifact in science fiction, validated by cognitive logic; see Suvin 1977) of time machine, but continue to engage with the future that cannot be easily marked as utopian or dystopic. Such a new narrativization of the future indicates the fresh cinematic potential acquired by the time travel trope in neoliberal times.

City Spaces in a Temporal Continuum

It is interesting to note that *Love Story 2050* is set in near future, that is, 42 years from the year of release of the film (2008). The film employs the conventions of the mainstream Hindi family-melodrama. The everyday life of the romantic couple, Karan Malhotra (Herman Baweja) and Sana (Priyanka Chopra) is set in Sydney. Karan is a reckless, carefree son of a highly successful non-resident Indian businessman. Karan's mother is dead and his father is obsessed with his business meetings and spends no quality time with his son. Meeting Sana, a beautiful, down-to-earth, lower middle-class girl who is settled in Australia, transforms Karan's life as he falls in love with her. Sana eventually reciprocates his love, and the romantic relationship progresses fast. Sana returns to her hometown in Southern Australia (Strathalbyn) after completing her studies, and Karan follows her. Karan's caring and affectionate maternal uncle Dr. Yatinder Khanna aka uncle Ya (Boman Irani) also stays in Sana's hometown, and so Karan stays at his bungalow. Khanna is a world-renowned scientist who resigned from

NASA to devote his time to develop a time machine. For the last 19 years, he has been working on the machine. A happy friendship eventually develops between Uncle Ya and Sana as well.

Khanna's time machine's construction is unfinished, as he cannot make a breakthrough in formulating the scientific theory behind the idea of time travel. One day the romantic couple enters his laboratory and accidentally erases some part of the technical formula scribbled on the blackboard. In a haste to hide their wrongdoing from Khanna, Sana inserts the symbol of infinity in the formula. Later on, her innocent and ignorant intervention turns out to be a major breakthrough and he successfully completes the construction of the time machine.

Karan and Sana's romantic relationship continues with the blessings of Sana's family. But then Sana dies in a fatal accident, leaving Karan in great despair. This is when his uncle tells him that the time machine can be used to bring Sana back from her next birth in the future. Recollecting Sana's wish to travel to Mumbai in 2050, Karan along with Dr. Khanna and Sana's siblings (Rahul and Thea) travels to the Mumbai of 2050. The spectacular future city comes as a grand surprise for them; it is technologically designed with flying cars, automated houses, and high-rise buildings. An android named Q.T. (aka 'Cutie') whom they find in a repairing yard guides them to the city.

Since the time travel is set for 30 days, Karan has to find Sana as soon as possible. Eventually, he realizes that Sana lives in the city under the name Ziesha, as a highly popular rock star and youth icon. Ziesha, the reincarnation of Sana, is independent and single, living in her sea-facing apartment with an android doll that looks like a teddy bear. She is arrogant, manipulative, and highly professional. Karan finally manages to contact her and realizes that she indeed does not remember anything about her previous life with him. However, after meeting Karan, occasionally she is struck by flashes of memory about her previous birth. Eventually they fall in love.

Meanwhile, Dr. Hoshi, an evil and powerful scientist who had been trying to steal Dr. Khanna's time machine for the last 13 years, realizes that the time machine has arrived from 2008. Dr. Hoshi's search for Dr. Khanna becomes successful and since the latter is not ready to divulge the location of the time machine, Karan is also snared. Karan is already in trouble by this time because Ziesha's secretary convinces her that he is a trickster. In the narrative climax, Karan kills Dr. Hoshi. Meanwhile, Ziesha reads the diaries of Sana brought from 2008 by Karan and remembers everything about her former life and

decides to live with Karan. Karan and Ziesha along with Dr. Khanna, Rahul and Thea, and Q.T. escape to 2008 in the time machine. The story ends on a happy note when Karan formally proposes to Ziesha/Sana.

The film maintains a peculiar temporal continuum between today's Sydney and future Mumbai of 2050, which is marked by the absence of references to Mumbai city of the present. Both Karan and Sana's family members are first-generation emigrants to Australia. For Karan and Sana, as second-generation emigrants, the links with India are very thin. Seeing the time machine, Sana's desire is to travel into the future and in particular the future city of Mumbai of the year 2050. Her desire is not to *go back* to the present-day Mumbai. Sydney, the city where she lives today as an immigrant, is depicted in the film as distanced from present-day Indian cities with their sweltering weather, poverty, busy life, narrow streets, and thick population. Sydney is represented as a technoscientific urban space with its youth culture, less populated streets, well-designed and spaciously built environments, and white, beautiful bodies occupying the space. As a city, the present-day Mumbai has nothing to offer Sana, the middle-class NRI girl. She enjoys freedom and happiness in Sydney and believes in a utopian urban future that will offer a similar but much advanced lifestyle full of happiness, consumption, freedom, and autonomy. Such utopian imagination of urban technoscientific spaces is as old as the history of science fiction literature in India. In the first ever feminist science fiction short story titled *Sultana's Dream* (1905), Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, the author, depicts a futuristic city where women rule (see Ray 2002 for more details). What Sana aspires for, like Sultana in the short story, is a technoscientific urban utopia that gives more freedom, autonomy, and social security to women, unlike the present-day Indian cities.

Ziesha is as independent and assertive in the future city of Mumbai, as Sana was in Sydney. She is very much at the core of the urban youth culture as an icon, and an important part of its culture industry. The technoscientific built environment of the future city of Mumbai, the film portrays, exists in continuum with the first world cities of the present day like Sydney. The future Indian cities are neoliberal technoscientific utopian spaces, imagined through a radical ideological rupture from contemporary Mumbai, which cannot deliver the promises of the (neoliberal) future. While contemporary Mumbai is absent in the film for its un-utopian nature, the present-day Sydney is portrayed without anything that distracts us from its cleanliness, order, and utopian characteristics. Technoscience is at the core of this continuum—Dr. Khanna is the 'world's greatest scientist' as Karan states, and

he is considered as a great scientist of Einstein's stature in the future city (the film refers to Dr. Khanna's murder in the year 2037). He is recognized as the inventor of the time machine and androids, and his scientific contributions have become the foundation of the future city/world. A hologram of him addresses Karan and the team (including Dr. Khanna from 2008) in the city museum, explaining his great discoveries and inventions that made possible the utopian city.

The future of Mumbai is not a natural extension of the present-day Mumbai, but a radical departure from it. Cities in developed countries like Sydney are the forerunners of the futuristic cities. The futuristic urban landscape of Mumbai is imagined as devoid of the problems and crises of the present-day urban India. There is great order and cleanliness, and the working class has been expelled from the global city and has been replaced with androids and Artificial Intelligence (see Sassen 2014). Apartments are automated and housemaids are robots. The public places are shown as filled with androids and human beings engaged in their busy schedules. The human bodies in the city spaces are almost uniform, without much variation in physical appearance and ethnicities. It is largely a non-happening city with its mundane chores, and even the interventions of Dr. Hoshi do not affect the everyday urban life unlike in Gotham city of the *Batman* movies. The laboring bodies are erased, but the narrative does not refer back to the historical process that eliminated or hid the laboring bodies from the city of the future. This is in sharp contrast to the movies from the Weimar period in Germany like *Metropolis* (dir. Fritz Lang, 1927) where the lower, working-class city is neatly separated from the upper, elite city and the tension between the two defines the central conflict in the cinematic narrative. It is also in sharp distinction to the dissenting cyborgs/androids depicted in *Blade Runner*. Androids are happy to serve, peacefully coexisting with humans. What exists in the future city is pure labor devoid of the laboring human bodies.

In this sense, the Mumbai 2050 becomes a one-dimensional spread of a vast technoscientific, utopian space without any explicit history that refers back to the city in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. It is a new imagination of neoliberal urban existence, without any local cultural marks. This city is presented as a part of a universal neoliberal globality, and its genealogy can be traced back to present-day neoliberal global city spaces of the developed countries rather than to its own history. This peculiar connection between the present and the future is mediated through the Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) who have already immigrated to the global cities of the west.

Neoliberalism and Urban Utopias

The utopia called Mumbai 2050 overpowers the visitors from 2008 in the second half of the film with its neoliberal iconography and commercial saturation of the city space. This includes hologram advertisements that appear from nowhere in mid-air announcing honeymoon-on-the-moon packages, a 3-D advertisement of CEAT tyres that scares our visitors like the early cinema screenings in the nineteenth century, and display screens for video advertisement on the skyscrapers. It is a video-advertisement hoarding about a live performance by Ziesha that helps Karan in his search for Sana. The shopping malls of the city have interactive, AI-enabled shopping systems. The city space is three-dimensional; there are air traffic-lanes at different levels as in *Blade Runner*, and also elite residential apartments facing the sea. The city is highly cosmopolitan in its appearance; there are westerners everywhere; so are Indians. All these cosmopolitan human bodies in the city are young and agile. However, it is difficult to see even a single dark-complexioned body—all the bodies occupying the cityscape are white, erasing out the differences between the western and Indian bodies, while expelling dark and brown (hence unproductive) bodies from the city spaces. The abled-bodies of the global city are fashionably dressed in western outfits, expressing a confident cultural and racial uniformity, which is western (and hence universal/global/cosmopolitan) in its essence.

Yet this visual presentation of Mumbai city as one of the metropolitan locations in the vastness of universal neoliberal time-space subliminally smuggles back the unique cultural aspects of Mumbai. In other words, the visual presentation of the futuristic urbanscape is ridden with an unresolved ideological tension between the old and the new. The futuristic city's desire to be a neoliberal, utopian technoscientific space sans its 'Indianness' but becomes impossible to be portrayed without bringing back the same essence in technoscientifically modified forms. The traces of the old Mumbai are technically upgraded and appropriated into its futuristic imagination. When Karan and the team reach the house where the android Q.T. used to work, the Artificial Intelligence (AI) system of the house interacts with them in the form of the hologram of a housemaid from Mumbai. The hologram attracts the curiosity of the visitors from 2008; their interaction with the maid's image is as violent and hierarchical as the middle-class Indian city-dwellers' general interaction with their maids and laborers. This is a major reference available in the film about the expelled laboring bodies of the yester years' Mumbai, in its evolution

into a mega city that plays a nodal role in the global circulation of finance capital. Saskia Sassen (2014) argues that the expulsion of a wide range of people from the global city (such as the poor, refugees, minorities, workers, and slum dwellers) is a key characteristic of the neoliberal economy:

> We can characterize the relationship of advanced to traditional capitalism in our current period as one marked by extraction and destruction, not unlike the relationship of traditional capitalism to precapitalist economies. At its most extreme this can mean the immiseration and exclusion of growing numbers of people who cease being of value as workers and consumers. But today it can also mean that economic actors once crucial to the development of capitalism, such as petty bourgeoisies and traditional national bourgeoisies, cease being of value to the larger system. These trends are not anomalous, nor are they the result of a crisis; they are part of the current systemic deepening of capitalist relations. (ibid., 10)

From this point of view, the utopian city portrayed in *Love Story 2050* represents an emerging 'globalized configuration of capitalism' that transforms the cities in developing countries into nodes in the global urban network (Brenner and Kell 2006, 5). Such an integration of cities like Mumbai into a new global hierarchy generates new patterns of uneven spatial development as well as novel forms of social exclusion and localized conflicts (ibid.). The cinematic rendition of the futuristic city rehearses the cultural imagination of a neoliberal future.

Similarly, street culture of the contemporary city reenters the futuristic city space in a technically upgraded form. There is a snake charmer on the street with his robotic snake ('because there are no actual snakes existing'), reproducing a colonial stereotype which is still active in the west. In the *paan* shop, a foul-mouthed robot asks for tips from customers and delivers a wide variety of pan from various cultural locations (e.g., Banarasi pan) to the customers. Architectural landmarks of Mumbai like the Gateway of India and the colonial buildings are still visible, but immersed in and dwarfed by a vast cityscape of new buildings.

While Karan and the team enter the city, Dr. Khanna feels very happy and attempts to offer hugs to those who come across, but faces strong opposition. Karan intervenes by alerting Dr. Khanna that 'this is not Australia, it's Mumbai', hinting at the differences in the urban culture and civic sense between the two cities. This is a city that is almost a global neoliberal space, but yet to accomplish that transition through a complete erasure of its unique cultural marks. This is further endorsed by the presence of people who eke out a living by doing frugal jobs in the city, like

street vendors, snake charmers, pan shop owners, air-taxi drivers, and city cleaners. Their presence is but heavily suppressed in the cinematic narrative in its attempt to portray the technoscientific space, but despite that these people and their everyday practices still beset the sanitized urban space. The narrative tension between the neoliberal becoming of the city and its forgotten lower strata exists at a sub-textual level, as a part of the unconscious of the utopian city. Another hint at the flourishing of undesired cultural practices in the futuristic city is its pirate electronic culture (see also, Sundaram 2010). Since biometric chips implanted under the skin are mandatory in order to live under the city's biopolitical governmentality (Foucault 1980), Karan and his team face the threat of being arrested by police, as they lack the chips/citizenship. Since it has become impossible to stay in the city without an identity, they approach someone who implants fake bio-chips in their bodies, indicating the active presence of a pirate culture in the city, leaving clues to the proliferation of a paralegal mode of existence of population groups, whose visibility is suppressed in the cinematic portrayal of the futuristic metropolis.

This erasure of Mumbai's subaltern everydayness is also achieved through an assertion of a peculiar kind of femininity. Ziesha, the popular cultural icon, is the central figure embodying this futuristic femininity. The urban space foregrounds her as a self-assertive, sometimes arrogant, and independent young woman, who is highly successful in life as a public cultural icon. While the present Mumbai has its cultural icons of male film superstars, in 2050, their status is claimed by Ziesha, the female superstar. She occupies the center stage of the city during her performance, and she constantly blurs the boundaries between the real and the virtual. Her music expresses this hegemonic, lethal femininity; she sings; "Hey, you! lover boy!/Will you be my toy?/I play with toys/and then shatter them …/I can accept you/and then choose to leave you!" The expression of this techno-femininity is also endorsed by the greater visibility of the female and gay bodies filling the urban spaces of Mumbai 2050. The film also displays female air-taxi drivers and women scientists, as well as female androids (e.g. Q.T.). The arrogant and shrewd manager of Ziesha is another powerful representative of this femininity in the film. The film foregrounds these successful and domineering women and their exuberant femininity in order to indicate that the neoliberal city is devoid of social disparities and inequalities. The brightness of the femininity displayed in the film is an attempt to conceal the undesirable return of the expelled back to the utopian city.

While Ziesha represents the urban pop culture, Dr. Hoshi represents the dark, masculine side of the city. He is a scientist with superhuman

abilities (provided by technoscience), a man with a thick mask, reminding the spectator of Darth Vader in the *Star Wars* series. He heads the corporate technoscientific establishment of the city; even the city administration does not dare to offend him. Hoshi has a large team of scientists and engineers engaged in scientific experiments; he represents the technoscientific order of the city. Interestingly, the movie does not depict him as a negative figure that the city-dwellers fear. Rather, he is presented as a part of the urban system, unlike the similar figure of the evil scientist in movies like *Krrish 3*. Dr. Hoshi turns villainous only in his attempt to procure the time machine by killing Karan and Dr. Khanna. Otherwise, he is as indispensable for the city as Ziesha, the pop star. While Ziesha represents the culture industry of the neoliberal city, Dr. Hoshi represents the corporate technoscience; without both, the futuristic city cannot exist. The film gives enough clues to the viewer that the technoscience that Dr. Hoshi represents is different from that represented by Dr. Khanna, who is considered as a great scientist of the past in Mumbai 2050. It is Dr. Khanna's science in the yester years that becomes the foundation for the futuristic city, and is ingrained into the official narrative of the history of the global city, as the science museum sequence shows. At the same time, Dr. Hoshi represents a departure from Dr. Khanna's science; the latter gets killed in 2037 when he identifies his confidante assistant in the laboratory as Dr. Hoshi's henchman, of which the viewer is informed by Dr. Hoshi himself.

Ambivalences of the Neoliberal-Hindu Nation

While the city has been portrayed as part of the neoliberal technoscientific future of humankind, the narrative closure is attained by a return from the future to the present. Even before embarking on the journey to the future city, the duration to be spent there had been fixed to 30 days by Dr. Khanna, the reasons for the same remain unclear. Karan tries to negotiate the duration but Khanna informs him that the time machine would come back to the present on its own, with or without them, exactly after 30 days. They come back to the present (Sydney, 2008) with Ziesha, after Karan killing Dr. Hoshi. Ziesha lives thereafter as Sana, as the life partner of Karan. He could have stayed in Mumbai 2050 with Ziesha, because there is nothing holding him back in Sydney 2008. Ziesha too had ample reasons to stay in the future as a successful professional singer and a cultural icon of the utopian city. Yet she decides to leave the future to stay in the past with Karan as his wife.

In spite of the film's portrayal of the spectacular utopian city, the central conflict in the film is about its volatility; the denouement is accomplished by bringing Ziesha, the figure of futuristic femininity, back to the present, into the heteronormative nuclear family to live as Sana, whose femininity is more acceptable to the present. Therefore, the film is also about taming the dangerous techno-femininity of the future (Indian) woman and about defusing the challenges the nuclear family faces. Throughout the film, Karan longs for a family; he lives with the agony of the death of his mother and complains about the unavailability of a loving father, suggesting the restoration of the nuclear family as the central concern of the film. Mumbai city in 2050 is the spectacular embodiment of the neoliberal future of India; nonetheless, it becomes undesirable (and uninhabitable) because of the lack of its 'Indianness' (especially its Hindu patriarchal values). Interestingly, in *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (dir. Aditya Chopra, 1995), this is the very reason why Baldev Singh (Amarish Puri) longs to go back from London to his village in Punjab. In *Love Story 2050*, there is no such physical location that preserves the Indianness for the protagonists to return to. At the end of the film, Karan and Sana (Ziesha) settle down in Sydney as a married couple, where also there is no such Hindu Indian essence available. This lack is also strongly suggested in the text through the personal vacuum that Karan feels through the absence of his mother, and so, of a family. Sana's family is intact with parents and two siblings, but is yet to be integrated into the foreign city's culture. Sana's parents are from a middle-class Punjabi family, and her mother, due to her inability to master the English language, creates mirth. Dr. Khanna, Karan's scientist-uncle, seems to be never married, and leads a solitary life, engrossed in his scientific experiments. The non-Indian city of the present and the future Indian city are both places devoid of an Indian character, and hence generate a gap in cultural belongingness. Being in Sydney, Mumbai 2050 becomes the desirable location; being in the future city, Sydney of the present appears to be a better place. This persistent alteration between the present and the future and the unending deferment of the denouement of the crisis are unique aspects of the neoliberal, futuristic city life.

And this ambivalence at the heart of the neoliberal imagination of the city is directly linked to the reassertion of the legitimacy of a certain 'Hindu' mode of existence. 'Reincarnation' is a powerful concept that is employed in the narrative—Sana dies to be reborn in the future city of Mumbai, and this was her wish, which could otherwise be attained only by time travel, a technology that was not available at that point of time. The idea of

reincarnation also helps establish that Ziesha (the word 'sheesha' literally means 'mirror' or 'glass') is none other than Sana (meaning 'radiance' or 'brilliance'), or a mere reflection of the latter. Ziesha herself eventually recognizes this through memory flashes about her previous birth since meeting Karan. Once time travel invented, Karan travels to the future to reclaim her back to the present. Thus, time travel, a technoscientific concept, becomes a 'Hindu' idea; the present and the future are short-circuited through reincarnation/time travel, and hence the neoliberal future becomes a desirable trajectory of the Hindu present. Another reference is to the idea of destiny/providence, which Karan experiences in moments of crisis; a butterfly (which appears both in Sydney 2008 and in Mumbai 2050, implying its eternal, metaphysical presence) appears from nowhere and guides him through the right path. When he misses the train that Sana was traveling to her hometown, the butterfly gives him clues about how to find her by fluttering on the name of her hometown on the information display board in the railway station. The moment he realizes that it is nearly impossible to find out Sana's reincarnation in Mumbai 2050, the butterfly guides his eyes to the huge advertisement hording that displays Ziesha's image.

A third reference is the fact that the romantic couple, Sana and Karan, belongs to Hindu NRI families settled in Australia, a much-rehearsed idea in the Bollywood through films like *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*. *Love Story 2050* shares with these films the longing for India among the diaspora, and their strong desire to reshape India in the image of the west, but with the Hindu family values at its core. In these films, 'the deterritorialized Indian has been imagined as internal and integral to the Indian nation-state' (Desai 2004, 39). What the film does in addition is to show the precariousness of the very endeavor, and the fears and anxieties that populate that desire. It should also be noted that this is not a diasporic male desire to physically return to his own village, a theme strongly depicted in *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* and *Swades: We, the People* (see Desai 2004). From the future city of Mumbai, the protagonists of *Love Story 2050* return to Sydney, not Mumbai, as the present-day Mumbai is equally uninhabitable like its future avatar.

However, this is not just a search for an 'archaic modernity' (Prakash 1999) that blends the 'Hindu' past/present with the neoliberal technoscientific present/future, although Dr. Khanna practices astrology while being a world-renowned scientist. The film rather captures the irresolvable crisis in suturing the present and the future of post-liberalization India. There is fear and loathing in the engagement with the neoliberal

technoscientific future we desire to be a part of; simultaneously, we are not comfortable with the present too as it is incomplete and unstable in its discursive construction. The present is meaningful only as a moment in our long journey to the perfect utopian city, which is but unstable and uninhabitable due to its incapacity to incorporate the Hindu mode of life as its kernel. While archaic modernity was created out of the successful blending of the Hindu tradition and the modern present, in the post-liberalization phase, it appears as an unattainable goal, leading to an unending mimesis.

Conclusion

The post-liberalization political culture in India nurses the dream of a neoliberal utopian future, and the futuristic city is a strong metaphor at the core of this dream. As many of the chapters in this book demonstrate, neoliberal developmentalist discourse generates new architectures of the city, which aim to exhaust its social and cultural impurities. The creation of Special Economic Zones (SEZs), rescaling of major cities (see Das 2016), and 'smart cities' like Dholera in Gujarat (Datta 2015) indicate this fascination with futuristic urban spaces which can be techno-socially engineered. The image of the futuristic city is central to the designing of airports, industrial hubs, IT Parks, and shopping malls too. Accomplishing absolute biopolitical control of the life of citizens and thereby maintaining a desirable social order that would help the flourishing of a globalized, consumption-oriented urban life is deeply linked to this imagination. The desire to be in the technoscientific, futuristic city is also expressed through the Indian state's recent obsession with cleanliness and order (*Swachh Bharat Abhiyan* or Clean India Mission), biopolitical control of population (*Aadhaar*/Unique Identification Number), and a total derecognition of peasants and the laboring classes as central to developmental planning, and of the centrality of working-class politics and subaltern everyday life in the making of Indian urban life in the neoliberal decades.

Such an imagination of the futuristic city as a sanitized, technoscientific autopoetic system, however, is unachievable. This is a cultural dilemma deeply ingrained in the collective unconscious of the nation in the post-liberalization phase. Neither the present, nor the future, does become perfectly comfortable for the newly emerging Indian middle-class, caught up between their desire for and fear of the techno-future swiftly developing under the neoliberal paradigm. Surpassing the present (which is bleak and uninhabitable) through time travel is attempted by them in two distinct ways:

first, by migrating to western cities in search of a better life, and second, by aspiring to come back to the perfect urban spaces of the neoliberalized India in *the near future*. Coproduction of Hindu fundamentalism and neoliberal developmentalism in contemporary India epitomizes this paradox. The role of the NRI community is central to this imagination, as we have seen earlier.

The figure of Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India, itself is an embodiment of this paradox as a strong facilitator of both Hindutva and neoliberalism. During the election campaign in the general elections of 2014, Modi was projected for his achievement of the 'Gujarat model of development', which was founded on corporatization of agricultural land and natural resources by marginalizing the rural peasantry, as well as dalits and tribals. Gujarat also witnessed a politically designed genocide of the Muslim community in 2002, while his government was in power. BJP's election campaign projected Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister Candidate of the party and conspicuously demonstrated his penchant for the neoliberal developmentalist future, and simultaneously his endeavors to reclaim India's 'Hindu essence'. His election campaign successfully used the possibilities of the Internet and social media with the support of a team of young 'techies' (most of them were NRIs) who joined him to fulfill the neoliberalist-Hindutva dream about their homeland. Modi used innovative ideas like simultaneously addressing public gatherings at different places through holograms. During his ongoing tenure as the Prime Minister of India, the paradox of the imagination we have discussed in the chapter is becoming more and more explicit, leading to a shattering of his superhuman image as *the One* who has the powers to make India's time travel possible to the neoliberal, technoscientific future, while safeguarding its Indianness. The rise of Narendra Modi and his Hindu right-wing politics thus epitomizes the paradox of the neoliberal moment of the nation.

Every moment of the nation in the post-liberalization era is a manifestation of the ambivalences of this imagination of the perfect city. *Love Story* 2050 portrays this crisis in a subtle manner through the presentation of the utopian vision of the city, which is but a highly unstable one, as the narrative closure indicates. Neither the present, nor the future of India, does perfectly suit the desires of the neoliberal Indian citizen, and she/he is caught up between these temporalities. A temporary line of flight for her/him is to be diasporic in the western cities (which are closer to the perfect Indian city of the future) while longing for the utopian future. On the one hand, such a utopia is unattainable, and on the other hand, the future city itself is loathsome, due to a loss of the 'Hindu essence' of

the nation. The city of the future is simultaneously desirable and dreadful, and the paradox catapults the neoliberal citizen into an unending tunnel of ambivalences. And this is the paradox of our national life in the post-liberalization era.

Note

1. This theme appears also in *Swades: We, the People* (dir. Ashutosh Gowariker, 2004), where the NRI scientist revisits his ancestral village and reinvents himself by attending to the mundane problems that the villagers face, using his technological knowledge. However, the movie does not belong to the science fiction genre.

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PART II

Urban Megalomaniac Visions and Heritage Utopias

CHAPTER 7

Manifesting Sri Lankan Megalomania: The Rajapakses' Vision of Empire and of a Clean Colombo

Øivind Fuglerud

By 2020, the city of Colombo will have no more shanty dwellers

(Mahinda Chintana, 'Sri Lanka—the emerging wonder of Asia', 2010)

In order to capitalize on his military victory over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in May 2009, the Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapakse called for a presidential election in 2010, two years ahead of schedule. He was re-elected in a landslide victory, drawing support from the country's Sinhalese majority. One of his first decisions was to bring the Urban Development Authority (UDA) under the purview of the Ministry of Defense led by his brother Gotabaya Rajapakse. Soon after, in May 2010, the bulldozers started working. Accompanied by armed soldiers, the UDA started demolishing homes and businesses belonging to a small lower-middle-class community in Mews Street in central Colombo.

In the present chapter, I will locate the visions of globalization contained in the urban renewal of Colombo within a broader landscape of political authoritarianism, militarization, neoliberal economics, and international alliance-building in Sri Lanka after the war. I am particularly interested in

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exploring this landscape from a perspective of 'mobility'—geographical and social mobility. In their article 'Regimes of Mobility Across the Globe', Glick Schiller and Salazar (2012) offer a careful critique of the recent 'mobility-turn' within studies of migration and studies of globalization more generally. In staking out a direction for future research on mobility, they suggest that one of several areas in need of further exploration is the relationship between mobility and immobility. I wholeheartedly agree and find this to be important not only in studying the movement or not of people but also when looking at other 'scapes' (Appadurai 1996). While the Sri Lankan civil war has produced millions of migrants and refugees, this chapter is not about them but about the interaction between localized political ambitions, globalizing standards of middle-class living, and international capital.[1]

Relocating the Undesirables

The evictions from Mews Street were only the first step in transforming Colombo—at the time a run-down, dirty, and heavily fortified city by any measure—into what the Rajapakse brothers repeatedly described as a 'slum-free, world-class garden city', a 'preferred destination for international business and tourism'. While the details of the plan have never been made public, some estimates stipulate that as many as 135,000 Colombo families, around 500,000 people, were planned to be evicted by force (CPA 2014). As the president's brother Gotabaya encouraged in one of his speeches:

> All of us desire a better Colombo; a city that is clean, green, attractive and dynamic. Let us work together and work hard to achieve this. Together, we can transform Colombo into a world-class city, globally recognized as a thriving, dynamic and attractive regional hub that is the centerpiece of 21st Century Sri Lanka: the Miracle of Asia.[2]

Soon after Mews Street, evictions followed from neighboring Java Lane; consequently, also inhabitants of Narahenpita, Torrington, Kollupitiya, and Wanathamulla were forced from their homes. In early 2016, the cases of most of the evicted residents have still not been settled. The former residents of Mews Street have not received permanent replacement housing and court cases are ongoing. The evictees from Java Lane have not even been informed in writing about the possibilities of compensation (Perera 2015).

The cleaning up of big-city slums is nothing special for Sri Lanka. However, unlike many other capitals in South and South-East Asia, Colombo has a relatively low influx of people from the surrounding countryside and

has never had widespread slum areas. According to the 2001 census, 72.2 percent of the country's population lives in the rural sector, 21.5 percent in the urban, and 6.3 percent in the estate plantation sector (Department of Census and Statistics 2001). The spatial distribution of population thus has a clear rural bias. The largest slums in Colombo are in the inner city, where the oldest low-income housing is located. These are the old residential quarters built mostly in the 1930s by private landlords for laborers who were engaged in processing agricultural products for export. Houses vacated by middle-income residents and traders in the inner city areas during the Second World War became gradually occupied by the low-income population, and these later turned into slums. The partitioning of large old residences was done either by the owner himself or by tenants who had rented out the single units at low cost to people of low income who had migrated to the city searching for new jobs during a period when a thriving plantation industry required labor (Sevanatha 2003). A 2001 survey carried out by the Colombo Municipal Council (CMC) and Sevanatha Urban Resource Center[3] identified a total of 77,612 families living in low-income settlements in the city but found it difficult to categorize all the identified low-income settlements as being slums. According to the 2011 Census of Population and Housing of the Department of Census and Statistics, out of the 555,926 housing units in the Colombo District, only 7979 units fall under the category of 'hut/shanty'.[4] Nor have most of the people evicted been encroachers or illegal dwellers. Many of the demolished settlements had been fully serviced by municipal authorities with water and electricity for decades, and many inhabitants actually held deeds to their properties. As noted by Perera (2015), what most of the people evicted have in common is that they all occupy commercially valuable land in the heart of Colombo. When relocated they have been made to pay dearly for their new homes, most often located in high-rise buildings far away from their earlier homes and their working places. In many instances, they have had to sign contracts obliging them to pay more than one million rupees to the state over the coming 20 years, including 50,000 in one installment to obtain the keys (Perera 2015).

Although only few people would claim that Colombo is a beautiful city today, the urban landscape has changed since 2009. These changes have been appreciated by those not adversely affected. The evictions are part of the creation of a new visual regime (Ghertner 2011: 291), involving the removing of roadblocks and military bunkers, road improvements, development of new parks and residential areas, and upgrading of heritage spaces and colonial buildings. Apart from certain acute improvements

in infrastructure, like flood control measures, the emphasis has been on projects upgrading the urban image, seemingly meant to enhance the city's attractiveness to investors, foreign visitors, and the domestic upper middle class by offering 'world-class' metropolitan attributes and lifestyle (Economic and Political Weekly 2013). Among the new attractions and UDA's flagship projects, we find the upgraded colonial Dutch Hospital, and the old Race Course area, now beautifully refurbished, both offering a fusion of East and West, of shopping and dining—all the prices way beyond the reach of any local on a blue- or even an average white-collar salary. Within the same category falls the proposed redevelopment scheme in and around York Street, close to the harbor. Like the other schemes, this one too envisages the restoration of old facades and the laying of cobblestoned streets and pedestrian zones with shopping, dining, and entertainment to attract tourists disembarking from the cruise-liners which planners hope to attract in the future. The refurbished areas are not gated; instead, Colombo's 30 years of social control by way of military checkpoints and brute violence is giving way to aestheticized boundaries and new forms of disciplining. As noted by the defense secretary in the speech cited above: 'Keeping the city clean also involves a lot of civic discipline, and this is an area in which the citizens of Colombo need to improve. Whatever attempts made to improve the garbage collection system will not be enough if people randomly dump trash on the streets.'[5] With the relocation of undesirables to the periphery of the city, it has become common for police, sometimes in plain clothes, to conduct identity checks in parks and other public spaces. An 'Environmental Police' has been established to monitor cleanliness and the enforcement of anti-jaywalking rules—an idea that would have been difficult to explain to anyone living in Colombo a few years back. Thousands of fines have been issued, necessitating time- and money-consuming court appearances, the poor as always being most adversely affected (Economic and Political Weekly, ibid.).

The Rajapakses' Will to Power and Militarization of Society

At the time of writing, one year after he failed to be re-elected as a president for a third term in January 2015, 'everyone' in Sri Lanka seem to agree about Mahinda Rajapakse's megalomaniac personality and the authoritarianism of his rule. This personality, however, did not prevent him from being elected twice. When Rajapakse first came to power in 2005, the

civil war between the government troops and the LTTE had been going on for 25 years, and the cease-fire agreement, which since 2002 had in some measure stabilized the situation, was rapidly unraveling. The LTTE used the cessation of open warfare to systematically eliminate their Tamil opponents, and on the Sinhalese side there was a widespread feeling that the cease-fire agreement had been a strategic maneuver on the part of the LTTE and the international facilitator, Norway, to strengthen the government's armed opponents. One of Mahinda Rajapakse's election promises was to put an end to the Tamil insurgency. With determination and the help of his family, he turned the situation around. Under the leadership of his brother, the now infamous Gotabaya Rajapakse,[6] the armed forces were expanded and re-armed. From 2006 to 2008, additional recruitment resulted in an increase in the number of the military personnel by 70,000 new troops and 40,000 civil guards (Smith 2010). This development led to a political cool-off of relations with Western countries. Rajapakse's unwillingness to keep to the cease-fire agreement and the increasingly harsh counterinsurgency methods used by the country's armed forces brought disturbances in the country's relationship with the 'co-chairs' of the peace process, among them, the USA, the EU, and Japan. The USA ended its direct military assistance in 2007 on account of concerns over the deteriorating human rights situation. The EU, which was and is Sri Lanka's main export market, after continued pressure over several years, in 2010 temporarily withdrew the enhanced system of trade preferences known as GSP + from the country as a result of Sri Lanka's non-fulfillment of its human rights obligations. Defying the criticism, Rajapakse took an eastern turn. When the USA withdrew its military support, China increased its contribution to over one billion dollars in economic and military aid to Sri Lanka and gifted seven fighter jets free of charge to the Sri Lankan air force. China also facilitated the sale of arms by its ally Pakistan to Sri Lanka and the training of Sri Lankan pilots by the Pakistani air force.[7] China also provided diplomatic protection in the international arena and blocked all UN Security Council resolutions alleging human rights violations by the Government of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's foreign secretary at the time, Palitha Kohona, put this shift in foreign relations into plain words in an interview with the *New York Times* in 2008 when he said that Sri Lanka's traditional donors had 'receded into a very distant corner', to be replaced by countries in the East. He gave three reasons: The new donors are neighbors; they are rich; and they conduct themselves differently. 'Asians don't go around teaching each other how to behave', he said.[8]

Another brother of the president, Basil Rajapakse, was brought in as advisor to the president and was later appointed as minister of economic development. He thereby became the central figure in handling the large development programs and foreign investments. At the time of his joining, his brother was already publicly known as 'Mr. 10 percent' on account of his demanding a ten percent commission on every project while previously working in the Ministry of Mahaweli Development.[9] Indications are strong that he continued this established practice. According to Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, a Chinese company involved in construction work in Colombo deposited 150,000 US$ to a foundation headed by Basil Rajapakse's wife, part of which was subsequently used for the brothers' election campaign in 2015.[10] The minister of finance from 2015, Ravi Karunanayake, has on a number of occasions been clear on what was going on before he came into position. 'Chinese companies used the opportunity of a corrupt regime' he said in April 2015 to CNN; 'they built bridges where there were no rivers.'[11] His statement referred to the massive infrastructure development implemented under the Rajapakses with the help of Chinese loans. Commenting on one small part of this development, the Colombo-Katunayake Expressway between the international airport and Colombo City, which was found to be the most expensive highway ever built in terms of cost per kilometer with the government spending 1.8 billion Rupees per km on the 26-km expressway, the minister of foreign affairs, Mangala Samaraweera, more than hinted to the same. Comparing it to another Chinese project, a 50-km highway in Kenya that had only cost 972 million rupees per km, the minister told reporters: 'Clearly someone or other has earned Rs 1 billion per km on the Katunayake Expressway'.[12] After the presidential election in January 2015 when Mahinda Rajapakse was not re-elected, Basil Rajapakse was the first—but not the last—of the Rajapakse family to be arrested, accused for misappropriation of public funds.

Together, the three brothers Mahinda, Gotabaya, and Basil constituted a tight and coordinated leadership in suppressing the insurgency, topping the team with a fourth brother, Chamal, who in 2010 was made the speaker of parliament. The war ended in May 2009 in a bloodbath, the top echelon of the LTTE all killed on the beaches of Mullivaikal together with an estimated 40,000 civilians. Out of the carnage stepped Mahinda Rajapakse, donning the image of Dutugemunu, the Sinhalese mythological cultural hero who united the country by killing the Tamil king Elara in the second century BC. On gigantic posters and in government media,

the historical references to the rule of kings in Sri Lanka's golden age was explicit (see Fig. 7.1). Interestingly, budget allocations to the military did not decrease after the end of the war, but instead increased significantly. From 2011 to 2012, the increase was 7 percent and from 2012 to 2013, it was 26 percent.[13] In 2013, the allocation to the Ministry of Defense and Urban Development was nearly 90 billion rupees, under 5 percent of which was allocated to 'urban development', whereas over 95 percent

Fig. 7.1 Former president Mahinda Rajapakse. Photo: Øivind Fuglerud

to the combined army, air force, navy, police, and civil defense force (Skanthakumar 2013). In comparison, 159 billion rupees was allocated to health and education combined. This increase in budget allocations was accompanied by a militarization of the state administration and the economy, particularly in the northern and eastern regions until recently ravaged by war. Local military commanders in these regions are active in civilian administration ranging from resettlement and rehabilitation activities to the functioning of schools, hospitals, and places of worship, undermining the authority of other state officials. The taking over of urban development by the Ministry of Defense following the end of the war can be seen as an attempt to rationalize the size and cost of maintaining the armed forces, now redeployed in non-combatant roles. Wherever the State has been engaged in development projects, such as in construction and renovation and even in refurbishing and maintenance of buildings and facilities, it is military and not civilian labor that has been used. The wage-labor of military personnel is entirely financed by public funds, and work opportunities in masonry, carpentry, landscape design, and as caretakers and so on are all unavailable to civilians. The military are also directly involved in economic activities such as agricultural cultivation and sale of produce in the North and East. The military are visible in petty trade and the operation of food outlets along the main arterial roads in the northern province. Several commercial tourist ventures including hotels, passenger transport, and recreational activities have been initiated. Militarization has been a continuing process, deepening wherever it has taken root and expanding to new terrains. As de Mel (2007: 12) explains, militarization of society involves the military taking ascendancy over civilian institutions and being relied upon to police and regulate civilian movement, solve political problems, and uphold boundaries in the name of national security. Such reliance on the military causes a decline of democratic institutions and an undermining of the freedoms and rights of citizens on the one hand and an ascendancy of violence as part of routine social relations on the other.

Is It Neoliberalism?

Urban development in Colombo has traits that bring the term 'neoliberalism' to mind. The ongoing process is characterized both by what Goldman (2011) calls 'speculative urbanism' and by a privatization of urban and regional planning (Shatkin 2011), both characteristics manifesting neoliberalist rationality. A spectacular example of the former, 'the way in which

competing cities have leveraged their urban infrastructure—housing complexes, waterfronts, city centers—to attract the capital to improve city life' (ibid: 230), is the recent relocation of the large army headquarters away from the prime location opposite Galle Face Green, the open beach-front parade ground in central Colombo, in order to make room for a massive hotel and an apartment complex to be built by the Hong Kong-based Shangri-La Group. The latter evolution in planning processes, which is seen for example in the Colombo Port City Project to be discussed below, involves 'the ascendance of private-sector actors from an historically fragmented and indirect role in shaping urban form to a central role in the core functions urban planning' (Shatkin 2011: 78). In this reconfiguration of actors, the task of the state authorities becomes facilitating private sector development as a means of capitalizing on the economic opportunities presented by globalization (ibid).

Neoliberalist ideas and policies in themselves are at this point nothing new to Sri Lanka. After practicing a strictly controlled economic policy based on 'import-substitution', since the independence in 1948, a shift from statist to market-oriented policies begun in 1977, a year when the country under the right-wing United National Party also adopted a new constitution with executive presidential rule. Notably, this economic turnaround was not a shift enforced by the Bretton Woods institutions; rather, the first president, J.R. Jayawardene, and his party had long advocated deregulating the domestic economy, opening up for foreign direct investment and scaling back social welfare provisions (Skanthakumar 2013). The reforms that followed were sweeping and covered the whole field from devaluating the currency to promote export, lowering tax on imported goods in order to promote trade, removing controls on capital flows, allowing foreign banks to establish themselves, ending state monopolies, and establishing export processing zones to attract foreign investments.

The effects of these reforms were significant. From 1978 to 1984, the economic growth rate doubled to almost six percent compared with the 1970–1977 period, the largest growth being in the industrial sector. However, these numbers do not express an improvement in the general standard of living but a widening gap between the haves and have-nots. Income inequalities that were dramatically reduced in the decades following decolonization now grew, a trend that has since been continuous. State expenditure on social welfare, which in the 1970s comprised around 40 percent of total state expenditure (Tudawe 2001), was in the late 1980s reduced by half. Sri Lanka being a net food-importing country,

the fall in the value of the rupee hit the consumers badly, with rising prices on commodities like wheat flour, sugar, onions, milk powder, and fuel. For example, between 1977 and 1980, the price of bread increased by 241 percent and the cost of kerosene increased by 394 percent (Skanthakumar, ibid.). Universal subsidies on food were removed in 1980 and replaced by directed food-stamp programs. The calorie consumption of the poorest 30 percent of the population dropped precipitously even as the food intake of the richest grew exponentially (Sahn and Edirisinghe 1993: 45–46). In 2012, the richest 20 percent of households accounted for 54.1 percent of income share, whereas the poorest 20 percent had only 4.5 percent and the middle 60 percent had a lower combined income than the richest 20 percent (Central Bank of Sri Lanka 2012). As noted by Hettige: 'the well-to-do could indulge in types of consumption and acquire new status symbols which clearly set them apart from the rest of the population as never before, particularly in the urban areas' (Hettige 1995: 100).

Mahinda Rajapakse distanced himself in his political rhetoric from the most obvious neoliberalist slogans, for example, emphasizing his reluctance to borrow money from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank because of their unreasonable conditions, while stressing the ideal of self-sufficiency in agriculture. However, his economic manifesto from 2010, *Mahinda Chintana Idiri Dekna* ('Mahinda's vision for the future'), is explicitly privileging foreign investment, the private sector, free trade agreements, and the financial service industry and 'is framed by the conviction that high economic growth; an export-oriented economy; large physical infrastructure investments; and increased urbanization are virtuous ends of development policy' (Skanthakumar 2013: 11). This difference between his posturing and actual program meant that the country's economic policy—and the explicit question of too much or too little neoliberalism—has been continually debated during the Rajapakse era. A relevant posting in this debate comes from a local prominent commentator, Dr. Kumar David, who advised fellow debaters to be concrete rather than sticking labels, as the Rajapakse model 'is a model without a name, an ad hoc economic order, cut, patched here and there, and tailored to suit the venality, corruption and power hunger of the leaders'. According to him the Rajapakse economic model 'is so deeply interwoven into a nexus of corruption, abuse of power, and political impunity for crooks and cronies, that it is not sustainable in the long-term without resorting to dictatorship'.[14]

Worlding Practices—A Bag of Mixed Intentions?

The perspectives on urban development—and its wider economic surroundings—adopted here reflect in broad terms Ong's understanding of 'neoliberalism as exception' (Ong 2006) and the perspective outlined by Roy and Ong (2011) on the 'worlding city' as a milieu of intervention, of ambitious visions, and of speculative experiments. More than an economic doctrine pure and simple, *neoliberalism as exception* should be seen as a technology of government. It comprises both the introduction of market-driven calculations in the management of delimited populations and the administration of delimited spaces within surroundings that are in general not characterized by such calculations and *exception to neoliberalism*, the exclusion of particular groups and spaces from neoliberal calculations. Notably, exceptions to neoliberalism can either be ways of protecting social safety nets, of securing privileges to a selected few, or of removing rights and political protection attainable through the market from the less worthy. In the present context, I am particularly interested in two dimensions of neoliberalism as exception pointed out by Ong (2006: 6–8).

First, neoliberalism as exception questions the understanding of the relationship between government and citizenship as a strictly juridical relationship. As a form of governmentality seeking to optimize the human resources available, neoliberalism produces conditions that change citizenship practices. The infiltration of politics by market logic unsettles the notion of citizenship as a legal status rooted in the territoriality of a nation-state. The components that we tend to think of as constituting citizenship—rights, entitlements, protection, a nation, and a homeland—become disarticulated and rearticulated with market forces. On the one hand, mobile individuals possessing human capital or valued expertise may be able to claim citizenship-like rights in different locations. On the other hand, citizens who are judged not to have such potential or competences may become devalued and vulnerable to exclusionary practices.

Second, neoliberalism as exception challenges the study of state sovereignty as a political singularity. Instead of steamrolling across the nation, imposing uniform conditions on everybody in the way theoreticians of the nation-state sometimes imagine, sovereignty is often manifested in multiple and often contradictory policies that produce diverse and contingent outcomes. In particular, the neoliberal exception allows for a flexibility that fragments the nation-state, governing different populations according to different rationalities, prying open the seam between sovereignty and citizenship. As noted by Ong, in the Asian context where states tend

to be strong and authoritarian, the possibility of exception has permitted states to carve up their own territory so they can compete better in global markets. This 'zoning-technology' of government is quite explicit in post-war Sri Lanka—while Colombo is being face-lifted, the destitute population living in the former LTTE-controlled area of Vanni, seven years after the war, is still neglected by all authorities but the military. One may suspect that they are 'warehoused' there as the future sweatshop labor for the new Special Economic Zones under construction.

It is within this 'governmentality of zoning' that we should locate the *worlding* practice of urban renewal in Colombo. Low-grade populations are made disposable in order to attract high-grade investment. One of the sharpest critics of the Rajapakses, Tisaranee Gunasekara (2010), suggested that the evictions from central Colombo were made all the more easy by the fact that the poor people inhabiting these valuable areas are mainly Tamils and Muslims not voting for Rajapakse's party. This suggestion seems reasonable. She saw the evictions under Rajapakse as a double-win operation for the former president: 'In the Rajapaksa worldview, Colombo's poor are alien socially, sociologically (caste) and ethno-religiously and undesirable politico-electorally. And their mass eviction can bring enormous [economic] benefits to the Ruling Family'.

Worlding practices are understood as practices directed at acquiring recognition by and projecting attractiveness to international investment capital, mobile white-collar and cultural industries, and tourism; 'projects that attempt to establish or break established horizons of urban standards in and beyond a particular city' (Ong 2011a: 4). However, the intention of such practices should not be construed as purely economic. Worlding practices are practices that creatively imagine and shape alternative visions—'worlds'—to those existing at a given moment. As the Colombo Port City Project's official website states—to name one concrete example of such worlding practices—its vision is:

> To develop Colombo Port City as the symbol of emerging Sri Lanka with limitless opportunities and a promise to offer unmatched potential for business, leisure & tourism and high quality of living, not only for the local inhabitants but also for the countless numbers of the global human family from across the shores.[15]

As pointed out by Gunasekara (ibid.), the Rajapakse regime used the prejudices latent in Colombo's middle and upper classes to manufacture consent for the evictions from central Colombo, just as they used the

prejudices latent in the Sinhala South to manufacture consent for incarcerating the Tamil population of the former war zone in 'welfare-camps' after the end of the war. Urban renewal of the kind going on in Colombo 'becomes part of an anticipation of a future that is asserted as a guarantee' (Ong 2011b: 209); it promises gains and raises hopes for the future among the groups from which the regime can expect support. It provides expectations of being part of a wider world.

What is significant with Ong's perspective (2011a) is that it rejects single-logic explanations of urban change. As pointed out by Ong, the academic discipline of urban geography has been dominated by two analytical frameworks, one Marxist-inspired and the other postcolonial. While the former regards a diffuse and abstract capitalism as the engine of globalization, a process overtaking and homogenizing urban space throughout the world, the latter sees the condition of postcoloniality as provoking a similar set of responses in different non-Western localities: the cooptation of elites and resistance by the oppressed and marginalized. Common to the two is that they embrace one-factor causalities; they tend to regard different sites as instantiations of either capitalism or colonialism. As an alternative to this, Ong posits the need to liberate the city as a conceptual container of capitalism and subaltern agency in order to explain 'how an urban situation can be at once heterogeneously particular and yet irreducibly global' (2011a: 9). While the power of elites and investment capital should not be denied, urban environments are formed through 'specific combinations of the past and the future, the post-colonial and the metropolitan, the global and the situated' (ibid: 10). Sri Lanka, I argue, is a good illustration of this situatedness and of the need for geo-historical specificity. While the colonial legacy should in no way be denied, in the period under discussion here, it manifested itself politically mainly in the form of a desire on the part of the political elite to demonstrate independence from Western powers preoccupied with liberal democracy and human rights. What seemingly triggered the ongoing urban development was an opportunity-structure that was shaped, among other factors, by the Rajapakse regime's power-hunger, a broad electoral support for this regime grounded in a specific historical situation and the availability of Chinese capital.

The Utopia of Empire and Its Financiers

In the 2010 presidential election, Mahinda Rajapakse secured 57 percent of the votes, drawing support from all Sinhala districts. He celebrated his victory by presenting the 18th Amendment Bill to the Parliament,

which was passed in October the same year with 161 members of parliament voting for and 17 against the Bill. The most radical of the changes made to the Sri Lankan Constitution through this vote was the removal of the limitation on how many times—until this point, two—the president can be elected. Among other clauses, it also brought formerly independent commissions under the authority of the president, giving him the power to appoint the chairman and members of the Election Commission, Public Service Commission, National Police Commission, Human Rights Commission, Permanent Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery and Corruption, Finance Commission, Delimitation Commission, chief justice and judges of the Supreme Court, the president and judges of the Court of Appeal, members of the Judicial Service Commission, attorney general, auditor general, ombudsman, and secretary general of Parliament. In short, the amendment made the president omnipotent without any mechanism of checks and balances, giving the president full control over the executive, legislature, and judiciary. As commented by the Indian Institute of Defense Studies and Analysis at the time, Sri Lanka seemed to be following a path 'dogged by democratic deficit, corruption, nepotism and low-intensity authoritarianism'.[16]

Among the physical manifestations of the Rajapakses' utopia of a lasting empire are the recently built Mattala airport, the new Hambantota harbor, and a 35,000-seated cricket stadium, all in the Rajapakses' home area, all carrying the former president's name, all funded by Chinese loans, and all totally out of scale compared to their human surroundings. Hambantota is a small town of 23,000 people and about as far away from the economic and industrial center as you can come in Sri Lanka. About 96 percent of the district's population is considered rural and 32 percent is living below the poverty line. No one without personal interest and a conviction of being in a position to personally enforce very long-term development would consider the investments sound. 5000 acres of forest land, home to 400 wild elephants, was bulldozed to build the Mattala airstrip. Less than three months after Mahinda Rajapakse lost the presidential election, the national carrier, Sri Lankan Airways, terminated its services to Hambantota, leaving Flydubai, a low-cost carrier from the United Arab Emirates, as the sole operator.[17] The Hambantota harbor project was initiated in 2007 at a cost of 1160 million US$ for the first two phases of construction, the main lender being the China's Exim Bank. Labeling the port a 'white elephant', the newspaper Sunday Leader recently reported an additional cost of 148 million US$, out of which 45

million is budgeted for removing a giant boulder at seven meters depth, somehow overlooked during the planning survey.[18]

Rather than following an economic logic pure and simple, the Chinese-funded infrastructure developments in Sri Lanka represent a confluence of the Rajapakses' political ambition with strategic Chinese interests. One relevant context for the discussion of these interests is what has been termed the 'Chinese string of pearls' theory. In response to Chinese investments in a number of ports along the Indian Ocean littoral, American researchers in the early 2000s argued that China might be planning the development of overseas naval bases in South Asia, in order to support extended naval deployments, each base a 'pearl' on its string (e.g. Pehrson 2006). One important motivation behind this strategy would be to protect the country's maritime trade routes, in particular its seaborne energy imports. In 2013, China surpassed the USA as the world's largest net importer of oil, out of which more than 80 percent passes through the Indian Ocean and onward to the Malacca Strait on its way to the mainland. India being the leading power in the Indian Ocean, with which China has a strained relationship for a number of reasons, China has sought to counterbalance this dominance by developing close relationships with Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka.

Not all researchers agree with the pearl-of-string theory's claim that that China's aim is the development of naval bases in the strict sense. Considering the Sri Lankan situation, Marantidou's claim (2014) that China's policy is rather to develop 'places with Chinese characteristics' seems a reasonable assessment. Without any official definition, this term denotes access by Chinese military forces 'to another country's ports, airports, and other logistic facilities on an ad hoc basis, without the need for a permanent positioning of forces' (2014: 12). This involves the development of broader arrangements of cooperation and economic exchange establishing bonds between China and other states. When the first ever Chinese submarine together with a submarine support ship was observed docking in Colombo in September 2014, it created a stir, both in Sri Lanka and in India, where the issue was raised for debate in the Indian Parliament.[19] The Indian navy chief announced that Chinese naval activities in the Indian Ocean were being continuously monitored and his force was 'ready to face any challenge' (ibid.). Where did it dock? It docked at the new Colombo International Container Terminal, completed in 2014 as a joint venture between China Merchant Holdings and Sri Lanka Port Authority, the former holding 85 percent and the latter, 15 percent.[20]

And so we are back in Colombo. Next to the commercial container terminal, China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC) is involved in Sri Lanka's largest urban development project so far, the massive Colombo Port City Project, involving a 500 acre and 1.4 billion US$ ocean landfill in the waters off central Colombo, providing space for luxury office buildings, apartment blocks, a golf course, a water sport area, medical facilities, education institutions, hotels, a theme park, and marinas. 'The project itself is a modern sustainable metropolis in the South Asia continent. It is being planned to be the most modern city in this part of the world', said Liang Thow Ming, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer of CHEC, Colombo Port City in an interview to Channel NewsAsia.[21] Images on the project's website project an upper-class, Western-leisurely lifestyle so far unknown to Sri Lankan social life even among the well situated. One of its slogans is: *Colombo Port City—Your Personal Haven*. The project was immediately stopped because of suspicions of corruption and potential environmental damage after the election of a new president in January 2015.

A Preliminary Postscript

In January 2015, Mahinda Rajapakse was not re-elected. Instead, shortly before the presidential election, one of the ministers of his cabinet, Maitripala Sirisena, fielded his candidature and subsequently surprised everyone by winning the election, mainly supported by the country's non-Sinhalese minorities. In November 2015, the new foreign minister told the media that 750 separate criminal investigations were ongoing against the Rajapakse family for different offenses, including fraud, wastage, and murder.[22] However, Mahinda Rajapakse is still active; he is down but definitely not out. While he and his family members are regrouping, many other former members of his regime have found temporary shelter in the new government circles. This is the tragedy of Sri Lankan politics—power-greedy politicians do not disappear; instead, when they understand they will lose, they change sides.

And the Colombo urban renewal schemes? In February 2016, *Sunday Times* reported the following:

> Almost 350 residents of unauthorized homes built down Ferguson Road, Thotalanga, an area known as Kajima Watte, were evicted by the Urban Development Authority (UDA) this week amidst disputed claims that authorities had given prior notice. One of those evicted, 29-year-old Inoka

> Perera described how backhoes and bulldozers had broken through the shanties that contained their belongings, and claimed at least two children had been injured and taken to hospital.

In May 2015 the new president went on an official visit to China. In February 2016 a slightly modified Colombo Port City Project was approved.[23]

Notes

1. This chapter has been written as part of the project 'Norwegian Network on the Anthropology of Mobilities', funded by the Norwegian Research Council.
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4. www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/CPH2011/index.php?fileName=hhd61&gp=Activities&tpl=3, Occupied housing units in districts and DS Divisions by type of housing unit, 2012, Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka, accessed 22.1.2016, accessed February 14, 2016.
5. http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=20101203_04, accessed February 5, 2016.
6. Among the many stories of the brutality of Gotabaya Rajapakse circulating in Sri Lanka is that he kept a shark tank in the garden of his Colombo residence where he used to feed the sharks with people critical of the regime abducted by the military under his command.
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CHAPTER 8

A Modern *Chakravartin:* Mayawati's New Buddhist Visual Culture

Melia Belli Bose

Like numerous historic cities worldwide, Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh (U.P.), India's largest and most populous state, possesses several *lieux de mémoire* that are meaningful to multiple intersecting communities. Such sites of memory are chronotopic referents to a particular "Golden Age" that enable individual communities, the city and the nation to construct fantastic utopias, in which diverse inhabitants are fabled to peaceably coexist. The city's best-known landmarks, the sumptuously decorated Imambaras and lofty Rumi Darwaza, were raised under the aegis of the Nawabs of Awadh (1775–1856) and are metonyms of the cultural and artistic florescence and communal harmony that transpired there between the conclusion of the Mughal Empire and the establishment of the British Raj. Today these *lieux de mémoire* inform popular Indian imaginings of the city as a social utopia characterized by its dedication to secular nationalism, even when communal violence rages throughout the rest of the state, for example in the wake of the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992.[1]

By their very nature *lieux de mémoire* are exclusive, and no matter how successful they may be in uniting members of imagined communities, they necessarily exclude, or at least do not address the concerns and aspirations

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of others. Similarly, not all communities in a society agree on what constitutes a utopia. Indeed, one group's utopia may be another's dystopia. In the case of Lucknow and other urban spaces throughout U.P., the oft-designated "Golden Ages" of the Nawabs of Awadh, and the Mughals do not signify utopian eras for the majority of the state's historically disenfranchised *dalits* ("ex-untouchables").[2] Over the past few decades the *dalit* community has grown in political, economic and social prominence, a situation that left its impression on the urban fabrics of Lucknow, Noida and to a lesser extent, other north and central Indian cities, through the prolific construction of *dalit* utopian sites of memory. The dozens of sites in U.P. were commissioned by a single individual and offer provocative examples of intersections of historical (debatably fabricated) memory, communal identity and the appropriation of religious art in the service of political ambition.

Memorializing Ambedkar and Mayawati Through Appropriations of Ancient Indian Buddhist Art

In the mid-twentieth century, after a hiatus of nearly a millennium, Buddhism underwent a major revival in India, the land of its birth. This revival was inspired as much by social and political agendas as religious ones. The Indian Buddhist renaissance was galvanized in 1956 when Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar (1891–1956), a lawyer, social activist and author of the Indian constitution, together with thousands of his followers, publically converted to the *Nayayāna* ("New Vehicle") school of the faith.[3] They did this to disavow Hinduism and its caste system, which historically oppressed their community.[4] Ambedkar belonged to the *dalit* community, whose members have traditionally been among India's most marginalized. Until the social reforms Ambedkar instituted in the mid-twentieth century, *dalit*s were officially denied education, social justice, entrance into sites of worship, and possessed little recourse to better themselves. Particularly degrading to many *dalit*s is that, according to Brahmanical Hindu teachings, caste is determined by *karma* (actions) in previous lives. Following this logic, *dalit*s transgressed in the past and were expected to live according to their *dharm* (socio-religious duties of each caste), in hopes of a better future rebirth (Zelliot 1992: 267). Largely due to Ambedkar's activism, caste-based discrimination is outlawed in the Indian constitution and there are now a number of reservation schemes for *dalit*s

in the Indian government, education and workforce. Nevertheless, members of the community remain among the nation's poorest and least educated (Zelliot 2011). Ostracism, discrimination and abuse against *dalit*s are still alarmingly prevalent.[5]

In the decades following Ambedkar's death, his supporters commissioned a number of public memorial sculptures and buildings in his honor (Fig. 8.1). The best-known architectural memorial is the Deeksha Bhumi Stūpa in Nagpur, Maharashtra, which was designed by the architect Sheo Dan Mal and constructed between 1978 and 2001.[6] Meaning "conversion site," the monumental *stūpa* marks the location where Ambedkar took *dīkṢā* (converted to Buddhism). A bronze statue of Ambedkar now stands prominently on the campus of the Indian Houses of Parliament, and others have been erected in cities and villages throughout the country. These architectural and sculptural Ambedkar memorials, many of which are modeled after well-known ancient Indian Buddhist monuments, constitute the first phase of what Gary Michael Tartakov terms a "new Buddhist imagery" (1990: 409–416).[7] Writing in the early 1990s, Tartakov investigated

Fig. 8.1 Deeksha Bhumi Stūpa in Nagpur, Maharashtra, designed by Sheo Dan Mal, constructed between 1978 and 2001. Image: Melia Belli Bose

how, since the 1970s, *dalit*s have attempted to secure a visual presence for their community, which relies heavily on the iconic image of Ambedkar and the appropriation of ancient Indian Buddhist art.

The past decade has witnessed radical new developments in *dalit* Buddhist visual culture, which, building on Tartakov's nomenclature, I term "second phase new Buddhist imagery." The second phase artistic developments are concentrated in Lucknow and Noida, an industrial city in U.P. outside of Delhi. The tremendous surge of *dalit* Buddhist public art in these two cities is part of one individual's agenda to create *dalit* utopias, sites which nurture communal pride and further their patron's political ambitions. Between 1995 and 2012, during her four terms as the state's *dalit* Chief Minister, Mayawati (b.1956)[8] commissioned dozens of architectural monuments that enshrine larger-than-life-sized statues and friezes of notable members of her community and the Buddha. Mayawati's own image is the most conspicuous in the memorials. Among these numerous sites are the Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar Samajik Parivartan Prateek Sthal, ("Dr. Ambedkar Site of Social Change," hereafter the Ambedkar Memorial) (Fig. 8.2) and the Rashtriya Dalit Prerna Sthal ("The Site of National Dalit Inspiration," hereafter Prerna Sthal) (Fig. 8.3). Mayawati's monuments were opened to the public in January 2012, only to be closed and reopened intermittently after their patron was voted out of office in early 2013. While they have been the subject of scrutiny in the Indian and international media, and have begun to attract the attention of scholars, a consideration of Mayawati's creation of a new politically informed Buddhist visual culture has received scant attention.[9]

The memorials' architectural styles and the sculptures' narrative programs present Mayawati not only as Ambedkar's worthy political heir, but also as a *charkavartin,* an ancient Indian, particularly Buddhist, term for a righteous universal leader who upholds the *dhamma* (cosmic law).[10] Literally meaning "wheel-turner," *chakravartin*s keep order, support laws, and govern their content and prosperous subjects in a just and ideal manner. The *dhamma* was originally expounded by the Buddha, who is said to have "turned the wheel of the *dhamma"* when he delivered his first sermon. The wheel is thus a preeminent icon in Buddhist art throughout Asia that signifies the *dhamma,* and by extension, one who "turns" it—a *chakravartin*.[11] In addition to the Buddha, numerous kings who ruled in accordance with the Buddhist *dhamma,* such as Emperor Ashoka (r. 273–232 BCE), one of the most celebrated rulers in Indian history, are similarly referred to as *chakravartin*s. As far as I am

Fig. 8.2 Ambedkar Stūpa at the Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar Samajik Parivartan Prateek Sthal, Uttar Pradesh, designed by Jay Kaktikar, completed in 2012, and bronze statue of Ambedkar by Ram V. Sutar. Image: Melia Belli Bose

aware, Mayawati has never publically referred to herself as a *chakravartin*. Nevertheless, she is undoubtedly aware of the concept and presents herself as such through the ubiquity of Buddhist and Ashokan references, including wheels, in her public commissions.[12]

A Noble Past: *Navayāna* Buddhism and *Dalit* "Homeplaces"

> I want to speak about the importance of homeplace in the midst of oppression and domination…a site of resistance and liberation struggle (hooks 1990:43).
>
> With this foundation we can regain lost perspective, give life new meaning. We can make homeplace that space where we return for renewal and self-recovery, where we can heal our wounds and become whole (hooks 1990: 49).

Fig. 8.3 Rashtriya Dalit Prerna Sthal, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, designed by Jay Kaktikar, completed in 2012. Image: Melia Belli Bose

Buddhism is central to *dalit* communal identity. Since Ambedkar's conversion, tens of thousands of *dalit*s continue to accept the faith. However, while the overwhelming majority of *Navayāna* Buddhists are *dalit*s, not all *dalit*s are Buddhist. Mayawati herself has not converted, although she participates in public Buddhist rituals, such as the performance of the *dah saṃskār* (last rites) in the Buddhist funeral of her mentor, Kanshi Ram (1934–2006). For Mayawati, like many *dalit*s, Buddhism offers as much a social and political refuge as a spiritual one, and her commissions stridently refer to the faith and its ancient Indian past to promote her political authority.

Buddhism enjoys widespread popularity among India's *dalit*s for a number of reasons. First, (at least in *Navayāna* thought) anti-casteism was one of the cornerstones of the Buddha's social reforms.[13] Second, the faith is associated with Ambedkar, the respected founder of the *dalit* social movement. Ambedkar himself possesses an ambiguous, quasi-sacred posthumous status among many *Navayāna* Buddhists. While the faith eschews the existence of deities and the worship of images, in the esteem of many *Navayāna* Buddhists, Ambedkar is the Bodhisattva Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future, who is prophesized to become enlightened and re-preach the *dhamma* after it has been forgotten. Accordingly, Ambedkar is often depicted, especially in Mayawati's commissions, with a halo denoting his extraordinary status. Third, Buddhism is appealing to *dalit*s as it is an ancient indigenous religion, which is associated with one of the subcontinent's "Golden Ages," under the Maurya

Empire (322 to 185 BCE). Specifically, it is associated with Ashoka, who was greatly influenced by the faith.

Fourth, and perhaps most relevant to *dalit*s is that, according to Ambedkar, Buddhism and liberation from the caste system it offers are their birthright. Ambedkar argued that *dalit*s were among the first converts to Buddhism and among the last to reconvert to Hinduism when Buddhism declined in India ca. 1000 CE. Regarded as "outsiders" in mainstream Hinduism, *dalit*s were systematically subjugated, exploited and denigrated (Ambedkar 1990: 290–303; Jaffrelot 2003: 22). Several *dalit*s with whom I spoke both in India and the United States echo this belief regarding their communal history. Thus, many *dalit*s claim that their acceptance of Buddhism is not a conversion, but a *reconversion,* and a path to recover their agency and defiantly reject the system that oppressed and humiliated their community (also see Zelliot 1998: 220). Whether this alternative *dalit* history is accurate or not, is irrelevant. What is pertinent is that it offers a noble *dalit* past, counter to the Brahmanical narrative of *karmic* digression and retribution to account for their subaltern status. This construction of a *dalit* Buddhist past operates as a sort of communal origin myth with a bygone "Golden Age," the visual culture of which Mayawati's artists appropriated.[14]

Finally, for much of its history in India and elsewhere in Asia, Buddhism has been associated with royalty; rulers and members of their court commissioned works of Buddhist art, supported the monastic community, and strove to uphold the *dhamma*. Thus, for many *dalit*s, Buddhism offers the additional benefit of royal, as opposed to the subaltern affiliation, which has stigmatized them for so long.

This noble alternative *dalit* past is referenced at the new Buddhist memorials of the first and second phases through their formal and decorative programs. In particular, the Great Stūpa at Sanchi was a major source of influence (Tartakov 1990: 410, 1996: 129). Initially constructed during the reign of Emperor Ashoka, the Great Stūpa is the oldest extant Buddhist monument. It is also particularly sacred as it enshrines a portion of the Buddha's cremated ashes and tens of thousands of pilgrims from around the world, including *dalit*s, visit the site annually. The Deeksha Bhumi Stūpa is the oldest of the new Buddhist memorials. The two *stūpa*s are similar in form and decoration. References to the Great Stūpa at Sanchi are found in the Deeksha Bhumi Stūpa's streamlined hemispherical *aṇdā* (dome), which is surmounted by a *harmikā* (fence) and *chattā* (honorific umbrella), *vedikā*s (fences), and *toranā*s (gateways).

At the new Buddhist sites from both phases, meaningful architectural quotations from the past are brought up to date for the sake of convenience, and equally important, inclusion. The most significant difference between ancient and *Navayāna stūpa*s is their functions. The former are solid and cannot be entered. At these sites, pilgrims circumambulate the mounds in a clockwise direction. In contrast, *Navayāna* Buddhist *stūpa*s are architectural and visitors are encouraged to enter into their large, open interiors that are flooded with natural or electric light. Their central chambers are congregational spaces where the community gathers to celebrate religious and communal holidays. For a community traditionally denied access to sacred sites, the significance of the new Buddhist *stūpa*s' inclusivity, facilitated through the internal congregational space, should not be underestimated.

Prior to Indian Independence, *dalit*s were denied participation in mainstream religious (Hindu) and social institutions, as well as spaces of their own. They were officially denied entrance into the majority of temples and other sites of worship and relegated to segregated slums in cities and villages. Coupled with their lack of social rights, *dalit*s were thus essentially invisible. Ambedkar secured official rights for his community by outlawing their discrimination in the constitution. *Dalit* memorials from both phases are monumental, and significantly and permanently alter the urban fabrics of their immediate surroundings. Thus, sites such as the Deeksha Bhumi Stūpa, and Mayawati's memorials, have secured for *dalits* their own spaces to assemble and honor their community members, and an undeniable visibility.

While ancient Indian *stūpa*s are built of brick or stone, the monumental *Navayāna* sites are constructed of even more durable materials. Earlier ones, such as the Deeksha Bhumi Stūpa, are built of reinforced concrete, a material associated with modernity and technological advancement in India. Mayawati's commissions are of marble, sandstone and bronze. These materials ensure her buildings' permanence and will prevent the *dalit*s from literally being erased from India's built environment and history. *Navayāna* memorials are also well-cared for and lavished with modern amenities; they are air-conditioned, well lit, and kept scrupulously clean, thereby associating the community with advancement and cleanliness, rather than the "backwardness," poverty and dirt with which they are popularly associated. Cleanliness (both personal hygiene and environmental cleanliness) plays a salient role in the establishment of utopias. According to Thomas More (Spears 1897: 666) and Roland Barthes (Barthes and

Briggs 2012: 121–124), the two figures most associated with the concept of utopia note, filth is nearly universally deemed antisocial and associated with sloth, ignorance and coarseness. As utopias are fantastic, ideal spaces, dirt has no place there. Moreover, *dalit*s' hereditary occupations, which are historically determined by caste in Hinduism, are marked by literal and ritual pollution, as they have traditionally associated with corpses (removing dead humans and animals, working with leather, and butchering), sweeping, and performing other menial jobs. Maintaining cleanliness at the *Navayāna* memorials thus distances the community from the negative associations of its past. These clean, comfortable, monumental sites are *dalit* spaces where thousands of the community's members gather to celebrate religious holidays and historic events. In 2012 on the occasion of *Dhamma Chakra Pravartan Dīn,* the annual commemoration of Ambedkar's conversion, several hundred thousand *Navayāna* Buddhists congregated for a day of prayers, speeches and readings of Ambedkar's writings.[15]

While the memorials have given *dalit*s an urban visual presence, they should be appraised on an equally important, more personal and communal level as well. The buildings may be understood in relation to what acclaimed African American educator and theorist of feminism and race, bell hooks, terms "homeplace," which is a domestic utopia. hooks identifies a homeplace as a "space of care and nurturance in the face of brutal harsh reality" (1990: 42). She introduces the concept through the example of her childhood visits to her grandmother's home, which necessitated traveling through a poor white neighborhood where she was subjected to the residents' racially motivated hostility. Arriving safely at the homeplace of her grandmother's house, hooks notes: "There we learned dignity, integrity of being; there we learned to have faith" (1990: 42). Although in India it is not racism, but casteism to which *dalit*s are subjected, hooks' experiences and those of other African Americans resonate with those of *dalit*s. In fact, the significance of these shared experiences of subjugation, exclusion and exploitation by their respective mainstream societies was not lost on Ambedkar, as he highlighted in his correspondence with the African American civil rights activist W. E. B. Du Bois (Kapoor 2003–2004: 5344–5349).

As homeplaces, the *dalit* memorials are secure sites, and thus utopias of sorts, where the community is able to reinvent and empower itself. They are influential spaces of affirmation and healing, as well as resistance and defiance against mainstream Indian society. hooks claims that by creating a

nurturing, loving and reaffirming homeplace for her children, her mother defied dominant oppressive white American culture. At the *dalit* memorials, community members may be inspired to better themselves (through education, activism and religious conversion) thereby subverting the mechanisms of mainstream Indian society that have historically dehumanized, disempowered and deprived them.

Both the earlier *Navayāna* sites, particularly the Deeksha Bhumi Stūpa and Mayawati's commissions should, like Lucknow's nawabi monuments, also be understood as *lieux de mémoire,* which Pierre Nora notes possess a common memorial function that unites individuals in an imagined community, creating a shared sense of social identity, common sets of values, and communal sentiment (Woods 1994: 123–149). Such sites of memory, Nora asserts, often involve performative displays of communal identity and unity, all of which are enacted at the Deeksha Bhumi Stūpa on regular occasions such as *Dhamma Chakra Pravartan Dīn*. With the commission of her *dalit* memorials, Mayawati created larger, costlier and more politically charged utopian homeplaces for her community in U.P. that reference ancient Indian Buddhist monuments and their charge as powerful *dalit lieux de mémoire*.

Mayawati's Homeplaces in U.P. and Second Phase New Buddhist Imagery

Mayawati's commissions have secured her a place in modern South Asian art history as one of its most prolific patrons of art and architecture. When she first took office in 1999, Mayawati was an unlikely candidate; while not the first *dalit* Chief Minister, she was the first woman from her community to hold the position, as well as the youngest in U.P. It appears that she was thus compelled to reiterate her political authority through highly visible and performative means.[16] Mayawati's commissions unite the *dalit*s, who constitute the majority of her political constituency, in an imagined community and reference their illustrious Buddhist past. Her commissions also visibly link her to the Buddha, Ashoka, Ambedkar, post-Independence Indian heads of state, other world leaders, and her own political mentor, Kanshi Ram, who founded the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), which Mayawati now leads. Ultimately, these works of art announce that Mayawati is their political heir, and as a modern *chakravartin,* her rule upholds the *dhamma*.

Mayawati's memorials are distinguished by a hybrid architectural style and building materials, which combine conspicuous references to ancient Indian Buddhist monuments and the early-twentieth-century Rashtrapati Bhavan (President's Residence) in New Delhi. Interviews with her chief architect, Jay Kaktikar, and head sculptors, Ram V. and Anil Sutar, in July and August, 2011, revealed that Mayawati played an active role in the construction of her memorials. Her choice of artists was indeed wise—Kaktikar and the Sutars are well versed in Indian art and architectural history. In particular, Ram V. Sutar, a recipient of the *Padma Shree,* India's fourth highest civilian award, was involved in restoration projects at the Ellora and Ajanta cave complexes under the Department of Archaeology in the 1950s, which familiarized him with ancient Indian Buddhist art.[17] Kaktikar and the Sutars claim to have tutored Mayawati in historical styles. She then worked closely with her artists on the planning of her buildings and sculptures, making informed decisions regarding their historical references and messages.

The Rashtrapati Bhavan is also a meaningful reference for Mayawati's memorials as it is a national *lieu de mémoire* recognizable to nearly every Indian citizen. Completed in 1929, at the height of British colonialism in India, post-Independence it is a metonym of the nation, signifying its self-governance as the residence of one of its highest democratically elected leaders. With the forms of its streamlined domes and pillars, and presence of decorative *chatrī*s (domed kiosks), the Prerna Sthal bears a formal resemblance to the Rashtrapati Bhavan, thereby visually linking *dalits* with government, independent rule, upward mobility, and social justice, rights they have historically been denied. That Mayawati appropriated this politically and historically significant building for her commission may also indicate her own ultimate political aspirations of being elected to a much higher office than that of chief minister.[18]

Similar messages are suggested through Mayawati's choice of construction materials: red and white sandstone. Red sandstone and white marble, the latter of which is frequently replaced by less costly beige sandstone, have been the preeminent materials for royal and governmental structures in north and central India since the early-fourteenth century with the Khilji Sultan, Ala-ud-din's commission of the Alai Darwaza in this material at the Qutub complex in Delhi. Following the Khiljis, other Indian Sultanates, Mughal emperors, several Rajput dynasties, the British, and finally the independent nation employed these materials. They remain the principle construction materials for Indian law courts, universities, and government

institutions, including the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Significantly, according to Kaktikar and the visitors' brochures that come with admission tickets to the Ambedkar Memorial, Mayawati's sandstone was quarried in Chunar, U.P., which over two millennia ago supplied the material for the free-standing pillars Emperor Ashoka erected throughout his vast empire.

The Ambedkar Memorial

Three sites associated with Ambedkar's life are popular pilgrimage sites among *dalit*s: *janambhoomi* (the site of his birth, in Mhow, Madhya Pradesh), *deeshabhoomi* and *chaityabhoomi* (where he was cremated, in Mumbai), all of which are marked with *stūpa*s. Mayawati publically declared that she created the Ambedkar Memorial to similarly serve as a *dalit* pilgrimage site (Sinha 2014: 104–105)—the community's largest, and with the most symbolically charged decorative program. The monument expands the religio-political Ambedkarite sacred geography to the capital of the state Mayawati governed (despite the fact that, unlike the other Ambedkarite pilgrimage sites, Lucknow is not associated with any of the major events of his life), and associates her with the founder of the *dalit* empowerment movement.

Completed in 2012, the Ambedkar Memorial complex commands the skyline of Gomti Nagar, an upper middle-class suburb of Lucknow. The several dozen acre complex is dominated by the nearly 200-foot tall Ambedkar Stūpa, which like the Deeksha Bhumi Stūpa, is architectural. Entrance into the Ambedkar Stūpa is through an ogee *chāndrasālā* arch, the form of which is repeated in blind arches throughout the *stūpa's* exterior. This architectural and decorative feature is borrowed from the reliefs on the *torana*s at sites such as the Great Stūpa at Sanchi and western Indian rock-cut *chaitya* halls, such as Bhaja (ca. 200 BCE).

A 15-foot bronze sculpture of Ambedkar stands sentinel in front of the *stūpa*'s main entrance. Like the innumerable Ambedkar statues across India, he is recognizable through his iconography: Western-style suit and glasses and holding the constitution. The choice of costume both references Ambedkar's position as an urban lawyer and conveys associations of modernity, education and literacy, and social status (Tartakov 2000: 102–103), qualities echoed by the materials and conveniences of the *Navayānā* memorials. Ambedkar's enduring identity in public art is markedly (and intentionally) different from that of Gandhi, whose iconography includes the homespun cotton *dhotī* (wrapped lower garment),

which associates him with rural India and his politically defiant act of spinning cotton. Significantly, Ambedkar and Gandhi publically disagreed on the role of caste and interpretations of untouchability in the new nation, necessitating the creation of a distinct Ambedkar iconography. Also like the majority of Ambedkar statues, the one before the Ambedkar Stūpa punctuates the air with the right index finger. This polysemic gesture of leadership and authority is shared with statues of Imperial Roman orators and those of Buddhist figures; in the latter it denotes the *tarjanī mudrā* of vigilance and triumph over illusion.

The Ambedkar statue before the *stūpa* surmounts a plinth adorned with the heads of two elephants, animals prominent at all of Mayawati's sites. At the Ambedkar Memorial, each of the *stūpa*'s four-directional entrances is flanked by elephants. The complex also contains an "elephant gallery" with dozens of caparisoned life-sized sculpted stone elephants. A pan-Indic symbol of auspiciousness and royalty, the choice of animal is meaningful. Resonating with *dalit* politics and *Navayāna* Buddhism, elephants feature prominently in the life of the Buddha, who is referred to by the epithet *Gajottama* ("Best of Elephants"); Prince Siddhartha was conceived when his mother dreamt of an elephant entering her side; after his enlightenment he performed the miracle of pacifying a mad elephant; an elephant plays a central role in the Vessantara Jātaka; and elephants are associated with the Buddha's relics in myth and living Buddhist traditions (Strong 2007: 182–185). Elephants are also among the first animals to be depicted in Indian art, featuring on the capitals of Ashokan columns, again associating the emperor with Mayawati and her community. Further linking Mayawati with traditions of Indo-Buddhist kingship is the fact that elephants are associated specifically with *chakravartin*s. As John S. Smart observes:

> a great white elephant is, after the Wheel, the second of the seven "treasures" of a chakravartin king… and kings themselves, riding their elephants, are often compared to Indra the king of the gods, atop his divine mount, Airāvaṇa… Possession of a state elephant… not only legitimizes rule, but also acts of a guarantee of order, prosperity, and fertility (Strong 2007: 184).

The elephant's ancient, sacred, and imperial associations were surely decisive factors that led to its adoption as the symbol of Mayawati's BSP party.

The Ambedkar Stūpa is approached via a vast open court punctuated by monumental free-standing pillars carved of Chunar sandstone that are surmounted by either addorsed bronze elephant heads or a wheel. In addition

to elephants, the Ashokan pillars also bear numerous wheels. The visitors' brochures are a powerful, portable medium through which Mayawati's memorials disseminate their messages. Should visitors to the complex fail to recognize the Ashokan reference of Mayawati's pillars, the brochures explicitly refer to them as "Ashokan." As in Buddhist art throughout Asia, the wheels reference the *dhammachakra* (Buddhist Law) and a *chakravartin* who sets it in motion. As Thierry Zèphir explains in relation to the wheel's status as a metonym of the faith:

> as a motif evoking the sermon—and more broadly the doctrine itself- the wheel has become a major symbol of the faith…Always in motion, always rotating it suggests the uninterrupted repetition of the precepts of the Law and their diffusion in every direction. It stands as the visual expression of Buddhist teaching, through which every being can be guided toward salvation (Zèphir 2014: 192).

Kaktikar noted that Mayawati ordered her columns to be slightly taller than Ashoka's, suggesting that as a *chakravartin,* she eclipses even the great Mauryan emperor. This is also noted in the tourist literature at the site. How effective has Mayawati's distinct visual culture been in associating her rule with Ashoka's? Biku Chandra Ma, a *dalit Navayāna* Buddhist monk at the Gomti Buddha Vihar, a monastic complex in Lucknow that Mayawati founded, asserted: "Mayawati is just like a modern-day female Ashoka,"[19] indicating that she has indeed created a lucid semiotic vocabulary, which many of her community members understand and accept. Significantly, it was not only Ashoka who erected pillars. Gupta and Mughal emperors, Indo-Islamic sultans, Rajput kings and the British Raj also raised *vijay sthambh*s (victory columns) to commemorate military victories or conquest. Thus, the act of commissioning pillars is a well-established performance of Indic kingship, in which Mayawati similarly participates.

References to Buddhism and rulership continue in the sculptural program of the interior of the Ambedkar *stūpa*. The walls of the antechamber are faced with two life-sized high-relief bronze friezes. One depicts the Buddha under the Bodhi tree, beside a family of elephants. The opposite wall offers a family portrait of Ambedkar, his son and wife. Time collapses in the *stūpa*'s antechamber, bringing Ambedkar and the Buddha into dialogue, conveying that Ambedkar furthered the Buddha's program of social equality and anti-casteism. For *Navayāna* Buddhists who consider Ambedkar to be the Bodhisattva Maitreya, the proximity of these friezes in the antechamber would be effective. Maitreya is, after all, Shakyamuni

Buddha's spiritual successor and to underscore this, the two are often featured together in art from across Asia.

The *stūpa*'s interior is dominated by a 30-foot tall bronze sculpture in the round of Ambedkar. His seated posture, with one foot slightly forward, and his chair are based on the statue of Abraham Lincoln at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C., which according to the Sutars, was Mayawati's intention. The association is apt: Both Ambedkar and Lincoln were lawyers. Ambedkar wrote the Indian constitution and after the Civil War, Lincoln amended the American constitution to extend rights to all male citizens, including African Americans. Again, Ambedkar likened the situation of Indian *dalit*s to that of African Americans and admired Lincoln for championing the rights of subalterns in his own nation. Mayawati, who also earned a law degree, sought to link the founder of her movement (and herself) to a well-known international figure, thereby making the *dalit*s' struggle global.

The central Ambedkar statue is ringed by an ambulatory with bronze friezes on the walls depicting key events from Ambedkar's life. In one, before the Indian Houses of Parliament, he presents the constitution to India's first president, Rajendra Prasad. The composition is crowned by the polysemic sign of the Ashokan lion capital (Fig. 8.4). Ambedkar was instrumental in selecting this singular work of art from India's millennia of visual culture to represent the new nation at Independence (Tartakov 1996: 120). Several *dalit*s informed me of the national icon's Ambedkarite associations, a source of communal pride. The capital now features prominently on Indian currency, postage stamps and official seals, among other venues, where it carries associations of Ashoka and the Mauryan "Golden Age." Finally, due to both Ashoka's association with the faith and the iconography, particularly the wheel on the abacus signifying the *dhammachakra,* the capital possesses inherent Buddhist associations. Another frieze depicts Ambedkar taking *deeksha*. Clothed in simple monastic robes, he stands before a monk and a Buddha image enshrined in a *stūpa*.

The final two friezes in the *stūpa*'s ambulatory are concerned exclusively with Mayawati's role as patron of the Ambedkar Memorial and her political lineage. A 16-foot tall statue of Mayawati stands beside the final frieze in the cycle, which displays a map of the sprawling memorial complex (Fig. 8.5). Her placement next to the map of the Ambedkar Memorial reminds visitors to the site, particularly *dalit*s, how their elected representative secured for them an undeniable visual presence and a utopian homeplace in which their community members are celebrated. That the cycle of

Fig. 8.4 Bronze frieze in the Ambedkar Stupa depicting Ambedkar presenting the constitution to President Rajendra Prasad before the Houses of Parlement. Ram V. Sutar. Image: Melia Belli Bose

friezes culminates in Mayawati alone is fitting; it visually announces that she alone continues Ambedkar's legacy. By extension, the prevalence of the Buddhist content in earlier friezes in the cycle conveys that Mayawati also inherits the Ambedkarite mantle of social change and that she too is a *chakravartin*. Her patronage of the site and her Ambedkarite lineage are

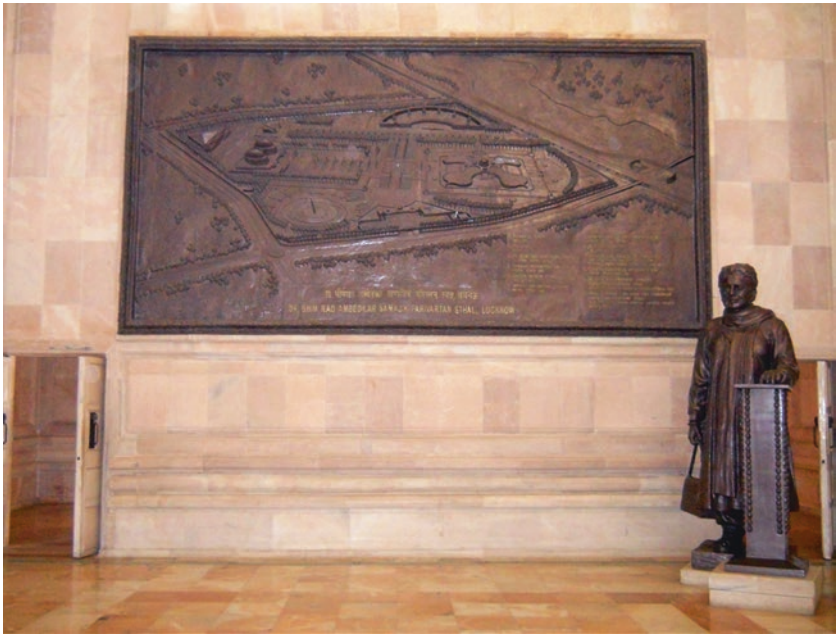

Fig. 8.5 Bronze statue of Mayawati beside a frieze depicting a map of the Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar Samajik Parivartan Prateek Sthal. Ram V. Sutar. Image: Melia Belli Bose

reiterated in the tourist literature that visitors to the site take away with them. The back cover of the brochure displays a photograph of Mayawati laying the memorial's foundation stone, amidst throngs of security guards, politicians, Buddhist monks and members of the press. On the inside of the brochure's front cover, Mayawati presents the *stūpa*'s Ambedkar statue with a bouquet of flowers on Ambedkar Jayanti (his birthday).

The Prerna Sthal

Mayawati's self-styled identity as her community's modern *chakravartin,* who rules as the social and political heir to the Buddha, Ashoka, and Ambedkar is made even more explicit through the sculptures at the Prerna Sthal. In her program of self-promotion and political legitimacy, Kanshi Ram plays a key role as he is the conduit through which Mayawati claims her Ambedkarite legacy. Kanshi Ram founded the BSP, which is grounded

in Ambedkarite philosophy. After their first meeting in 1977, Kanshi Ram groomed Mayawati as his successor of the party, which he announced in 2001 at a rally in Lucknow.[20]

Completed in 2011 and located beside Noida's busiest highway, the Prerna Sthal includes the Rashtriya Dalit Smarak ("National Dalit Memorial," hereafter Smarak), a domed building enshrining monumental statues of Ambedkar, Mayawati, Kanshi Ram, and bronze friezes and the adjacent Green Garden. The site's full name ("The Site of National *Dalit* Inspiration") and dedicatory plaques in Hindi and English next to the main entrance promulgate the building's function—to educate visitors about figures who struggled for social justice in India but have hitherto been excluded from the nation's history.

While the Smarak's dome draws from the Rashtrapati Bhavan, references to the ancient Indian Buddhist past are also conspicuous. On the exterior these include a relief of a Bodhi tree flanked by elephants on the base of the memorial's porch (Fig. 8.6). Several people I met at Mayawati's various memorials had also viewed her other memorials. Thus, many of the visitors to the Smarak would be familiar with, for example, the frieze of the Buddha under the Bodhi tree attended by elephants in the Ambedkar Stūpa. Mayawati presided over the Prerna Sthal's public inauguration ceremony and Buddhist monks performed rituals.[21] She addressed a crowd of thousands who assembled in the court before the Smarak from its porch, thereby transforming especially this portion of the building into a highly symbolic, politically charged stage. The strong axiality, with Mayawati surmounting an aniconic symbol of the Buddha (the Bodhi tree) visually linked her to the founder of the faith and mapped a trajectory of sacred power. The vertical axis is utilized to convey the same idea in a frieze in the monument's interior. That the Buddha himself does not feature in Smarak porch frieze would in no way obfuscate the work's meaning of his enlightenment. After all, the major events of the Buddha's hagiography are depicted aniconically at early Indian Buddhist sites such as Sanchi, with which many *dalit* Buddhists are acquainted.[22]

Located centrally in the Smarak's rotunda is an 18-foot tall bronze sculpture of Ambedkar, whose arm is extended with his hand raised above his head, palm facing the viewer. As with the hand gesture displayed by the Ambedkar statue in the court before the *stūpa*'s entrance at the Ambedkar Memorial, this one is polysemic. It is both a popular salute among politicians internationally, as well as *abhaya mudrā,* the hand gesture displayed by Buddhist figures to dispel fear and reassure. The Ambedkar statue is

Fig. 8.6 Relief of a Bodhi tree flanked by elephants on the base of the Rashtriya Dalit Prerna Sthal porch. Image: Melia Belli Bose

flanked, on slightly lower plinths by statues of Kanshi Ram and Mayawati. Despite the fact that Mayawati is slight in stature and that Kanshi Ram was over six feet tall, as per Mayawati's orders, their statues are of the same height, suggesting their equality.[23] Their side-by-side placement charts the twentieth-century history of *dalit* political activism from Ambedkar to Kanshi Ram, and finally, to his appointed protégée, Mayawati.

Bronze friezes line the interior walls of the Smarak's central rotunda and its two flanking chambers. Divided into two spatial cells, in image and Hindi text, each section of the friezes presents key moments in *dalit* history. Central to the Buddhist pilgrimage experience is circumambulating sacred monuments, such as *stūpa*s, and progressing through buildings in a clockwise direction. Appropriately, the frieze cycle at the Smarak begins in the left chamber and unfolds to the right, from upper to lower register.

The upper register on the first frieze, titled "the seven great men of the Bahujan Samāj (People of the Majority)" depicts Ambedkar in the center middleground (Fig. 8.7a,b).[24] He is nimbated, reflecting his status among some *Navayāna* Buddhists as Maitreya, and holds the Indian constitution, in which is his *dhamma*. In the background on one side is a map of the subcontinent, underscoring the contribution of the community's most celebrated member to the nation. On the other side of the background is the Deeksha Bhumi Stūpa, the presence of which recalls the site's function as a *lieu de mémoire* that unites the national *dalit* community. As in the statues in the central rotunda, Ambedkar is flanked by Mayawati and Kanshi Ram, who are in turn flanked by named celebrated *dalit*s. These include social reformers and anti-caste activists such as King Shahuji II of Kolhapur (1874–1922); Jyotiba Phule of Maharashtra (1872–1890); and two South Indians: Periyar Ramasamy (1879–1973) and Narayana Guru (1856–1928).

The lower register of the frieze depicts a centrally placed Mayawati alone amidst a cheering crowd. She holds her hand above her head in a gesture mirroring the one performed by the Ambedkar statue in the Smarak's central rotunda. In addition to echoing Ambedkar's gesture, Mayawati's raised arm also creates a pronounced vertical axis, which links the two registers of the frieze and maps her political lineage. By including anti-caste activists from south, as well as west and north India in the upper register, Mayawati broadens the founts of her authority, not only back in time to Ambedkar, but also in space to communicate that their struggle continues in her alone. As with the shared forms between the Smarak and the Rashtrapati Bhavan, this frieze's geographical inclusivity suggests Mayawati's more ambitious political designs.

Also in the Smarak friezes are historic scenes of Ambedkar performing his resistance to caste. One features his 1927 *Mahad Satyāgrah*, during which he led thousands of *dalits* to drink water from a tank in Mahad, Maharashtra, that was reserved exclusively for caste Hindus (Fig. 8.8). In a scene widely reproduced in posters and other works of *dalit* popular art, Ambedkar occupies the center of the composition, standing on a *ghāṭ* (steps to water) bending over and defiantly lifting a palm full of water to his lips.

Mayawati's choice to include this episode in the frieze program was particularly savvy as it explicitly links Ambedkar with the Buddha through Ambedkar's own writings. In his seminal study on Buddhism, *The Buddha and His Dhamma* (published posthumously in 1957), Ambedkar

Fig. 8.7 (**a**, **b**) Bronze frieze in the Rashtriya Dalit Prerna Sthal titled "the seven great men of the Bahujan Samāj (People of the Majority)," with Mayawati in the lower panel. Ram V. Sutar. Image: Melia Belli Bose

Fig. 8.8 Bronze frieze depicting Ambedkar's *Mahad Satyāgrah* in the Rashtriya Dalit Prerna Sthal. Ram V. Sutar. Image: Melia Belli Bose

attempted to correct what he viewed as distortions of the Buddha's life and messages in previous writings. The work shifts the focus from what Ambedkar perceived as an overall negative and pessimistic message (existence is characterized by suffering) to one of the Buddha's action, compassion and campaign for social justice. For example, in opposition to more widely accepted versions of the Buddha's biography, Ambedkar claimed that Prince Siddhartha became an ascetic not after witnessing proof of life's transience and suffering, but by dint of his conscience. According to *The Buddha and His Dhamma,* after failing to quell a skirmish over water rights between his own people and a neighboring community, Siddhartha concluded that renunciation was the only way prevent the conflict from escalating (Hancock 2004: 18). Thus, Ambedkar and the Buddha are associated in the frieze through their similar attempts to bring equality and ameliorate social discord that unfolded around a similar incident.

The penultimate frieze in the Smarak's cycle depicts Kanshi Ram's public appointment of Mayawati as his successor (Fig. 8.9). Mayawati and Kanshi Ram perform identical, *abhaya mudrā*-like salutes, which mirror that of the Ambedkar statue in the rotunda, and further link the two BSP politicians to the movement's leader. Mayawati and Kanshi Ram stand

Fig. 8.9 Bronze frieze in the Rashtriya Dalit Prerna Sthal depicting Mayawati's swearing in ceremonies on the occasions she was elected as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. Ram V. Sutar. Image: Melia Belli Bose

before a cheering crowd and constituents rush toward their leaders offering garlands, illustrating their acceptance of his announcement.

The cycle concludes with visual and textual proof of the sagacity of Kanchi Ram's choice of successor. The final frieze offers a collage of Mayawati's four election victories to the office of Chief Minister of U.P. Thus, as in the Ambedkar Stūpa, the Smarak's decorative program celebrates the achievements of earlier *dalit* activists, particularly Ambedkar, but concludes with Mayawati, irrefutably announcing that she alone represents the *Bahujān Samāj.*

The Prerna Sthal Green Garden is dominated by an open-air sculpture installation visible from the adjacent interstate highway (Fig. 8.10a,b). The installation is comprised of a row of "Ashokan" pillars by a walkway leading to a central pillar surmounted by a bronze wheel, ringed by ten 30-foot bronze statues of many of the same *dalit* icons that feature in the "Bahujan Samaj" frieze. As at several of Mayawati's other sites throughout the state, at the Prerna Sthal's Green Garden, the statues are arranged in chronological order, which, as with the friezes, charts the history of anti-caste activism and *dalit* leadership through the community's most celebrated historical figures. The cycle begins with the Buddha, continues through Ambedkar, and Kanshi Ram, and terminates with Mayawati, beside the Buddha. The statues' placement around the soaring wheel conveys that each was a *chakravartin,* who turned the Wheel of the Law in their era.

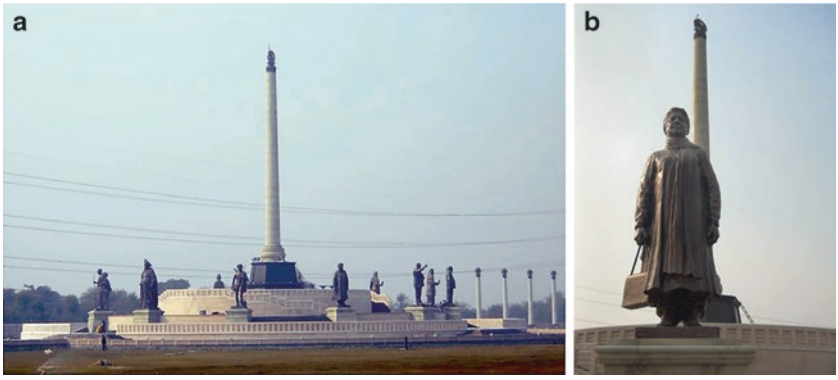

Fig. 8.10 (**a**, **b**) Prerna Sthal Green Garden sculpture installation with pillars (the central one is topped with a wheel) and ringed by Indian social activists. Mayawati is among them. Ram V. Sutar. Image: Melia Belli Bose

One need not enter the park to glean the statues' messages. Their location, by the side of a national highway, and monumentality ensure their visibility and meaning: Mayawati is the *chakravartin* of the present era.

Conclusion

Mayawati collaborated with her artists to construct her own identity and that of her community. In this highly ambitious program, she appropriated images, icons, and architectural and decorative programs from multiple historical sources, most notably from India's ancient Buddhist past. Mayawati's new Buddhist visual culture announces that she is the *dalit*s' legitimate *chakravartin* who upholds the *dhamma* and continues the righteous struggle for their betterment. Her works of art trace this struggle through Kanshi Ram, to Ambedkar, and various other Indian reformers, ultimately to the Buddha. These messages are deployed through the display of the same icons—wheels, pillars, elephants—and friezes cast from the same molds at Mayawati's other monuments, including the Manyavar Shri Kanshi Ram Smarak Sthal, Bahujan Samaj Prerna Kendra and the Budh Vihar Shanti Upvan (all in Lucknow), as well as the innumerable free-standing statues throughout the state. Mayawati performatively reiterates her religio-political lineage at her *dalit* memorials during their inaugurations and annual celebrations held at the sites.

The *dalit* identity promoted through Mayawati's commissions is yoked to the community's origin myth, the designation of a "Golden Age," and its alternative history of a noble Buddhist past, rather than the exploitation and humiliation members have suffered in more recent history. Through her promotion of a *dalit* Buddhist past, Mayawati also reintroduced the Buddha image and icons such as the *dhammachakra* to the popular Indian built environment. While Ambedkar and his immediate followers initiated the revival of Buddhist visual culture, Mayawati amplified and multiplied it so that it is now prevalent throughout Lucknow, and to a lesser extent, other cities throughout U.P.

Mayawati's *dalit* memorials raise myriad issues beyond their immediate roles within their patron's political agenda and her creation of a second phase of new Buddhist imagery. In particular, her commissions of her own statues, which feature so prominently throughout the memorials, remain the subject of media scrutiny, political debate and widespread criticism.[25]

The Ambedkar Memorial and Prerna Sthal and her other monuments have made Mayawati one of the most controversial figures in modern

Indian history. She is frequently criticized for claiming to represent the *dalit*s, who remain among India's most socially and financially marginalized, while spending the equivalent of hundreds of millions of dollars on her memorials. However, the power of granting a disenfranchised community visibility, a past in which they may take pride, and their own utopias cannot be overstated. Mayawati's *dalit* memorials are homeplaces where the community may be uplifted, and hopefully, inspired. This is at least a visual and spatial step toward equality. *Dalit*s are now able to claim their equitable share of the built environment, in which they (re)present their history, albeit on Mayawati's terms.

Notes

1. For greater explication of how Lucknow's nawabi past informs the city's reputation as a religiously and culturally pluralistic utopia, see Tereza Kuldova (2016).
2. I borrow the term "ex-untouchable" from Zelliot (2010) who employs the "ex" as untouchability is prohibited in the Indian Constitution.
3. The term *Navayāna* ("New Vehicle") distinguishes this school from the three traditionally recognized branches of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayāna and Vajrayāna.
4. For more on Ambedkar's conversion, see, among other sources (Verma 2010: 56–57).
5. Between 1990 and 1992, 285,871 crimes against *dalit*s, including murder, physical violence, arson, robbery and rape were reported nationwide. These surely represent only a fraction of actual cases (Ghanshyam Shah et al., *Untouchability in Rural India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006): 134–5).
6. A *stūpa* is a funerary memorial and reliquary enshrining the corporeal remains of a Buddha or revered teacher, their personal effects or *sūtra*s (scriptures). Many *stūpa*s do not contain relics, in which case they serve as a metonym, signifying the Buddha's teachings, which, when followed, bring the ultimate Buddhist goal, *mōkṣa* (freedom from rebirth). *Stūpa*s also commemorate a momentous event, such as Ambedkar's conversion, which is marked by the Deeksha Bhumi Stūpa.
7. See also Tartakov (1996, 2000, 2012).
8. Although her surname is Das, Mayawati is almost exclusively referred to mononymously.
9. Sources on Mayawati's monuments include Loynd (2009), Sinha (2014), Jain (2014) and Belli (2014).
10. *Dhamma* is Pali for the Sanskrit term *dharma*. These words possess multiple meanings and share similar, although slightly different semantic con-

tent. *Dharma,* in the Hindu context, refers to each caste's social and religiously determined obligations and the cosmic laws, among other meanings. *Dhamma* refers more to the universal laws expounded by the Buddha. *Navayāna* Buddhists accept the Pali cannon, associated most with Theravada Buddhism, and this is the sacred language of the faith. I employ the term *dhamma* throughout this essay and its associated meanings noted above. The remainder of the non-English vocabulary is either Hindi or Sanskrit and reflects the most popular terms in *dalit Navayāna* Buddhist literature and which members of the community used during interviews with me.

11. For more on wheel symbolism in Buddhist art in India and Southeast Asia, see Zèphir (2014:192–194).
12. If Mayawati did access the legitimizing paradigm of the *chakravartin* in her commissions, she would not have been the first female Asian ruler to do so. Karetzky (2002–2003) argues that Wu Zetian of China (r. 690–707) promoted herself as a *chakravartin,* aligned herself with the memory of Emperor Ashoka, and instated Buddhism as the state religion to support her reign.
13. As Verma (2010: 61) points out, in his seminal work on Indian Buddhism, *The Buddha and His Dhamma,* Ambedkar overemphasizes and even distorts interpretations of caste in early Buddhism to associate the faith with social egalitarianism.
14. Utopias are often informed by a communal origin myth and "Golden Age" (Levitas 1990: 1).
15. "Lakhs of Dalits Gather in Nagpur on Dhammachakra Pravartan Din," *The Hindu* (October 15, 2012), accessed May 25, 2013. http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/lakhs-of-dalits-gather-in-nagpur-on-dhammachakra-pravartan-din/article4028614.ece Additionally, in his paper "The Elephant and the Globe: the Aesthetic Legacy of B.R. Ambedkar," delivered at the Society of Architectural Historians annual conference in Buffalo, NY, April 12, 2013, Padma Maitland shed light on the significance of the Deeksha Bhumi Stūpa in creating inclusive *dalit* space.
16. Greater analysis of the role of gender in Mayawati's commissions is beyond the scope of this essay. However, I address this in Belli, ibid.
17. Personal communication with Ram V. Sutar.
18. Mayawati publically announced her aspiration to be prime minister on a number of occasions (http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/why-can-t-i-become-pm-asks-mayawati-2837). See also Bose (2008: 257–265). Panchavati, the official name of the Indian prime minister's residence, is far less stately and recognizable than the iconic Rashtrapati Bhavan, which may account for why Mayawati's memorials quote from the latter.

19. Interview 07/20/2011.
20. For more on Mayawati's political career and Kanshi Ram's role in this, see Bose (2008:257–265).
21. "Mayawati Unveils Rs. 685cr Park," *The Times of India*, (October 14, 2011), accessed May 25, 2013. http://photogallery.indiatimes.com/news/india/mayawati-unveils-rs-685cr-park/articleshow/10356087.cms
22. For *dalit* understandings of this site and its art, see Tartakov (1996).
23. Personal communication with Anil Sutar.
24. Literally meaning "majority community" *bahujan samāj,* for which Mayawati's political party is named, refers to the masses who have been oppressed and ignored by mainstream politics.
25. Among others: Neha Shukla, "Culture department still mum on Mayawati statues," *Times of India,* (April 17, 2013), accessed 06/03/2015. http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-04-07/lucknow/38345923_1_statues-culture-department-state-department.

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CHAPTER 9

Past as a Metaphor in the New Utopian Imaginations of Heritage in Kerala

Rachel A. Varghese

"Kochi-Muziris"[1] has become a sign of the new imaginations and practices around heritage that have emerged in recent years in the South Indian state of Kerala. New heritage discourses have focused on "re-inventing" the local for a "global" audience. This re-invention for a global audience has taken place primarily through market strategies for tourism and capital investment, by means of branding of locales, and through invention of catch phrases and terms that redefine places as global destinations. The entire state of Kerala, for instance, has been branded as "God's own Country," ever since tourism was declared an industry in 1986. With stress on natural heritage, this label promised the visitor a paradise of pristine natural beauty. The hyphenation "Kochi-Muziris" has emerged in the context of a recent international exhibition of contemporary art—the Kochi-Muziris Biennale (hereafter the KMB). In this context, I will examine the heritage discourses that have come up around the early historic port site of Muziris to build the narrative of a past of happy cosmopolitanism for the city of Kochi that at once engages with and deviates from the temporal and territorial notions of Kochi's past. Furthermore, I will argue

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that the juxtaposition of Kochi and Muziris occurs through a process of narrative exclusion or re-appropriation of the past of both these locales where it deviates from the requirements of recasting them as global heritage destinations.

There is a considerable scholarship on the invention of "desirable and recoverable past" (Said 2000, 179) in response to contemporary needs, possibly starting with Hobsbawm and Ranger's (1983) seminal work *The Invention of Tradition*. Heritage, defined as contemporary usage of the past (Ashworth and Tunbridge 1999) or "as a mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to past" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995, 370) deals with its object, the past, in complex ways and in response to the current situation. Ashworth and Tunbridge (1999), for instance, based on case studies from central European cities, point to the "eradication of a rejected past, a return to some previous pasts or beginnings of a new past (ibid., 105)" as among the many possible ways in which heritage planning in these cities have responded to the abrupt political and economic changes in the post-Soviet era. Elena Karatchkova (2007) points out how the contemporary stress on "tradition" in the tourism narratives on the Indian city of Jaipur, Rajastan, has led to physical erasure of elements of the city that signified modernity. Marking locations as global heritage destinations thus involves re-inventing the local and infusing it with new meanings that resonate with trans-national/global consumers of heritage. I take Kochi-Muziris as a marker of these processes to see how past becomes a metaphor that instils the contemporary urban space of Kochi with latent values that recast it as potential cosmopolitan utopia, ready to be recovered.

Kochi as Host City

Organized by the Kochi Biennale Foundation, a charitable trust set up in August 2010, the first edition of the KMB was opened to the public on 12 December 2012. The KMB hosts a number of permanent and temporary exhibitions of art installations, including paintings and multimedia installations. It also organizes cultural events and public intervention programmes including a series of talks under the heading "Let's Talk." The third edition of the biennale was opened to the public on 12 December 2016. The event's mission statement states that the KMB seeks to "create a platform that will introduce contemporary international visual art theory and practice to India, showcase and debate new Indian and international aesthetics and art experiences and enable a dialogue among artists, curators, and the public" (Kochi Muziris Biennale 2016a).

Art Biennales have a long tradition starting from the Venice Biennale of 1895 (La Biennale 2016). Many of these Biennales are named after the host city, the Berlin Biennale, the Beijing Biennale, and the Bucharest Biennale being other instances. Like its counterparts, the Kochi-Muziris Biennale also centres on a single host city of Kochi. The present city of Kochi (Cochin being the earlier Anglicized name) is a part of the district of Ernakulam in central Kerala. Administratively it is part of the Cochin Corporation, which was formed on 1 November 1967. The Cochin Corporation is formed by bringing the early municipalities of Ernakulam, Mattancherry, and Fort Cochin; four panchayats; and three Islands, namely, the Willingdon Island, Gundu Dweepu, and Ramanthuruth within a single administrative division. The sea port of Fort Kochi was an important colonial and trade centre. This port city forms a natural harbour with the Arabian Sea as its western fringe. The Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala declared Fort Kochi as a Special Tourism Zone in 2005 (Department of Tourism 2016b). Mattancherry was the seat of the local rulers as well as an important centre for trade. The current landscape of Fort Kochi and Mattancheri is dotted by remnants of built structures and warehouses that mark the influences of its colonial and trading past. Many of these structures were renovated as part of the KMB and became its main venues. The venues of the KMB are spread over the region, but with a definite concentration in the Fort Kochi-Mattancherry area. In the post-independence period, urban and administrative activities of the Cochin Corporation shifted east to Ernakulam, which is separated by the Vembanad Lake from Fort Kochi and connected to the mainland by land.

With 14 main venues (13 of which are in the Fort Kochi-Mattancherry area and one in the town of Ernakulam), the first edition of the KMB (hereafter KMB 2012) was a mega event that gained wide publicity. It showcased works of 89 artists from 23 countries. During the KMB multiple interest groups come together. The Government of Kerala through its Ministry of Culture and Tourism is the primary sponsor of the event. Additionally, the KMB attracts a vast range of individual and corporate sponsors, including big business interests, hotel chains, and banking groups, sometimes with direct business stakes in Kochi. This is a scenario comparable to events of a similar nature across the globe.

In addition to being a site of convergence for the multiple interest groups, the host city becomes an essential element for the conceptual and thematic integrity of events like biennales in many ways. Eizenberg and Cohen (2015) have showed that cultural flagship events can imbue the

urban space with new meanings through artistic engagement with the spatial and cultural components of the particular urban space. In their case of the city-sponsored Biennale of Landscape Urbanism in Israel, the event has creatively experimented with certain entrenched stigmatized attributes of the local city of Bat-Yam to "(re)-present them advantageously to locals and out-of-towners alike" (ibid., n.p.). On the other hand, for instance the Vienna Biennale 2015 revolved around the idea of "Digital Modernity." The understanding here is that creative disciplines play a key role in the search for a new path towards positive change by re-tooling the "digital revolution" (Vienna Biennale 2016). Vienna becomes an "authentic, credible location" for this search because it had been "one of the centers of the previous era of Western Modernity around 1900, from which significant impulses emerged whose effects in some cases continue to be felt to this day" (ibid.). In this case a connection to the past of the city is established by conflating two ideas of modernity, the globalized twenty-first century digital modernity, and the early twentieth-century Western modernity. The thus forged connection is one of authenticity, established through the selective showcasing of the city's past. I argue in the following part of the chapter that the thematic unity of the KMB is authenticated through a similar process of invoking the past.

Kochi and the Cosmopolitan Narrative

> The Kochi-Muziris Biennale seeks to explore the hidden energies latent in India's past and present artistic traditions and invent a new language of coexistence and cosmopolitanism that celebrates the multiple identities people live with. The dialogue will be with, within, and across identities fostered by language, religion and other ideologies. The Biennale seeks to resist and interrogate representations of cosmopolitanism and modernity that thrive by subsuming differences through co-option and coercion. (Kochi Muziris Biennale 2016a)

The KMB wishes to have a global reach and conceives of itself as a platform for artists from across the globe. Artists from Kerala and other parts of India are an integral part of this spectrum. In presenting Kochi as the apt location to host the event, "cosmopolitanism" has become the key catchword. Emerging from Classical Western schools of thought, the term cosmopolitanism has acquired multiple meanings over the years (Kleingeld and Brown 2014). What all these diverse significations have in common is the idea of human beings as citizens of a single community. Apart from

this core concept, the multiple ideas that the term cosmopolitanism signifies in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are very different from its earlier meanings. The concept is used increasingly in relation to discourses of the global economic market and free trade. The idea of political cosmopolitanism on the other hand, enters the discussions around the role of international regulatory bodies in the globalized polity and about the concerns related to global citizenship (Held 2003; Cabrera 2008). The current proliferation of art biennales is often identified as one of the markers of "globalization" and trans-nationalization of the discourses around art (Carroll 2007, D'Souza 2013). "Partly predicated on attracting international tourism … [the art biennales] also function to assemble a large number of artists from different geographical regions and cultural backgrounds and thus to showcase, especially for curators, a wide range of work that can, in turn, feed into the ever-expanding museum and gallery systems worldwide"(Carroll 2007,138). If we consider this, we can immediately understand why the term "cosmopolitanism" becomes so attractive within this context and why it is turned into a thematic unifier for an event like the KMB, which is pegged on similar expectations.

> When we thought of Kochi as a venue, it was a conscious decision because no other place in India could have reflected the concept of cosmopolitanism better than Kochi. – Bose Krishnamachari, Artist Director and Co-Curator, KMB 2012 (Iqbal 2012, 11)

> The Kochi-Muziris Biennale seeks to create a new language of cosmopolitanism and modernity that is rooted in the lived and living experience of this old trading port, which, for more than six centuries, has been a crucible of numerous communal identities. Kochi is among the few cities in India where pre-colonial traditions of cultural pluralism continue to flourish. These traditions pre-date the post-Enlightenment ideas of cultural pluralism, globalisation and multiculturalism. Mission Statement, KMB (Kochi Muziris Biennale 2016a)

Kochi becomes the appropriate location for hosting an international exhibition of contemporary art by virtue of its "multicultural" "cosmopolitan" past. The choice of Kochi is legitimized by reference to its present significance as a commercial hub, which is again perceived in terms of continuity with a past of urban-mercantile cosmopolitanism. Kochi as a centre of

commerce saw the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the British, with their trading and colonial interests vying for political and economic control from 1500CE. The commercial significance of Kochi also attracted people from China, the Middle East, and different parts of the Indian sub-continent like Konkan and Gujarat. The narrative of Kochi's cosmopolitanism focuses on its past as a site of convergence for political and commercial interests from different parts of the globe. This is a past that can be accessed through surviving and vestigial architectural forms[2] and through a religious and linguistic profiling of its population in the present.

The official book of the KMB 2012 titled *Against All Odds* edited by Sabin Iqbal (2012) plays time and again with this idea of plurality. It calls upon the "latent cosmopolitan spirit" (ibid., 20) of Kochi to "invent" a "new language of cosmopolitanism" through art. The biennale is thus the ideal location that imbibes this cosmopolitan impulse by democratizing art practice through "dialogue among artists, curators and the public"(Kochi Muziris Biennale 2016a) and by subverting the power hierarchies to "balance the interest and independence of artists, art institutions and the public"(ibid.). The KMB's stated mission is to "*invent* a new language of cosmopolitanism and co-existence" (Kochi Muziris Biennale 2016) (emphasis mine) rather than merely cashing in on an existing one. This implies that the present of Kochi and by extension of Kerala is different from the ideal conditions of the biennale space. There is a conscious effort on the part of the KMB, through promotional material and public statements, to underline this notion. The organizers are vocal about the less-than-ideal conditions that they negotiated in their efforts to organize the event. The title of the official book of the KMB 2012 (Iqbal 2012), is a reference to the controversies and accusations of financial mismanagement faced by the event organizers that generated a huge debate and ill feelings towards the event within Kerala's public sphere. In narrating these events the book emphasizes the character of Kerala's public sphere and media as less than ideal.

> (A) news-hungry publics lapped it (the controversy) up with gusto and came to a hasty conclusion without understanding the truth behind 'the facts and figures.' (ibid., 34)

Thus, the idealness of Kochi as the host city does not reside in its present. The cosmopolitan conditions of Kochi are latent, and the authenticity of the existence of such conditions can only be sought in Kochi's past.

I argue that this becomes possible through a process of selection and exclusion, which allows for only a single-stranded narrative of the past of the city. It is here that the hyphenation Kochi-Muziris becomes significant in that it strengthens the strand by conferring it with temporal depth that goes back into the "mythical" past.

Rather than being a story of smooth assimilation of successive waves of influences, the medieval/colonial past of Kochi is in historiography understood as one of strife and contestations. It is replete with instances of conflict amongst the European colonial/trading interests and between the Arab traders operating in the region. One also sees the local rulers, like the Samuthiri of Calicut (another important port town of the time further north of Kochi) and the rulers of Cochin, drawn into the strife in complex ways showing varying levels of allegiance and enmity to the European interests over time (Bristow 1959, Menon 1911). The idea of a smoothly integrated religious tapestry also does not stand to historic attestation. To take a few instances, we see severe divisions and conflict between the early Syrian Christian groups and Catholics who come to the scene with the advent of the Portuguese (Menon 1911). The presence of the Jewish community in Kochi has, following the migration of the community *en masse* to Israel in the twentieth century, been reduced to a handful of people. This is not to completely discount the facets of cultural co-existence and pluralism of Kochi, but to argue that the biennale narrative requires discarding or downplaying of these conflicting aspects of Kochi's past and selectively playing up those facets that fit into the utopian imagination of the past as a cosmopolitan cultural melting pot.

Configuring Kochi-Muziris

> One main reason to do the Biennale in Cochin is its multicultural cosmopolitan aspect. When one goes into the real history of it which predates the colonial times the contribution is mainly in Muziris. Muziris really excites the whole project because you get to see that there is a strong history of more than 3000 years that existed, (…) which attributes to creative production. It is a great concept where archaeology or history or even excavations become a huge metaphor. At a time where religious fundamentalism or issues of border or issues of cultural difference become huge, there exists something like Muziris which has a history of plurality, living together, multi-cultural existence, exchange of ideas, exchange of religious tendencies. It becomes a great plot for creative thinking.[3]

The above is an excerpt from my interview with Riyas Komu, the director of programmes and co-curator of the KMB 2012. It points to the crucial importance of Muziris for the KMB, which we will now discuss in depth.

The historical Muziris was a port that was active in the early centuries of Christian era and played a significant role in the Indo-Mediterranean trading networks of the period. A number of Greco-Roman and Tamil texts of the time talk about Muziris, often in poetic and evocative terms. The popular and historiographical understanding of Muziris equated it with the present-day Kodungallur, in Thrissur district of central Kerala till recent years. Kodungallur is around 30 kilometres north of Kochi. The association of Kodungallur with Muziris in the writings from the colonial period onwards owe to its later political and commercial significance[4] and has been part of popular accounts of the region as well as part of the public imagination. However, apart from textual references, archaeological indications associated with the port for the period in which it was believed to be active had been absent till the late 1990s. A village called Pattanam, near the town of Paravur, in Ernakulam district came into archaeological notice around this period (Shajan 1998). Pattanam underwent multiple seasons of excavations and explorations from 2004 onwards.[5] The site yielded evidence in the form of multiple ceramic classes, beads of semi-precious stone and glass as well as other artefact types. The remains of a wharf and log boat were also found at the site. The artefacts pointed to the Mediterranean, West Asian, and Chinese contacts of the site as well as its connection to the hinterlands. This site's peak activity period corresponded to the time frame when the port of Muziris was active in the Indo-Mediterranean tradescape. These factors, along with the geological indications from the area, led the excavators to suggest that Pattanam could be ancient Muziris (Shajan 1998, Cherian et al. 2006). The equation of Pattanam with Muziris troubled the existing ideas about the location of the port. Hence the new equation led to claims and counterclaims in public dicourse in the early years. Local public at both the places responded to the situation by organizing seminars which brought together historians, local politicians and archaeologists, voicing their protests through elected representatives, and through active use of the word Muziris as a brand name for commercial establishments. The excavations and the debate surrounding the location of Muziris eventually meant the word Muziris acquiring an instant reconnaissance and the status of a brand, especially in the Paravur-Kodungallur belt.[6]

Parallel to these developments, the Government of Kerala initiated a Heritage Project called the Muziris Heritage Project (hereafter the MHP). The MHP visualizes a heritage-scape called the Muziris Heritage Site (hereafter the MHS) with a territorial spread of over 150 square kilometres including parts of both Thrissur and Ernakulam districts. Both Kodungallur and Pattanam fall within this geography. The entire MHS is imagined as a unified geography incorporating a number of heritage sites with differing chronological significance and with multiple religious and colonial referents. It also integrates landscape elements like waterways and living forms of heritage. Prior to the conceptualization of the MHP, the sites and elements that it includes were not understood as part of a single site. The integrity of the project lies in a narrative thread, which suggests that Muziris was a location with over 2000 years of history that welcomed successive waves of people from different parts of the globe as well as belonging to different religious traditions. The project is thus based on a utopian imagination of Muziris as proto-cosmopolitan global nucleus and a microcosm of religious co-existence. This is captured in the introduction given to the project in its official website, which states that:

> The Muziris Heritage Project intends to conserve and to showcase the culture of 3000 years or more for posterity. In Muziris, which was the doorway to India for varied cultures and races: Buddhists, Arabs, Chinese, Jews, Romans, Portuguese, Dutch and even the British history no longer slumbers but rather lends itself bare to the curious minds. (Department of Tourism, n.d.)[7]

The recent shifts in global heritage discourses require a heritage location to be characterized and marketed in terms of criteria, which are defined by international charters and organizations like the ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) and the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organizations), and that are seen as having "universal acceptability." A primary compulsion here is to identify what is termed as the "outstanding universal value" of a site. I have argued elsewhere (Varghese 2015) that the MHS attains its "outstanding universal value" through the narrative it constructs around and for Muziris. "The MHS becomes unique because it is imagined as the utopian landscape of Muziris that smoothly integrates and condenses different times and spaces into a single thread of over 2000[8] years, conceived as a process of assimilation of external cultures and people into an existing

culture"(ibid., 188–189). What is significant here is that this possibility of imagining an integrated heritage locale of the MHS was totally absent prior to the excavations at Pattanam. The identification of Muziris with the archaeological site of Pattanam figuratively rooted a hitherto floating idea of Muziris. The MHP in turn fell back on this sense of reality to "build a storyscape of MHS that frames and re-contextualises the otherwise disconnected sites and monuments spread across a vast geographical territory of everydayness" (ibid., 189).

I dwelt at some length on the MHS to underline that at the time of the conceptualization of the KMB, the public sphere was saturated with a heritage discourse around Muziris that was gaining currency. For the project, Muziris is "a primeval spice city where the world traders met (…) As they did business they equally became partners in producing an early model of cosmopolitanism with Muziris as a global nucleus" (KSICL, n.d.[9]). Hence, much like Kochi, Muziris becomes a proto-cosmopolitan welcoming space, a utopia of cultural co-existence in antiquity centred on maritime commerce. Thus we see the heritage discourse built for Muziris could have an easy resonance with the biennale narrative of Kochi. Cosmopolitanism is here defined in much the same terms for both Kochi and Muziris. Hence, the connection between the two locales would provide Kochi with a time depth extending into the realms of "mythology." The KMB, which was initially supposed to be called the Kochi-Biennale, recognized this potential when it changed its name to Kochi-Muziris biennale; this took place on 3 December 2010 through an order issued by the Government of Kerala.[10]

While the present-day Kochi is only about 20 kilometres south of the excavation site of Pattanam, there is no actual correspondence between the MHS and Kochi. How then does the hyphenation of Kochi-Muziris become possible? "The Kochi-Muziris Biennale seeks to invoke the latent cosmopolitan spirit of the modern metropolis of Kochi and its *mythical* (emphasis added) past, Muziris…", (Kochi Muziris Biennale 2016a) says the mission statement of the KMB. Muziris is evoked time and again in the promotion material and official statements of the KMB as the mythical predecessor of Kochi.[11] The word mythical is of significance here as the connection between Kochi and Muziris is not predicated on historical authentication but on the myth of a deluge, recurrent in tradition and sometimes in historiographical accounts, but without the necessary factual backing. The story goes as follows: in the year 1341CE, a major flood led to significant geological changes leading to the formation of the

harbour of Kochi. In association with this narrative of the flood it is often added that Kodungallur (interchangeably used with Mahodayapuram or Muziris), which had been the centre of trade till then, lost its prominence owing to the same flood and other historical reasons (Abraham 2009, Bristow 1959, Menon 1911). The mythical flood here becomes the link between Kochi and Muziris, which the KMB narrative plays up and recasts in such a way that it fits into a narrative of continuity. The rupture that the flood signifies for Muziris/Kodungallur in the traditional accounts is replaced by one of a territorially displaced continuity in the biennale narrative. What happens here is a functional re-appropriation of the flood myth, whereby the story is retold as one where the "proto-cosmopolitan" values of Muziris are transported to Kochi by means of the flood to recast it as a space with a time depth of several thousands of years which contains within it the potentiality to achieve a utopian ideal. I use the term utopia, following Bloch in the sense of a place and time that is not yet here (Bloch 1995; also see, Munoz 2009). The flood myth here also signifies the loss of an ideal past which is sought to be retrieved in the present through the space of the biennale.[12] The biennale space is not in itself a utopian space, but one which stages the potentiality of a utopia that is not yet here.

What does the biennale narrative do to the history of Kochi's "mythical predecessor?" Luis (2014) points out that KMB's version of the "ancient port town represents a false history in the guise of making a utopian future possible in the here and now" (ibid., 56). He argues that the conflictual relations that could have existed between the different trading and religious groups in Muziris do not become parts of the KMB's version of the port's history, while "additional ornamentation" of Muziris as the "land of milk and honey, cultural exchange and cohabitation that provides the feeble conceptual ground of KMB" (ibid., 56), is exploited.

I suggest, however, that rather than being a conscious omission of a history of conflict, a new narrative about Muziris is produced and permitted by the obscurity of its past. While the few textual references and archaeological indications are crucial pointers to the history of the port, they are not adequate to build an integrated storyscape around Muziris. At the same time, they serve as authenticity markers, pegs around which the story of Muziris can be built. In the context of the MHP, I have argued that (Varghese 2015), "the idea of Muziris is marked by twin potentials, the potential of historical authenticity, and an infinite potential for imaginative escalation to the realm of legend" (ibid., 194). In the KMB, two narratives merge, that is the narrative of lost cosmopolitanism of the MHS and the

narrative of Kochi's latent cosmopolitanism. Together they tell a story of continuity extending back from Kochi into Muziris through several thousands of years. The circuiting is achieved through the re-appropriation of the flood myth as a story of linkages rather than as a story of breaks. Presenting Kochi-Muziris as the apt locale to host a biennale of contemporary art involves within this logic a careful process of branding of the locale as one infused with values like cosmopolitanism, that have a resonance in the contemporary global heritage discourse. Here the past, cast as a cosmopolitan utopia, serves as a metaphor for the ideal that the KMB aspires for. The hyphenation of Kochi-Muziris adds time depth and staged authenticity to the narrative that can be accessed by selectively evoking the history and archaeology of Muziris. One of the most celebrated art installations from the KMB 2012, The *Black Gold* by Vivan Sundaram (2012), illustrates this process.

The *Black Gold* was an installation in two parts arranged in two separate locations within the Aspinwall House, one of the main venues of the KMB 2012. The first part is a 17 ft × 35 ft × 1 ft terracotta installation set up on the floor of a spacious hall comprising thousands of local pottery sherds from the Pattanam archaeological site (See Fig. 9.1). The second part of *Black Gold* is a video installation of 13 minutes length, videographed by cinematographer Shehnad Jalaal. The video (8 ft × 30 ft) has three panels and is projected horizontally on to the floor on a black monochrome background. The terracotta installation recreates the lost city of Muziris by means of the potsherds from Pattanam excavations. The experience of the installation is of encountering a landscape made out of potsherds. Black pepper corns distributed among the sherds signify the past of maritime exchange where pepper had been a major commodity. The context in which the work is displayed is of primary importance in many art installations. The *Black Gold* would not make the same sense elsewhere; it acquires specific significance within the context of the KMB to which the idea of Muziris is integral. *Black Gold* is not trying to recreate Muziris or Pattanam "as it were." Nor does it have the function of a museum display in which the artefact on display is a direct testimony to that which has not survived. However, the use of pottery sherds from Pattanam makes the visual experience of the installation more "authentic." In the artist's own words, "what is dug up and what is made available to one are what are called discarded sherds. What it communicates when you physically see them or touch them is that it is a piece of terracotta. But the aspect of age, of it having been dug out, carries a sort of resonance or aura."[13] Thus the installation capitalizes on the "aura" of the potsherds gained through its

Fig. 9.1 Close up, Terracotta installation, part of *Black Gold* by artist Vivan Sundaram. Photo: Author 2013

"materiality," "age," and the fact of "being dug out." Similar to the way in which the presence of black pepper evokes the image of Muziris as a hub of spice trade, the realization that the potsherds come from the Pattanam excavations plays with the imagination of the observer and orients the site-specific narrative providing coherence to his/her experience of the installation.[14]

The video installation plays on the other hand with the flood myth, with the terracotta city being flooded with water, muddy water along with pepper corns flowing through the landscape, altering and transforming it; the descriptive panel for the installation gives the following narration:

> A scene of devastation. A cityscape submerged in a cataclysmic spill-millions of floating peppercorns…The video image oscillates between showing a bed of detritus, a geological phenomenon, an emerging gestalt deciphered as history.
>
> Often in mythic and historic tales there is a tragic end—the flood.

There is the sound of the deluge.
There is the silence of the aftermath.

In *Black Gold* thus we see the "twin potential" of the idea of Muziris, that brings together the factual realm of historical authenticity and the imaginative realm of the myth, put into effective use to achieve an artistic recreation of the Muziris story that would acquire meaning in the location of the biennale.

While the discussion might suggest a simplistic linear process of Pattanam-Muziris identification leading to the heritage-scaping of the MHS which is appropriated by the biennale narrative around Kochi, the touristic promotion of the Muziris Heritage project is in turn a desired outcome of the KMB. This is indicated clearly in the Government Order renaming the event as Kochi-Muziris Biennale.[15] We have, at the Aspinwall house in Kochi, one of the main venues of the KMB, a prototype of the wharf roof and in-situ museum proposed to be built at the Pattanam excavation site. The KMB also makes interventions in different parts of the project area of the MHP. Gothuruthu in Paravur *taluk*[16] of Ernakulam district is an important site for the MHP owing to its association with the art form *Chavittunatakam*.[17] KMB organizes *events like* Chuvadi Fest 2014, a *Chavittunatakam* festival at Gothuruthu (Kochi Muziris Biennale 2016b) and proposes to turn Gothuruthu into an art village (Iqbal 2012). Thus juxtaposing Kochi with Muziris leads to the blurring of boundaries between the MHS and Kochi, forging new heritage imaginations in the region with tangible expressions. The new narrative can hypothetically disturb the existing notions of the past, of not just Kochi, but of the project area of the MHP as well. The manipulation of the flood myth renders to Kochi a time depth of several centuries. At the same time, it territorially displaces the history of the last few centuries of the "Muziris region." Thus Kochi, rather than Kodungallur or Pattanam or the MHS, becomes the true claimant to Muziris's past in the present.

New Narratives of a Past Utopia: Exclusions and Appropriations

The conceptual integrity of the KMB rests on the narrative of happy cosmopolitanism built around its host city, Kochi. Cast anew as Kochi-Muziris, the host city becomes the ideal stage with a potentiality for the recovery of the latent values of Kochi as a past utopia. I have argued that

this is a process that draws heavily on the past. Munoz (2009) notes how "the past, or at least narratives of the past enable utopian imaginings of another time and place that is not yet here, but nonetheless functions as a doing for futurity, a conjuring of both future and the past to critique presentness" (ibid., 106). Kochi-Muziris is set as a critique in contrast with the present "time where religious fundamentalism or issues of border or issues of cultural difference become huge."[18] It has been argued in the context of the KMB that exhibitions like the biennale offer the artists alternative spaces that are to some extent free of the constraints of profit-driven gallery spaces (Jeyachandran 2014) and allows "experimentation, free expression, and concurrent representation of different ideologies" (ibid., 140). Conversely, it has been pointed out that the claims put forward by the biennale organizers and representatives, who claim to have democratized art, are hugely exaggerated. It has also been suggested that in reality the space paradoxically subverts the very principles of democracy and dialogue in art practice that it maintains to further. Luis (2014), for instance, critically interrogates the "ideological presuppositions" (ibid., 55) of the KMB. He uses selected works from the KMB 2012 to argue that the assumption of the unified cosmopolitan space of the KMB, does away with the possibility of dialogue and conflict among the artworks produced and also fails to create "dialogical and dialectical relationships between the artist and the viewer" (ibid., 61).

What this discussion has tried to bring out is a different paradox, emerging out of the allusions to the past that the KMB makes. Constructing the narrative of past utopia of Kochi, we saw, plays with the temporal and territorial notions of Kochi's past, replacing it with new notions. It is a complex process of selectively playing up facets of the past, making mythological allusions, excluding incongruous elements, and of appropriating isolated historical and archaeological markers to authenticate new narratives. These tendencies of narrative exclusion and re-appropriation are also predicated on a selective privileging of places. We have seen that the main venues of the biennale are concentrated at the Fort Kochi-Mattancherry area, with only one of the 14 main venues located in Ernakulam. With the neo-liberal economic reforms setting in after the 1990s, one sees what has been called a "remapping" (Varghese 2012, 85) of places. The contemporary forms of urbanization, like Special Economic Zones and IT parks, are happening in villages and places near Ernakulam which were considered peripheral to such processes. While the Fort Kochi-Mattancherry region falls out of this new urban re-ordering of places, simultaneously it enters

into the global tourism narrative. With the entry of Kerala into the global tourism map, the tourism initiatives of the region came to be increasingly focused on the Fort Kochi-Mattancherry area. In this new spatial reordering, the Fort Kochi-Mattancherry area derives its meaning primarily as a repository of its colonial/urban past, a meaning that the KMB narrative accesses through its venues that are recognized markers of that past.

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Notes

1. The hyphenation Kochi-Muziris is achieved by juxtaposing the place name Kochi with that of the early historic port site of Muziris.
2. The colonial and religious architectural remnants of Kochi, especially Fort Kochi's past, are the key elements in showcasing it as a heritage tourism destination. See, for instance, Department of Tourism 2016a. This need not always be articulated using terms like cosmopolitanism and cultural pluralism in these cases. However, we have academic literature on Kochi that marks it as a cosmopolitan space.
3. Excerpt from personal interview with Riyas Komu, artist and Director of Programmes and co-curator of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2012–13 on 18 May 2013 at Kochi.
4. Kodungallur is identified with Muziris/Muciri on the basis of its later identification with Muyirikodu, mentioned in the Jewish Copper plates of the tenth century CE and Makotai or Mahodayapuram, the headquarters of the Chera rulers of the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries and in the later centuries of the rulers of the Perumpadappu *Swaroopam*. The region has had clear associations with the later Cheras. We still find place names here that signify its association with the Cheras like the Cheraman Juma Masjid and Cheramanparambu. The location of Kodungallur on the northern bank of Periyar also is in rough agreement to the description of Muziris as an inland river port given in the literary texts.
5. The first season of excavations at Pattanam was by the Centre for Heritage Studies, Thripunithura in 2004. This was followed by explorations in the Kodungallur-Paravur region in 2006 and nine consecutive seasons of excavations at Pattanam from 2007 onwards by the Kerala Council for Historical Research (KCHR). Both the CHS and the KCHR are autonomous institutes supported by the Government of Kerala.
6. I examine these in detail as part of my ongoing doctoral work at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Also See Adarsh 2013, Selvakumar 2006, and Varghese 2015.

7. The website undergoes periodic revisions. While the text changes, the idea of Muziris that it advertises remains much the same in all the versions.
8. In the promotional material of the MHP, the temporal span that it claims to cover often changes between 2000 and 3000 years.
9. By a Government Order of the Government of Kerala, dated 3 October 2009, the KSICL (the Kerala State Institute of Children's Literature) and the KCHR were assigned the charge of publications related to the MHP (GO(P) NO.225/2009/TSM dated 3 October 2009).
10. GO(Rt.)No.8398/10/TSM dated 3 December 2010.
11. "Through the celebration of contemporary art from around the world Kochi-Muziris Biennale seeks to invoke the historic cosmopolitan legacy of the modern metropolis of Kochi, and *its mythical predecessor the ancient port of Muziris* (emphasis added)" says a press release by the Kochi Biennale Foundation dated 17 October 2012. Also see Iqbal 2012 for similar evocations.
12. Luis (2014) proposes a similar argument. He suggests that the KMB version of Muziris story is a "false history" (ibid 56) where momentum in history is seen to be determined by natural powers (the flood) rather than historic forces. This serves an "eschatological" (ibid.) function whereby history is simplified into "fall from the Eden of cosmopolitan life" (ibid.) whose spiritual recovery can occur in the space of the biennale.
13. Excerpt from the interview with Vivan Sundaram where he talks about his installation *Black Gold* (*VivanSundaram (KMB Let's Talk Interview Series)*. 2012.http://kochimuzirisbiennale.org/interview-with-vivan-sundaram/. Accessed on 3 March 2013)
14. There are more ways in which the installation is vocal about the Pattanam-Muziris connect. The video installation is set inside a room towards the farther end of the exhibition space. The visitor enters the projection space through an antechamber. Here in the antechamber seven photographs from the Pattanam excavations are exhibited in two walls. Along with these, there is a map depicting the Indian Ocean trade route in antiquity. All the photographs are aerial views of the trenches with architectural remains. It is the images from the excavation that orients the visitors towards the video projection.
15. GO(Rt.)No.8398/10/TSM dated 3 December 2010.
16. An administrative sub-division. A district is divided into different *taluk*s.
17. *Chavittunatakam* is a dance drama form associated with the Latin Catholic Christians of Kerala and has visible Portuguese influence. These features allow the form to be presented as a marker of religious and cultural plurality of the project region.
18. Excerpt from personal interview with Riyas Komu 18 May 2013 at Kochi.

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CHAPTER 10

Excavating the City: Metro Rail Construction and Imagination of Past in Contemporary Jaipur

Garima Dhabhai

Jaipur, an eighteenth-century city in the northwestern part of India stands on the cusp of transformation as it embraces metro rail, becoming one of the few tier II cities in India[1] to have a metro line. As the metro enters the walled city[2] of Jaipur, it has come under contention owing to its purported effects on the old structures located there. The aspirational urbanity of Jaipur seems to directly conflict with its past. Varied interpretations of this *past* continue in the present period, sometimes labeled as 'heritage' by the state and at times, it lives on in memories and interpretations that are marginal to the official historical narrative of Jaipur. This chapter will bring out the congealment of these different urban imaginations at the moment

This chapter is a part of my ongoing doctoral research on Jaipur. The process of metro construction in the walled city is still underway and several issues raised here are far from resolution. An earlier version of this chapter was presented at a seminar on 'Life in the Indian City' organized by Humanities Department, IIT Delhi, in April 2015 and more recently in the Yale Modern South Asia Workshop. I acknowledge the comments received during those discussions and from the editors, Tereza and Mathew, which have led me to revise this chapter.

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of metro construction in Jaipur's walled city, beginning in August 2014. On a larger canvas, through the narrative of Jaipur metro in the walled city, the chapter seeks to understand the localizations of a generic 'world class urbanity' (Ong and Roy 2011) on the terrain of an old city as also the role of 'heritage' therein. The trope of 'world-class' city evokes a generic form of urban development, creating networks of similar infrastructure, services, and architecture in the Asian context.

The narrative of Jaipur's past is churned out by the state government through its policy documents, tourism brochures, and projects reports on restoration of the old city. A monumental city, conducive to a touristic eye, emerges prominently in these reports and documents, often obfuscating many other renditions of 'past', articulated by the local groups agitating against the metro construction. In them, we sense a religious overture reflected in their bid to protect roadside shrines and temples, ensconcing it within a framework of Jaipur as 'Chhoti Kashi'. Chhoti Kashi is used as an epithet for Jaipur by local Hindi media and several residents, for whom it is a hub of temples, akin to Kashi. Its space and architecture is therefore understood as bolstering that image centered on major shrines, most prominently those of Govinddevji, Chandpol Hanuman, Sitaram temple, Nawal Kishore temple among others. Interestingly, a lot of protests, pamphlet distribution, and signature campaigns organized against the metro by an amalgam of many groups under the banner of Dharohar Bachao Samiti (broadly translatable as Heritage Protection Committee) were organized at these shrines. This group comprises several smaller and somewhat obscure associations such as Mandir Bachao Samiti (Temple Protection Committee), Balaji Sevak Sangh, Jhotwara Youth Brigade, Bhartiya Hindu Sena (Bhartiya Hindu Army), Sakar Mahila Manch (Sakar Women's Forum), to name a few. The state-led 'heritage' discourse on the other hand also emerges as a somewhat coherent rationality despite the departmental disjunctions within the state. As per Lowenthal, *heritage* is 'a fashioned past, that will fix the identity and enhance the wellbeing of some chosen individual or folk' (1968). In the context of contemporary Jaipur, heritage echoes the imperatives of urban development, rather than is opposed to it. This is testified by the silence of Archaeology and Museums Department in face of such intense discussions about old structures in the city, which fall under its jurisdiction. The A&M Department, which shoulders the primary responsibility for the upkeep of old structures in Jaipur, had issued a 'no objection certificate' to Jaipur Metro Rail Corporation (hereafter JMRC) for construction work in a densely settled walled city.

Urban Development and Trope of 'Heritage'

The decade of 1980s in India saw a change in the perception of urban space from being majorly industrialized or administrative center to becoming hubs of service industry, and more importantly, the tourism sector took lead in many cities. As funding started coming from international agencies such as the Ford Foundation in that decade and more recently from the European Union and Asian Development Bank for reconciling development with urban pasts, Indian cities are catapulted on a path of heritage-laden development. In Jaipur, first urban conservation initiatives were underway in 1985 under the auspices of Ford Foundation and Jaipur Development Authority (Ford Foundation Records, 1985–1988). Therefore, we sense a gradual displacement of literature on decay of old cities (Naidu 1990; Arora, Hooja and Mathur 1977) with texts of urban regeneration in contemporary policy discourse (Jain n.d.). A World Bank report placed urban regeneration efforts within what it called the 'economy of uniqueness', with city being primarily envisaged as a culturally thick landscape. (Licciardi and Amritahmasebi 2012). 'Heritage' has become a buzzword in Indian urban policy discourse now and the recent launch of initiatives such as HRIDAY or Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana reflects this concern. The metro project seems to homogenize a city's skyline; however, the modalities through which it intersects with economies around heritage and *uniqueness* are also noteworthy.

Within the present urban planning regimes in India, transport system is a medium of circulation and growth. City Master Plans not only lay down the projected urban growth over a period of time, but also delineate ways to achieve that. Jaipur's three consecutive plans (1971, 1991, and 2011) have also been templates of its growth as a million-plus city. Increased need has been felt by planners to utilize Jaipur's existing resources in an optimum manner, including its cultural past (Ramanathan 2010). Master Plan 2011, which envisages future urban development of Jaipur, includes a separate section on heritage conservation and tourism. According to the plan, 'heritage assets are physical assets that when properly managed increase land values, local attractiveness and in turn, quality of life…heritage assets can be a strong generator of jobs, income and tourism revenue' (ibid., 231–249). Tourism has emerged as a major industry in Rajasthan, especially post 1991 liberalization of the Indian economy, when a decentralization imperatives granted state governments with autonomy to raise their own finances through international collaborations and private local

investors. PPP (Public-Private Partnership) model got an impetus and led to several commissioned projects to improve urban infrastructure and augment 'heritage' appeal of the city. Later policy frameworks such as Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission active since 2005, and now the concept of 'smart city' have also generated templates of urban growth, envisioned by the national government's Ministry of Urban Development-inducing mobility and governance of urban space, making it fit for investment opportunities. The post-1991 period saw mushrooming of heritage hotels in Jaipur, and the state government constantly tried to market Jaipur as a city conducive for investment in tourism infrastructure. Recently, main roads of Jaipur were beautified with 'traditional' motifs and 'living arts of Rajasthan' to welcome the delegates of Resurgent Rajasthan summit, which sought more investment for the state. Tourism development has become a major part of state policy over the last two decades, in tandem with the former royal families, who have turned into an entrepreneurial class in the context of Rajasthan (Ramusack 1995; Henderson and Weisgrau 2007). How are then the goals of metro construction and heritage tourism coming together?

One rationale for metro construction in Jaipur is increased congestion on roads as the number of people and vehicles rises. However, rather than improving the existing network of the public bus system, the state government decided in favor of metro construction. Paradoxically, out of the two envisaged corridors, the construction of Corridor 2 with lesser number of projected daily commuters was chosen as the initial route (Ramachandran 2012). The Phase 1 A of this corridor comprised of nine overground stations from Mansarovar to Chandpol Gate (southwest to northwest). The next phase 1 B is currently being constructed inside the walled city, stretching from Chandpol Gate to *Badi Chaupar*, running from west to east. This phase is projected to have 61% of the total trips of Corridor 1, while having only 19% of its total length (EIA Report 2013, p. 2).

It is believed by the state's developmental arm that the metro line in the walled city will 'minimize physical congestion in the busy central business district and preserve its cultural heritage and historic architecture' (ibid.) by reducing emission of pollutants by overground vehicles. Ironically, concerns were stirred by a part of local media on metro's presumed effect on the 'old' structures of the city. I use the term 'old' here with some qualification, since every structure talked of or invoked as such also accompanied formations of narratives around them, and in this sense, the 'old' was simultaneously being produced and validated in public discourse. The 2.3-km stretch of the underground metro line in the walled city is dotted with several monuments,

which provide the cover image for city's tourism industry, including Hawa Mahal, Isar Lat, Jantar Mantar,[3] and Chandpole Gate. All of these fall within the gamut of protection under the Rajasthan Monuments, Archaeological Sites and Antiquities Act, 1961[4] and offer specimen of state's version of 'built heritage'. Their presence in the 100-meter range of the metro tunnel centerline has placed the overall project in environmental category 'A' by the Asian Development Bank (hereafter ADB), which is also the prime financier of the project. In the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, prepared by the Jaipur Metro Rail Corporation, or JMRC, in tandem with the Safeguard Policy Statement (2009) of ADB, these structures are deemed as most important 'physical cultural resources' (EIA Report 2013, p 1). The construction of a metro line was in the report perceived as a danger for these monuments, mainly owing to vibration and ground settlement during the construction process (ibid., p. 2).[5] Apart from these monuments labeled as 'physical cultural resources' in the report, this stretch also contains various other old structures of social and historical importance, mentioned simply within the 'land use' assessment in the EIA report. Such structures, mainly temples, schools, residences, and shops, are not classified by the JMRC as worth of restoration. Some of these buildings feared destruction as the metro construction progressed. While several verandahs and old shops in the bazaars started developing cracks after the beginning of construction work, the JMRC did not consider their demands for restoration as legitimate. The responsibility for this was handed over to the Municipal Corporation.[6] The pre-construction building survey of these structures was also undertaken to ensure truth of such claims and possible resettlement of shops in the impacted zone (Survey Report 2013). As opposed to this perception of the state represented by JMRC, narratives of Jaipur's urban form, according to many other interpreters including temple priests, residents of the walled city, and activists of bodies agitating against the metro, included temples, verandahs, and shops in the category of 'heritage' structures.[7]

In this sense, reconfiguration of old structures' reflects political contestations and certain economic rationale- in terms of their valuation as 'heritage'. Claims to attain the label of 'heritage city' for Jaipur are already quite rife in some sections of urban administration, which work in consonance with transnational funding agencies such as the European Union or Asian Development Bank to re-create the historic landscape of Jaipur (Jain, n.d). One such program called 'Asia Urbs' was launched in early 2000s under the auspices of Jaipur Municipal Corporation and European Union, which conducted a pilot project on heritage conservation in the

walled city. Asian Development Bank started a project for renovation of traditional water sources in Jaipur such as wells as well as carry out repair work in the walled city since 2001. These funds, used to conduct pilot projects in specific areas, sought to reconstruct a visual domain in the city, which seems to fit touristic imagination of the space. This trend was emerging not just in India, but also in urban spaces across the Global South (Alsayyad 2001; Hancock 2008; Kirshenblatt 1995). As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett puts it succinctly, 'heritage is a value-added industry' (1995, pp. 367–280) and heritage tourism is premised upon such value-creation, both economic and cultural. David C. Harvey brings out the aspect of cultural valuation inherent in 'heritagization' in a comprehensive essay, where he examines the history of 'heritage' itself and links it to mnemonic practices in different time periods (2010). Thus, he draws out a connection between popular memory and heritage, which is a point that is missed out, according to him, in reducing heritage completely to 'leisure' under a capitalist mode of production (ibid., pp. 321–323). For the purposes of this chapter, I will use heritage both to designate an economic valuation serving tourism in Jaipur, as also a popular practice, churning out divergent narratives of city space.

As far as the state's valuation of past is concerned in Jaipur, almost a decade back, a separate administrative body, named Amber Development and Management Authority (later Rajasthan Heritage Development and Management Authority) was constituted to manage heritage resources of the city and to undertake the task of 'restoration' of selected monuments. This consisted in bringing back the homogeneous *pink* facade of the walled city with the aid of private heritage consultants, who could facilitate the display of a state-of-the-art version of Jaipur's history (Revitalization of Walled City 2009).[8] In this light, one may recount that even Phase 1-B of metro in Jaipur is being financed by the ADB, under whose guidelines 'physical cultural resources' are being named and conserved (EIA Report, 2013). All of this suggests the presence of an ostensible sensitivity toward 'heritage' in the state register, further testified through the promised legislation on heritage conservation.[9] However, this sensitivity toward heritage does not necessarily translate as sensitivity toward other popular histories of the city. An instance of one such popular narration is regular columns appearing in the local Hindi daily, *Rajasthan Patrika*, since 1970s, presenting a slice of Jaipur's history through stories of numerous old havelis, neighborhoods, communities, and streets. Earlier known as 'Nagar Parikrama', since 2006, it has been titled 'Heritage Window'. Although different individuals authored the two columns, the titular difference is quite palpable, given the

insertion of heritage in urban discourse generally in the twenty-first century. Several narratives presented here touch on registers of *tantra*, astrology, spiritualism, and Jai Singh's rituals—themes that are unorthodox in terms of their absence from the official narratives of heritage tourism in Jaipur.

Reordering *Pasts* in Jaipur: Official and Popular Narratives

In order to substantiate further the point about two distinct registers on which Jaipur's past gets represented—the official and the popular, let me begin with narration of a few events, which unfolded in the walled city in mid-2014, at around the same time when metro construction had begun. A fire broke out in the City Palace located at the center of the old city. The incident of palace fire was linked to the metro digging process by reports published in *Rajasthan Patrika*, which was also running a public campaign against metro construction in the walled city at the time. As per the newspaper, the *original* urban form of Jaipur, which Jai Singh II had envisioned, was based on complex astronomical calculations and his knowledge of planetary movements more broadly. His city was then simply not just a stone and mortar structure, but was deeply linked to cosmic energies and what many popular historians would call 'nav griha' (nine planets).[10] Number nine's importance in Jaipur's plan was also brought forth by modern-day astrologers, 'learned' locals, and numerologists, who were quoted extensively in *Patrika*. Many scholars and architects studying built form of Jaipur have also underlined this point by bolstering it with academic expertise (Nilsson 1995; Sachdev and Tillotson 2002). The newspaper hypothesized that the destruction of old structures owing to metro construction was the reason for the inauspicious fire in the palace, because it disturbed the cosmic balance which Jaipur's built form represented.

Undeniably, the city was rendered as extremely planned by the way in which it was organized along straight wide roads with shops on both sides and two-storied residential complexes (most dominant among these were *havelis*) in the network of inner narrow lanes. Each *mohalla* or neighborhood, spread across nine *chowkris* (square wards), was named after the occupational group which resided within it, which can still be fathomed in most parts of the walled city of Jaipur (Pareek 1984). Out of the nine *chowkris* in Jaipur, the largest was the one that housed the City Palace and other royal offices, and the rest were populated around it**.** The roads around this central ward were also intended as spaces of royal display, and

on many occasions the cavalcade of the ruler used to pass through them in full gaiety. Two important congregational areas in the bazaars of Jaipur were the *Chaupars* (public squares), which were formed at the intersection of two main roads, each running from north to south and east to west respectively. *Choti Chaupar* and *Badi Chaupar* or *Manak Chowk* are still hubs of flower vendors, roadside silversmiths, and grain sellers. Situated around them are also major Vishnu temples of the city, and depots for the suburban bus network of Jaipur. Structurally, these *chaupars* are an indispensable part of Jaipur's urban fabric, and are used for various social and ceremonial purposes, right from being the origin spot of many political rallies to being a resting point for visitors, who come to the market from nearby villages. The annual royal processions of *Teej* and *Gangaur*[11] also pass through the *Chhoti Chaupar*. After having undergone a series of beautification measures since the period of Ram Singh II in mid-nineteenth century, the *chaupars* are now being transformed into emblems of new urban modernity, which has incarnated itself in Jaipur in the form of metro rail. They are the proposed metro stations of underground line and also the nodal points of digging activity inside the walled city, letting out most amounts of noise and dust particles. It is here that several *artifacts*[12] were found during the digging process. In its EIA report, the JMRC mentions the *chaupars* as the 'intersection of the main axial roads', which go with an overall symmetry of Jaipur's streetscape. It further states, 'the *chaupars* were venues for social activities highlighted with water structures that are connected by underground canals' (EIA Report 2013). The report promises to 'restore' these public squares to their 'original state' under the supervision of state Archaeology and Museums Department. Similarly, as per the report, the department is also supposed to deploy its experts on the metro construction site 'to protect chance find of artifacts' while digging is underway (ibid.). Hence, the metro was seen as a marker of urban development, albeit encompassed within the already existing urban space replete with traditional built form.

However, many of these claims seemed to have lost ground after the actual work of construction began in the walled city, and the JMRC was obligated to meet its required deadline. It is here when imagery of modern transportation redefined the practice of heritage conservation. Several structures were reported to have developed cracks on their walls and roofs. It soon seemed as if the metro was materially reordering the city through creating a different regime of valuation, and suspicions were raised about priceless urban heritage getting lost in the wake of such modern developments.

Owing to the barricading, several minor and major religious processions had to be rerouted in the last seven months, notably of Gangaur, Muharram, and Bhanu Saptami. In the case of Muharram, after several rounds of consultation between the state authorities and *taziya*[13] committees, *taziyas* had to be resized in order to pass through the narrow space, which was left by JMRC in Chandpol Bazaar for the purpose (*Patrika*, 5 November 2014).[14] Similarly, after almost 270 years, in 2015 the Gangaur procession had to be taken out from a longer, different route because of the ongoing metro digging.[15]

Laments about lost spaces and changed patterns of socialization and ceremonies are commonplace in popular media narratives against the metro, especially those in the *Rajasthan Patrika*. Through a close reading of the newspaper reports on this issue, which are published regularly in the *Rajasthan Patrika* and *Dainik Bhaskar*, another Hindi newspaper circulated widely, one can sense the language employed in this debate, whose broad terms are 'development' versus 'conservation of the old city'. Since the JMRC itself had also delineated several cultural resources in its environmental assessment report, the newspaper reports offer alternative public perceptions of preservable resources, which include many other features of the walled city, obliterated in the JMRC-led state discourse. The *Rajasthan Patrika*, whose popular history columns have already found mention, had also been playing an active role in ordering urban spaces by organizing *Humraah* for Jaipurites every Sunday, which included traffic-free zones in different neighborhoods for people to gather and take part in several early morning activities like laughter clubs, yoga, and exercising. In line with similar events in other metropolises of India, including Delhi, this occasion celebrates *pedestrianization* of cities and creation of pollution-free environments (*Patrika*, 24 November 2014).[16] Its reports on the metro construction may also be seen in this light.

On 25 February 2015, the *Rajasthan Patrika* reported the unearthing of tunnel-like structures from the metro site at *Choti Chaupar*. The news was part of a series of reports, which had already been published in this paper over the last seven months, under the head of *shahar bachao, shahar banao* (save the city, make the city). Previous reports in this newspaper had brought to light an earlier discovery of a tunnel in the old building of Residency, now a school and a hotel, located outside of the walled city while renovation work was underway. A tunnel was also discovered under Rojgareswar temple, which was demolished in June 2015. Hence a narrative of Jaipur's unique urban form was created, with exact material specifications. The point about a system of underground burrows in Jaipur was

also made in the weekly column, Heritage Window (Heritage Window, 3 March 2015).[17] This story presented in the news seemed contradictory to the claims made by JMRC with respect to these so-called tunnels. They constantly designated them as 'water canals', many of which had existed in the city since its foundation, to supply fresh water to the center from the nearby river Dravyawati.[18] However, after the introduction of modern water pipelines and public taps, these canals fell into disuse, and eventually dried up. The numerous *baolis* (stepwells) in the vicinity of Jaipur are seen as connected through an elaborate network of canals, which opened up in the center of the city through the reservoirs located at the *Chaupars*. An initiative of the Rajasthan Government includes restoration of these stepwells and connecting them through a heritage walk way. By naming them as 'water channels', therefore, the JMRC is reinserting these structures into a more familiar narrative of Jaipur's urban history, which the tunnels could possibly direct elsewhere. In the popular narrative of tunnels, published in Heritage Window in March 2015, an intricate and dense web of tunnels running underneath the walled city of Jaipur connects several important royal buildings with prominent havelis and temples in the city. This was not only done for the city's security but was also a significant aspect of its built form.

The issue here did not remain confined to simply the intelligibility of the so-called artifacts, which emerged from the metro site; instead it was centered on the seriousness with which these structures were being treated. Media reports raised concerns about the absence of 'heritage' consultants and 'archaeologists' on the site, which amounted to destruction of structures underneath, instead of their proper excavation as promised. The JMRC however considered underground formations as major 'hindrances' to project completion, and put more emphasis on the post-metro redevelopment of the area, which will be visually appealing to the tourists (EIA Report 2013, p 3). These arguments of JMRC found favor with Dainik Bhaskar, which majorly competes with *Patrika* to augment its local readership. Underlying the arguments offered by these reports seems to be their respective notions of 'heritage' and the procedure to conserve it. For JMRC, these underground structures did not mean much in the larger paradigm of contemporary urban development, and they framed 'heritage' very neatly as a commodity to be displayed in service of revenue generation, through an amalgam with tourism. Nowhere in the EIA does one find a link between physical cultural resources and social life in the walled city. The monuments are essentially invoked in terms of their status

as either 'protected' structures in the state registers or as UNESCO properties. Consequently, there is a bureaucratic discourse of management of 'pasts' in urban spaces within the JMRC report. The narrative disseminated through the *Rajasthan Patrika* puts more emphasis on popular intelligibility of these structures and local narratives of their existence, apart from criticizing the incompetence of JMRC and the Archaeology Department, the so-called expert body. This becomes clearer after looking at the sources quoted by *Patrika* to back their claims.[19] The newspaper attributed the responsibility of the restoration of the excavated structures and artifacts to the erstwhile royal family of Jaipur. It even covered the details of a report prepared by the Maharaja Man Singh II Museum Trust's administration describing the revealed structures as 'tunnels' whose maps and plans may be present within the palace archives. The legitimacy of JMRC's narrative is, through such claims, being contested by the royal family's claim to 'authentic' knowledge about the city. This is not a new contestation on the terrain of Jaipur, a former princely state, where the royalty assumed a pro-active role in public life post independence. Maharani Gayatri Devi's involvement in the social and political field is quite central, and so are the annual public rituals, which the royal family organizes in Jaipur on the occasion of Teej and Gangaur festivals. The abolition of privy purses of royalty in 1971 by the central government under Congress party and their overall decimation in economic life of the states is now being resuscitated through invocations of heritage.

A pamphlet distributed by Dharohar Bachao Samiti highlights the importance of *chaupars* as centers of astronomical instruments or *yantras* created by Jai Singh II for the prosperity and preservation of Jaipur; *Chhoti Chaupar* is the abode of *Saraswati Yantra* while Badi Chaupar is home to *Mahalaxmi Yantra*.[20] While criticizing JMRC for destroying old tunnels and tanks beneath the walled city, along with their disavowal of guidelines laid down by the Archaeology and Museums Department, special emphasis was placed in the pamphlet on dismemberment of *gaumukh*[21] that were found under the *chaupars* by metro workers. The pamphlet further raises concern over the silence of the royal family over this destruction and remembers Gayatri Devi, the former Maharani of Jaipur, for her sensitivity toward the traditions of Jaipur. The *Rajasthan Patrika* covered their activities extensively and was also seen by many shopkeepers in Chandpol Bazar as sponsoring their activities directly. This campaign also intersected majorly with a protest against destruction of street shrines in the walled city called Mandir Bachao Samiti (Temple Protection Society). One of their marches from *Chhoti Chaupar* to *Badi Chaupar* also included distribution

of pamphlets, which connected the Vaishnava shrines of Jaipur to *Braj* region in present-day UP and eastern Rajasthan. It takes the narrative of Jaipur's urban form beyond the city itself into a realm of communal interpretation of Vaishnav temples in North India, reinforcing Jaipur's identity as 'Chhoti Kaashi'.[22] If one looks at the protest sites, most of them were organized around big and small Hindu shrines in the walled city, following the script of a spiritual landscape, which includes temples of Govind Devji, Chandpol Hanuman, Tarkeshwar Mahadev, and Sitaramji. Chowkris with considerable Muslim population on the north and southeast of the walled city are not a part of this geography of protests, and are also not the most affected by metro construction, perhaps owing to their marginality in the tourist map of the city. The Hindu underpinning of these protests got reinforced with their takeover by RSS (Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh) against demolition of several shrines in the walled city area, most importantly that of Rojgareswar Mahadev (devoted to Lord Shiva) (*Patrika*, 3 July 2015).[23] It is interesting to note that the Sangh protests are directed against the Bhartiya Janata Party government led by Vasundhara Raje, raising suspicion about their genuineness in Congress party circles.[24]

Conclusion

Quite ironically, both JMRC and the popular domain, as presented by the newspaper reports, share the rhetoric of 'heritage'. However, different approaches toward its definition and management in the registers of state and the opposition are quite blatant. Periodic public notices issued by the JMRC on their website explaining the nuances of expertise and technology being used in the construction work indicate their desire for legitimacy.[25] It seemed that the JMRC through such notices was repackaging a run-of-the-mill idea of urban development in idioms which were familiar to people and conservationists alike. This may be explained by the extensive use of spectacles such as street plays, folk performances, and regular dissemination of information to the public. The metro was not leaving 'heritage' as a political and economic rhetoric behind. However, for the non-state actors, especially organizations like Dharohar Bachao Samiti and opinions expressed in the *Rajasthan Patrika*, heritage acquired its legitimacy from its connection to a royal sovereign, Sawai Jai Singh and his plan of the city and its deployment in larger narrative of Hindu nation. Thus, the space of the city is linked to other religious and temporal landscapes, that of Kashi and Braj. In that sense, the space envisaged by

these groups alludes to a kind of 'utopic' figuration, to use Smriti Srinivas' analysis of this term. In her words, utopia is 'a design for place, encoding the imagination of pasts and futures within the present' (2015). In this sense, utopia inheres multiple temporalities and presents a spate of apparently incompatible realities. In this case, the imagination of Jaipur as a religious-spiritual landscape bursts forth amidst the barricaded digging exercise for yet another 'world-class' utopia—the metro rail. Srinivas also draws heavily, in last parts of her book, on this very image, that posits a past and future on the present terrain of Bangalore. On a major road and metro line route in the city then, there is also a small shrine of Sathya Sai, ensconced away from larger public glare, but very much a part of urban imagination and signification of space for its middle-class followers. So, the question of a legitimate urban image and its meaning persists, intertwined with the wherewithal to fashioning it on part of different proponents of that *utopia*—seeped in purported past or aspiring toward a projected world-class city.

The government-sponsored image of Jaipur's heritage is well on its way to materialization in the walled city, where a few streets have been earmarked as the site of a 'heritage walk' trail, which seeks to display cobbled paving, old-style lamp posts, and restored facades in addition to offering a glimpse into the city's select crafts. A similar imagination is also being proposed in the state-led discourse with regard to the *chaupars*, which are designated sites for two metro stations within the walled city. It is envisaged that after the completion of underground metro construction work, the *chaupars* will be returned to their 'original look', with beautiful fountains and railings. None of this redevelopment, however, speaks of the underground structures that are being unearthed while the digging is on. Some of these so-called artifacts might find a place in the museum store while others might be used during the projected redevelopment of the *chaupars*. For now, their utility for Jaipur's urbanity is deferred.

Through this preliminary discussion, the essay attempts to lay bare the practices of naming and conserving heritage in the wake of urban development. Here discourses of 'public interest' and instruments of their legitimation seem to be constantly shifting—oscillating between modern means of transportation to concerns over old structures. This incessantly floating language in which the right to urban space is articulated by various groups of people and the state, offers to enrich our understanding of cities, as politically constituted units. Within it the arrangement of selective pasts can be seen as a strategy of garnering authenticity for otherwise

unremarkable projects of urban development. In a more economic logic, these reordered pasts as 'heritage' serve to generate immense revenue though global tourism industry, shaping the contours of local space.

Notes

1. Tier II cities are the second-level cities as per a government grading structure, including most provincial capitals and major urban centers in India.
2. Walled city refers to the enclosed old city of Jaipur, which was founded by Jai Singh II in 1727, and today is just a small part of Jaipur that has extended much beyond the walls. In this chapter, we will use walled city to refer to this particular part of Jaipur.
3. Jantar Mantar had also been declared UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2010. This has resulted in its surrounding area being designated as a 'buffer zone'. 'UNESCO declares six Rajasthan forts as World Heritage Sites', *The Hindu*, June 22, 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/unesco-declares-6-rajasthan-forts-world-heritage-sites/article4838107.ece, accessed on 20 October, 2013.
4. See http://museumsrajasthan.gov.in/Monument%20&%20Sites%20List.pdf, accessed on 10.04.2015
5. Ibid, p 2
6. *Rajasthan Patrika*, 17 February, 2015
7. *Rajasthan Patrika*, 17 February 2015. It is noteworthy here that many interpreters of Jaipur's old urban form have placed the verandahs into the category of 'heritage', since they were constructed during the period of Sawai Ram Singh II. See Heritage Window**,** *Rajasthan Patrika* **,** October 2014
8. Amber Development and Management Authority, formed under the BJP government of 2005 continues to restore 'heritage' structures in the walled city area, albeit its work has come under major criticism from a section of conservationists. See 'Historic Blunder in Amber Facelift?' *The Times of India,* July 15, 2011, 'Amber Palace Renovation: Tampering with History', *The Times of India*, January 3, 2009.
9. Recently, a step toward drafting heritage bylaws has been undertaken by the Jaipur Municipal Corporation, which will include not only heritage monuments, but even *chowkris*, verandahs, and drainage system of the walled city. *Rajasthan Patrika*, 25 December 2015
10. Heritage Window, 22 April, 2006
11. These two festivals, celebrated in the months of Shrawan and Chaitra respectively, as per the lunar calendar, saw ornate royal processions taken out from the palace since the city of Jaipur was founded. The processions

have now been resignified as heritage by the state department of tourism and are major spectacles of the walled city.

12. An artifact 'resists absorption into the daily activities of the utilitarian world'. In that sense it is akin to being an art work—a symbolic ordering of complex emotions. See Tuan, 1980.
13. Taziyas are well-crafted structures, which are carried out in mourning of Hussain's death by the Shia sect of Muslims. In India, Lucknow, Kolkata, and Jaipur have major taziya processions on this occasion.
14. *Rajasthan Patrika*, 5 November, 2014.
15. *Rajasthan Patrika*, 23 March 2015; *Dainik Bhaskar*, 23 March 2015.
16. *Patrika Plus*, 24 November, 2014.
17. Jitendra Singh Shekhawat 'Heritage Window', *Rajasthan Patrika*, 3 March, 2015.
18. See Roy, 1978 and Sarkar, 2009. Also EIA report mentions it.
19. It consists mainly of old residents of the walled city and private collections on the city, apart from retired archaeologists and conservationists.
20. This finds mention in the pamphlet distributed in April–May 2015.
21. *Gaumukh* is a Hindi term for stones shaped as cow heads, considered to be of utmost religious importance by Hindus. Such stones have often been deemed as source of holy water, be it of river Ganga or of Galta, a bathing tank located in Jaipur's eastern hills, visited by people on auspicious occasions. Though the importance of Galta as a place of pilgrimage and as an archaeologically significant site has been acknowledged in official registers, *chaupars* have only been seen as public squares devoid of any religious importance, and hence the valuation of *gaumukh* seems to correspond to its imagination as such by state departments.
22. Pamphlet distributed on 13 April, 2015.
23. *Rajasthan Patrika, 3 July, 2015.*
24. BJP and Congress are two of the most significant contender parties for electoral-political power in India. For over 20 years after independence, till around 1967, Congress enjoyed dominance in political sphere; however, since 1980s, BJP has emerged as a significant force. Its legitimacy rests not so much on its role in the national movement, but more on its invocation of a Hindu past, as a marker of Indian nationhood. Its reliance on myths, symbols, and older idioms of power such as *rajdharma* is noteworthy. RSS or Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh is a voluntary organization, which also supports the political and social cause of a Hindu nation. Both these latter organizations have overlapping membership. For more on BJP, see Jaffrelot, 1996.
25. Public notices from 26–31 August 2014 on the JMRC site. See *www.jaipurmetrorail.in* accessed in October 2014.

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PART III

Urban Queer Utopias and Bodily Expulsions

CHAPTER 11

Utopia or Elsewhere: Queer Modernities in Small Town West Bengal

Paul Boyce and Rohit K. Dasgupta

Indian Utopias: Limits and Excess

Like all good contemporary scholars, we began our musings for the composition of the present chapter with a Google search—testing the current media environment for what it might generate in terms of unexpected information or signifiers. Our favored search term 'India Utopias' yielded some expected leads—links to information about Auroville, the website of a data-services provider, and so on. Each of these options signifies a spectrum of utopian imaginary concerning contemporary India, the former perhaps located in the ideation of a retreat from modernity, the latter firmly anchored in techno-commerce. Uncannily, in terms of the themes of the chapter, we also found ourselves directed to the website 'Utopia-Asia.com', which offers advice to 'Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)' tourists planning to travel in the Asia region. The advice on offer includes information on places to stay and visit, along with ready reckoners

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pertaining to law and culture in different countries. The travel guidance for India offers information that outlines a particular sociocultural-legal scenario. In particular, the website informs that in India:

> Gays are reluctant to be stereotyped in the public mind as being effeminate or transgender, and non-conformity is one of the biggest fears for self-identified LGBT. Most challenging to change will be the unique relationship between Indian sons and mothers. Women largely secure their social status by raising their sons to be gods—gods who worship their mothers. While daughters are farmed off to serve their husband's family, Mum is largely focused on getting her boy married. Once married, he has only to produce a male heir and then he is free to resume his natural inclinations. The pressure to please Mum is acute and most homosexuals in India will eventually succumb, whether they have any interest in the opposite sex or not. Thus, this karmic tragedy continues to repeat until the day mothers prioritize their gay sons' happiness or sons get the courage to just say "no." Yet there *is* hope. Rallying to their children's side during the 2012 Supreme Court review of the Delhi High Court's overturn of the buggery law, Indian television viewers got to hear some radical words from a large group of parents who chastised opponents—"how dare you say the ruling is anti-family! We *are* the families." (*Utopia-Asia*, n.p)

The Indian sociocultural situation is described on the Utopia-Asia website as one in which 'change' in respect of an assumed aspiration for an 'out' and self-identified same-sex desiring and practicing subject might be hard to bring about because of a particularly static psychocultural circumstance. In this version of South Asian culture family and kinship is not only analytically central but also located in an alternative to an oedipal psychodrama in which the mother-son relation prevails over and above a narrative of mother-son love being interceded by the son's realization of a mother-father eroticism (Nandy 2009).

The archetypical nature of this psychoanalytic framing of sexuality offers a version of culture that might be imagined as both fixed and excessive; fixed in the sense that it is portrayed as psychodynamically intrinsic within a narrative of cultural particularity, but excessive in that the affective connection between mother and son is portrayed as overly enduring and problematic. This erotic attachment is seen to intercede into other desires, whereby the son, on marriage, might produce a child, after bearing which he might then turn back to his 'natural inclinations', as Utopia-Asia would have us believe. In this sense, the South Asian male is portrayed as perhaps

always already a queer subject, whose attachment to the mother accents insinuations of inclinations toward same-sex erotic attachment (Osella and Osella 2006).

Against this background, in this chapter, which is based on ethnographic research conducted in small towns in West Bengal, India, we are interested in the symbiosis of intimate and everyday lives with wider socioeconomic processes among people of same-sex desiring experience. We focus on how such processes connect to aspirations for intimate relationships, both same-sex sexual relations and connections to community and kin (Boyce 2013a). Our particular focus is to move away from the growing work on same-sex desires in the larger more cosmopolitan sites of urban India (Dasgupta 2014, 2015; Dasgupta forthcoming; Shahani 2008) and to instead examine the everyday tensions and practices of sociality and same-sex intimacy in peri-urban Bengal as such life-worlds may relate to ideas of urban self-realization or otherwise. In turn, this work engenders wider questions about queer utopian imaginaries and ways of imagining relations between 'queer subjects' and others in the wider context of contemporary India.

We especially take up concerns around contemporary 'liveable lives' (Banerjea et al. 2016) and social visibility for same-sex desiring subjects. A prevailing narrative of queer life trajectories, in India and elsewhere, has been oriented around escape from small towns to larger and potentially more anonymous cities (Boyce 2007, Barton 2013, Weston 1995), where a sense of freedom from heteronormative social mores and familial obligations may be imagined and experienced. Migration to big cities has been imagined both geographically and temporally—cosmopolitan centers offering not only anonymity and potential social venues for queer subjects but also a seemingly more modern outlook and attitude wherein same-sex desires might more readily find expression. Engebretsen (2012: 194) argues that sexual marginality 'as identity, discourse and sub cultural community' provides an ideal place for interrogating issues of anthropological methodology and ethics and such research provides the means to reevaluate how ethnographic knowledge of sexual cultures is produced.

In this context, we consider the narratives of the subjects presented in this chapter as potentially undergirded by themes of excess, which trouble urban-oriented queer utopian narratives. We explore the themes of queer utopia as an embodiment and spatiality that might exceed containment within the hyper social visibility of small towns (where many people know one another), but also in terms of big cities as excessive domains—big enough to contain social difference and diversity.

We also seek to problematize the spatial-temporal and psychodynamic underpinnings of such narratives to open up questions pertaining to where, when, and in what terms same-sex sexual life-worlds might be realized. Considering these themes as they relate to the aspirations of some of our small-town interlocutors in West Bengal, we are also interested in how such migratory narratives might have led to an invisibility of same-sex experience *within* local and regional histories—small towns, and their close natal ties, being cast as sites of origination and departure in many mainstream queer narratives as opposed to the actual mise-en-scène of queer life-worlds.

Space, Future, Child

To preface the ethnographic context of our analysis, it is useful to recall that spatial imaging has been intrinsic to utopian thought. Oscar Wilde's oft-cited cartographic metaphor for the imagining of a world without utopias points to a seeming romantic validation of utopian ideals as connected to progress (and which might be read in conjunction with ideas that conflate queer futurities with urban locales—a kind of 'elsewhere' for our small-town informants):

> A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias. (Wilde 1891, n.p)

This is a vision wherein humanity might be achieved via a version of socialism that attaches a view of fully realized individuals to aesthetic ideals—humanity liberated from mundane labor and poverty to pursue arts and leisure. For Wilde utopian imaginary was connected to artistic humanism in these terms. He outlined an ideal of progress not in the sense of restless socioeconomic advancement but out of a commitment to an aesthetic ideal. This schema played with prevailing ideas of Wilde's era, evoking progress but purposefully locating that outside logics of capitalist, abstract utopianism (Also see Beaumont, 2010).

Utopian thought and politics has been critiqued for abstraction, by Ernst Bloch, or, for example, for presenting an idealized form of escape, a projective dream engendered out of capitalism and its estrangements and discontent, rather than actual political goals (Bloch 1986). Predating

Bloch, but in sympathetic terms, Wilde's utopian writing was founded on a critique of abstract utopia too and on a concrete principle of change. He sees change as a condition of human existence, where nothing is permanent. It is in the recognition of this that we might see in Wilde ideals of futurity as always already located in the reality of the present, and its discontents. His ideal of utopia might be said to signify that to which we may aspire but never realize. Arriving at utopia, in any present moment, is to experience a realization that in its own becoming emerges as mundane. Utopia, in these terms, always shimmers on the horizon; indeed, it may be defined *as* the horizon—a phantasm, always elsewhere.

The cartographic element of Wilde's utopia connects to Thomas More's originary Utopian narrative. For More, Utopia was imagined in geographic terms—an imaginary island that by its nature might never be arrived at, and which upon arrival might anyway not live up to its ideals. This spatial-temporal imagining provides a metaphorical resonance, linking queer life-world perspectives, and theorization of utopia and excess (e.g., in India or elsewhere).

This schema reverses the logic of capitalist individualism to conceive of capital as that that quashes individual potentiality against the liberatory potential of socialism—and of course the lineages and contemporary connections are evident (also see Eagleton 2011). But this is a logic that might now read as flawed against the background of contemporary aspirational ideals, which within the increasingly hegemonic flow of neoliberal market ideals anchor individual realization to the acquisition of prosperity in other terms—to market imaginaries and forces, the attainment of dreams through consumption.

If utopian ideals are a necessary or inexorable effect of the inevitability of discontent in the present—the ephemera of dissatisfaction—they might pertain especially to queer imaginaries. Queer perspectives on futurity have accented the unrealizable conditions for queer life-worlds in the present. A queer utopian view might emerge in these terms as an affective attachment to a better life, even if that life remains out of reach, this perhaps being the condition of its projected romantic existence. Jose Esteban Munoz' (2009) polemic on queer utopianism, as a critical instance, might be conceived after this kind of futurist perspective; an evocation of political and life-world conditions yet to come because to-date adequate conditions for the realization of queer subjects and life-worlds do not exist. In these terms, the queer (utopian) subject might be figured as excessive because necessarily existing beyond any present time-space possibilities, being staked

in futures and in other places (modernity/big cities). Such dislocation of the subject, temporally and geographically, links queer imaginaries to the Indian utopian problematic of the present volume—as figures of perhaps phantasmatic futurity, even embodying pressing, contemporary sociopolitical circumstances (also see Manalansan, 2003). This links to ways in which Munoz utilized Bloch's thought to evoke an idea of queer futurity out of anti-relational modes of engaging to position a politics of longing that locates in an awareness of historical struggles for recognition, but which might emerge out of the aesthetic actions of the present.

A more nihilistic version of such a utopian narrative queries the idea of the future and the present practices in which it might seek anchorage for queer subjects. Lee Edelmen points to the normativity or futurist imaginaries; their location in tropes of aspirational legitimacy and recognition in the present. These orient toward a future that Edleman repudiates. The child (and law) signifies the kind of future against which Edelman rails, as signifiers that carry with them forms of projected legitimacy. He famously rails:

> Fuck the social order and the Child in whose name we're collectively terrorized; fuck Annie; fuck the waif from Les Mis; fuck the poor, innocent kid on the Net; fuck Laws both with capital ls and small; fuck the whole network of Symbolic relations and the future that serves as its prop. (Edelman 2004: 29)

For Edelman, queer utopianism is located in a future orientation that is not really queer—because a truly queer position might not be realized via heteronormative aspirational tropes. This is not to suggest that reproductive futures might not have been central to the queer movement, in India or elsewhere. However, it is to stress the forms of political traction that have emerged around the figure of the queer son or daughter as signifier for recognition—the queer child as located within the normative terrain of socially/legislatively legitimate kinship as opposed to performing as singular figure at the margins of relatedness. Relatedly, an excessively legally focused strategy for the realization of queer legitimacies has also been queried in the period after the reinstatement of IPC 377 by the Indian Supreme Court—raising questions about why the contemporary queer subject ought to orient toward the state and/or law as the locus for legitimate recognition—in the future (Nagar and Dasgupta 2015; Narrain and Gupta 2011). This too opens questions about the direction of queer politics and activism in India and its oft orientations toward cosmopolitan imaginaries, and by association in the relation to the city—as urban political sites in which the queer subject might be at once realized but lost.

The City or the Self?

Siliguri and Barasat are small towns in the north and middle of West Bengal, respectively. Siliguri is the second largest town in West Bengal, with a population of 513,264 (census data, 2011). Siliguri is regionally significant for attracting new investment from out of the State. This is partly because of the city's strategic location near to a range of internal and cross-national borders. Hence, investment in the region has increased somewhat since the last State elections in 2011. Consequently, while in regional terms Siliguri is not so small, on a national scale the city certainly cannot be cast as a large metropolitan center. Barasat, on the other hand, is a small town just on the outskirts of Kolkata in the North 24 Parganas district. It relies mostly on the sale of agricultural products with cotton weaving being a major industry. Most of the residents work in Kolkata due to the town's close proximity and transport connections.

For Aveek, leaving Kolkata was very much about leaving his father. He had been living in Siliguri for about three years since 2012, at the time when field research for the present paper was conducted—and indeed Aveek has continued to live in the city since that time. Aveek felt that he had had a sense of himself as same-sex desiring since he was a child—not a realization he could put an age to, but just an always already present sense of sexual difference. Aveek had done well in his school studies in Kolkata and after graduation had passed exams to study medicine. Yet, he had felt stifled too by the trajectory that was opening up before him—a life mapped out across projected pathways to achievement and familial pride. Such aspirations resided in Aveek as somehow intolerable—a conformation to the role of successful son and so on that was unappealing in respect of what had felt like its looming normative constraints. Aveek reported this as an especially difficult and pivotal period in his life—one in which choices about the future transected directly with what were emerging with nascent imaginaries of what his life to come may be.

It was against this background that Aveek decided to leave home, to leave Kolkata, to alter the narrative he saw himself falling into and to open the trajectory that he wanted to claim for himself. He rejected medicine to study pharmacy, for which subject he had an offer to study in Siliguri. His decision provoked much consternation within his family—as a choice to study a less prestigious subject, with good but lesser prospects than a medical career per se. But for Aveek such a resetting of his future horizons was intrinsic to the path he wanted to tread—to reset the future against a

set of normative aspirations that were closing in around him. The rejection of medicine for pharmacy, the move from Kolkata to Siliguri, and the failure in terms of the narrative of successful son were intrinsic to the claiming of a queer life project.

Aveek became involved in sexualities activism in Siliguri, as one of the activists associated with founding 'Neel Phool (Blue Flower)'—a support and political advocacy group for sexual and gender minority persons in the North Bengal region. Against this background, what is perhaps so resonant in Aveek's story are its common trajectories and reversals. The father as figure of repressive authority acted as a reminder of familial oppression for Aveek—a signifier in a narrative of self-realization against a perceived normative masculinity. In these terms, a description of a repressive situation (in his family, in Kolkata) was conceived of by Aveek as generative. The psychodrama mother-son dyad (Nandy 2009, also see Sinha 1995) was not a strong feature of Aveek's story, or his usual account of himself. Rather, for him, his father loomed large as a figure to be turned away from. And this signified too the turning away from heterosexuality—and the locus or normative kinship. Orienting toward same-sex objects of desire (men in Aveek's case) meant treading the recursive narrative of rejection and repudiation. He did not confess his desires to his parents, rather he moves away, not only from his family and the city but from the constraints of heteronormative aspiration.

And for Aveek, the smaller, admittedly growing and rapidly urbanizing town of Siliguri offered a potentiality that Kolkata did not. His story might be read as a claim to a future, but a repudiation of the future in other terms. The smaller town, where Aveek was admittedly an outsider, offered room to breathe in a way that Kolkata, as locus of familial expectations and normative expectations, did not. Siliguri was a place where new horizons might open even within, or against the context of other imagined small-town limitations. And indeed, Aveek's move there occurred at a time when narratives and possibilities of small-town queer activism in India were beginning to emerge and consolidate. This had been brought about by the work of activists in such locations who did not orient toward cosmopolitan queer activism, and in parallel at that time growth in funding for queer-type community projects in regional towns in India, partly through investment in community-based rights and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) prevention work by state governments (monies which since that time have contracted but which were instrumental in helping to support small-town community projects for sexual and gender non-normative peoples) (Boyce 2013b.)

In evoking a small-town/cosmopolitan contrast in respect of queer life projects in West Bengal, it is important to note that Kolkata (as the main cosmopolitan context in the state) has no individual streets or neighborhoods identified as queer per se. While spaces such as the Dhakuria Lake, the Nandan Complex, and Minto Park are recognized as popular cruising grounds, there can be no straightforward mapping of such spaces as they are transient and constantly shifting with many former 'queer spaces' ceasing to exist or being transformed to other uses. However, despite this Kolkata attracts a large number of queer people from suburban and small towns scattered around West Bengal as a sort of utopic place which provides the temporary fulfillment of queer desires.

Naveen lives in Barasat, a suburban town just on the outskirts of Kolkata. As a 19-year-old, he was just about to start studying at a local college in his town. Naveen stayed with his parents in a small one-storied house with two rooms. He shared a tiny rectangular bedroom with his parents, which had a large bed, a small *alna*, and a small desk stacked with his books, a tape recorder, and a few audio cassettes. There were also a few posters of Hindu gods belonging to his mother displayed alongside two newspaper cutout pictures of the popular Bollywood films *Kaho Na Pyaar Hai* (Say its love, 2000) and a bare-chested Aamir Khan from *Lagaan* (2001). Naveen wore his hair slightly longer than his parents liked and often chose to wear worn-out jeans and a loose checked shirt revealing a small pendant of Baba Lokenath (a popular Hindu mystic in Bengal).

Naveen, who identified as gay, revealed his inability to be a part of the 'happening' gay scene in Kolkata owing to his location. When asked what urban scene he referred to, he spoke of the freedom to live openly in a big city, one where he could get lost and no one would be there to question his life choices. He spoke at length about Park Street, which he had visited a year ago with some school friends, recollecting the bright lights and restaurants. He also recalled the 'handsome men' who all noticed him on the streets. Naveen's exaggerated imagining of a queer Kolkata evoked a certain kind of complexity. The city was imagined as a utopian, in a sense—locations where erotic and queer pleasures were etched on to the cityscape. But this perspective might be seen as far removed from reality.

A city like Kolkata is officially and unofficially zoned with certain neighborhoods designated for different purposes. For example, there exists a flower district, a fish market district, and red-light areas for those soliciting sex. However, there exists no specific 'queer zone'. Pat Califia (1994) in her landmark essay 'City of Desire' argues that separating the city into

designated areas of specialization allows certain needs to be met but these are often superimposed upon other areas. Thus, while Nandan Complex, a government-run theater and cinematic cultural center, is a family-oriented area during the day, it rezones itself as a queer cruising ground to meet the excessive demand of its space.

Naveen attended the Queer Pride parade in Kolkata in 2009, which he explained opened his eyes to the queer political movement in the city. This was something different from what he had expected the 'utopic' queer scene in Kolkata to be. In his own words, he found this 'excessive'. The constant media intrusion and the fear of getting recognized back in Barasat played on his mind. Rather than feeling the sense of freedom, he described earlier he felt he had to hide his gayness. As Foucault (1990) has theorized when individuals imagine they are constantly under surveillance, they learn to regulate their behavior to conform to the majority behavior and not draw attention. Naveen's initial lamentation about the urban and anonymous freedom in Kolkata that was so nearby to his hometown of Barasat was dashed by this experience. It suddenly became that Kolkata and not Barasat was the panopticon he was so desperate to leave behind.

We met Sagar in 2011, who also lived in Barasat. He had finished a degree in English literature from a local college and had aspirations of moving out from his home which he shared with his parents. He was certain once had a job he would be able to move to Kolkata, as he called it the 'big gay city'. At the time we met, Sagar was surviving on giving some English tuition to school students near his home and made just about enough to occasionally travel down to Kolkata. He also had a few friends in Barasat who identified as *kothi*. When enquired whether this kinship and forging of a community with other queer men had developed a sense of belonging to his hometown, Naveen was ambivalent:

> They are okay. But they identify as kothi. They say I am kothi too but actually I am gay. I can speak English and do I look that girly to you? Have you heard of the Kolkata Pink Parties now? The city is becoming modern like Bombay.

It was interesting to see Sagar reject a sexual identity that he considered lower class (those who cannot speak English) and gendered (girlish, effeminate). Contemporary Indian sexual subjectivities are formed through a synergy of the global and local and as Naveen identifies sexual modernity is almost synonymous to building one's identity across a Western global template (gay not *kothi*). Naveen did not want to be 'regional', his aspiration was to be a part of the global urban gay identity based in Kolkata.

Sagar did try to attend the Kolkata Pink Party that was hosted at Roxy, a popular nightclub in the city but was rudely turned away. This incident led to a furor on social media much to the dismay of the organizers who were genuinely trying to create a queer space in the city for socializing outside the NGO and cruising places. As Dasgupta (2014) has argued, this incident marks the politics of recognition. While the incident was viewed as a case of transphobic screening, much more insidiously it was related to reading class. Class is linked intrinsically to sexuality. Henderson (2013: 71) argues that 'recognition takes many forms, though some categories of social difference like sexuality have been more amenable to a positive politics of recognition, while others like class have been less so.' Sagar's recounting of this incident signals the fraught nature of recognition and belonging within the urban queer 'scene' in Kolkata.

In Sagar's words, there is a sense of 'failure' that marks this incident. He kept saying '*ami parlam na*' (I could not). This failure of course goes hand in hand with capitalism and Kolkata's neoliberal modernity. Neoliberalism requires that one live within a system of success (economic, romantic, etc.) and assimilate within that culture. Sagar's inability to assimilate and rejection from the urban (classed) queer scene in Kolkata marks his queer failure (Halberstam 2011).

Sagar does not embrace this failure as Halberstam (2011:24) describes it, as 'alternative ways of knowing and becoming that is not unduly optimistic'. The city according to Sagar remains replete with multiple possibilities, especially since the reading down of section 377 and effective decriminalization of homosexuality in 2009, yet it also signals the dismantling of the 'utopia' that he had created for himself.

Sagar as of 2013 has found a small clerical job in Belgharia, another northern suburb which is some distance away from Kolkata. He does not yet make the kind of money he needs to be able to live in Kolkata but he has made peace with his hometown and his *kothi* friends. While suburban towns such as Barasat offer little space for anonymity and being able to pass marks much of the narrative, Sagar's life-world evokes the dichotomy that exists between the globalizing tendencies to assimilate to a global queer culture as experienced in large urban cities and the worlds inhabited by economically marginalized young men such as Naveen.

The idea of the big city as some kind of a utopia, one that contains the excesses of social and economic diversity, is challenged through Naveen and Sagar's narrative. Small towns such as Barasat are not just sites of origination and departure, rather they can become an important site that stands in contrast to the predominantly urban neoliberal queer modernity that gets evoked as a marker of development.

Room to Breathe

Turning back to the web site that we referenced at the beginning of this essay, and extending the elements of our ethnography in the wider field of media and representation, what we encounter is a version of Indian sexual culture which is equally dealing with these issues of location, kinship, and identity in an overtly simplistic form—this being both ironic and profound. The cultural stereotyping on display was sobering but revealing—signifying an attempt to convey something about Indian 'sexual culture' and values and locating this 'sexual culture' in tropes such as 'karmic cycles'. The website's information page attempts to analyze the contemporary situation in respect to same-sex desire in India via a seemingly culturally oriented account. The website posits the realization of improved futures of 'LGBT' subjects in India through a resolution and transgression of the mother-son psychodrama intrinsic to the given narrative as a way of opening up to new kinds of (sexual) futures—represented as more modern and progressive.

At the same time, however, this natal familial connectivity is also conceived of as the route to change. Utopia-Asia cites recent popular media interventions by families that were involved in advocating for their 'queer children' during the Supreme Court's review of the reading down of IPC 377 in 2012. Family is thus suggested as the key to change, as a force to mobilize against potentially regressive legal reforms. Themes and ideas pertaining to tradition and modernity are brought into relation here. The parents here evoke kinship as a means to stake a claim for the legitimately accepted same-sex desiring child—in law. Maternal (and fraternal) love acts here as a provocation within present politics aimed at positive queer recognition. The queer child is claimed as a valid subject for progressive modernity (and a lawful future) secured within the authenticating traditions of natal family.

This highly stereotyped version of Indian sexuality is problematic for all sorts of reasons. To name a few: (a) the reification of cultural archetype over and above attention to actual relations, (b) the projected imaginary of the out, self-identifying same-sex sexual subject as the only viable figure for queer futurity, and (c) the static cultural matrix of family life portrayed as both engendering and repressing queer sexualities. This is a familiar Foucauldian-type scenario, in which conditions of power are seen to affect the subject, emerging out of dynamics of repression. Repression in these terms becomes generative rather than suppressive or eradicating (Foucault 1990). This analysis has a particular resonance in the Indian sociocultural

scenario, where same-sex desires have so oft been described sociologically as both present and absent at the same time, recognized but disregarded (Srivastava 2004). This is why much contemporary praxis has centered on reclaimed histories (stressing same-sex desires in Indian 'cultural tradition'). Yet, much work in this vein has also accented uncomfortable relations with negative repressive past attributes of governance and power in India (such as colonial laws pertaining to gender and sexuality). In these terms, the past is often claimed and denounced in complex multifaceted cultural-political forms in queer praxis.

As an example of such a process, we can take the case from 2015, when Padma Iyer, a mother of a queer activist Harish Iyer, placed an advertisement seeking a groom for her son in the matrimonial section of the tabloid newspaper *Mid Day*. The advertisement read 'Seeking 25-40 well settl(e) d, veg(etarian), animal loving groom, for my son Harish (Caste No Bar) (Iyer Preferred).' Iyer claimed that three major newspapers refused to carry the advertisement because it was 'illegal' (on the basis of pertaining to a same-sex relationship). While several newspapers and media outlets both in India and the West have celebrated this advertisement as a significant and provocative exemplar in queer rights actions (one signified through heteronormative marriage), on closer inspection the advertisement reveals some of the complex ways in which queerness and social identity are reflected in contemporary India. The advert openly seeks a 'well placed' (read upper class) and 'Iyer preferred' (read upper caste) groom, for sanctioned matrimony in a state which still upholds IPC 377, and which criminalizes consensual non-heteronormative sex. Caste preference far from subverts tradition. The Iyer caste are Brahmins at the very top of the caste hierarchy. The imagined queer (homonormative) utopia then in this case might be read as building on the endurance of class and caste discrimination. Queer activists had heated debates on social media regarding this advertisement and came from both sides of the debate. While some were supportive of the gesture, others were quick to admonish it.

The kind of scenario described evokes complex resonances for imagining same-sex desires and utopian politics in India. As the editors of the present volume have proposed, evocations of Indian neoliberal futures are so often bound to the fashioning of the past as a consumable product, for instance through the neo-feudal excesses of contemporary fashion design and heritage spectacles merging with the projection of India as a contemporary superpower in various forms of public display. The past, both real and imagined, runs into the present and projected futures in intrinsic ways in Indian modernity—as ways to advertise a unique market and culture.

This same quality might be evoked in tensions pertaining to the location of queer/same-sex desiring/gender non-normative subjects within an Indian utopian ideal. Returning to the case of law, after taking consultations during 2012, the India Supreme Court ruled in 2013 that the prior 'reading down' of section 377 of the IPC 377 by the Delhi High Court in 2009 had been illegitimate and that the matter ought to have been referred to parliament. This was de facto taken and reported internationally as a recriminalization of homosexuality by the India judiciary, although in practice the scenario is more complex. IPC 377 might represent a criminalization of homosexuality but in a manner that outlaws sex against the order of nature as opposed to making explicit reference to homosexuality per se. Moreover, for the great majority of gender non-normative and same-sex desiring and practicing subjects in India, everyday discrimination and social inequity take place with little recourse to law. This may be especially so for those who are most disenfranchised, perhaps from working class, and/or non-urban backgrounds, and who might lack political, social, and economic capital (Boyce and Dutta 2013; Dutta 2012). In these terms, the queer social movements that have galvanized around and against IPC 377 may not connect well to the needs of many, who might feel alienated and excluded by the tropes of identity with which cosmopolitan queer social movements. In these terms, peri-urban, non-cosmopolitan queer subjects might have felt themselves as located outside of Indian project queer modernities—as subjects whose life-worlds do not represent a suitable modernity (Boyce 2007; Boyce 2013a, Dutta 2012). Jasbir Puar's (2007) concept of homonationalism has been influential in arguing how nations and societies where non-heterosexuals have been traditionally configured as 'criminals' and perverts have in more recent times included into its fold queer citizens as worthy of protection and legal recognition. But more insidiously, as she argues, this inclusion process is selective and in turn reinforces new forms of social divisions.

Within prevailing narratives, peri-urban/rural queer life-worlds may be represented as hard to reconcile with utopian queer imaginaries, in India. Such life-worlds might most often be analytically or politically located within imaginaries of repressive community and family; this being linked to the social pressure and psychodramas that militate against the realization of full, modern, self-identifying sexual subjectivities. This is a prevailing narrative within imaginaries of queer lives in small towns, as sites that need to be left in order for fully realized sensibilities to take shape.

This kind of imaginary of queer life-worlds as realizable elsewhere has been intrinsic to queer utopian imaginaries. For example, several of the stories from a recent anthology, *Out: Stories from the New Queer India*

(Hajratwala 2012) dealt with issues of queer migration to bigger cities and foreign countries but also about its failure and returning home. Angela Jones (2013) has reminded us that queer utopias might emerge in sites that resist normative regulation. Jones links utopia to aspirational ideals. She argues that utopia is a spatial feeling space with room to breathe. Citing Sarah Ahmed's evocation of happiness and 'our' compulsive need to find happiness, Jones (2013:2) proposes that queer futurity is not 'just about crafting prescriptions for a utopian society… but making life more bearable in the present, because in doing so we create the potential for a better future'. Jones recalls Ahmed's reading of the word aspiration to remind us of the word's etiology—associated not only with projects aimed for a future better life, but with breathing—in spaces that allow room for air (and by association in this case queer recognition). Our interlocutors also evoke what Ahmed (2010:121) calls the 'melancholic migrant', one who does not let go of their racist suffering and the pressure that queer immigrants face in 'forgetting' the racism of their surroundings to comply with the happiness of the queer scene. Ahmed identifies that the legal rights and recognition given by the State to queer citizens often act to obliterate and disguise the class and labor struggle of diverse queer worlds which do not conform to the projected queer utopia—and its often cosmopolitan locations.

Queer lives in South Asia evoke complex ideals of what futurity and utopia look like. The cultural matrix of Indian same-sex lives is linked explicitly to the idea of the repressive family and society and a resolution always points to the utopia being elsewhere. However, as our ethnography shows, the queer subject in India emerges beyond this projected reality and in several ways questions and disrupts queer neoliberal progress. Utopia in this context can then be thought of as hope as well as discontent. Hope indeed is an intrinsic quality of utopian imaginaries, of realizations that will be achieved elsewhere. While projecting new futures, Aveek, Naveen, and Sagar are also rejecting other ideas of futurity altogether. Queer utopia suggests hope for a better future, one that need not be dictated by Indian neoliberal policies. The potentiality of the future that emerges from peri-urban India gives an insight into the quotidian ways in which queer utopic visions are created.

The relationship between modernity, queer desires, and the Indian state is marked primarily through the fight for securing sexual rights that posit the queer subject as a project of Indian modernity, one who is capable to forge love and free to live according to one's choice. Our ethnography suggests that a feeling of failure also haunts the formation of queer subjects in India. In a neoliberal Indian state that engineers success for a few, failure and 'queer failure' to borrow Halberstam's (2011: 88) term becomes a

location for resisting, dismissing, and refusing to conform. Failure can be counted as a positional tool, 'the weapon of the weak' and as a form of critique. Queer utopia is an assemblage of such experiential realities of discontent but also the potential to resist neoliberal queer subjecthood.

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CHAPTER 12

Utopia Interrupted: Indian Sex/Gender Dissident Activism and the Everyday Search for a Life Worth Living

Caroline Osella

The problem: 'Myths, ideologies and illusions are resistant to knowledge'

Kuldova points out that 'revealing myths as simplistic or unrealistic does not help, since it does not rob them of their effectivity. Myths, ideologies and illusions are resistant to knowledge. We cultivate them even when we know better. The important question here is: towards what kind of future is this myth pushing us?' (Kuldova 2014, 21). In this chapter, I sketch some critical moments in recent Indian public life that engage us with this statement, and move toward presenting two possible futures: a critical and cautious, dented utopia; and a flight which chooses everyday livability and the known compromise with clearly delineated unfreedoms over the unknown half-promise of future freedom. Because 'our past is not their present' (Dinshaw et al. 2007), sex/gender activists in India are very well aware of problems with globalized liberal mythologies of 'liberation' and 'sexual subjects' but are also caught up in those mythologies via engagements which are at once tactical, mediated and ultimately affective

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(Khanna 2013). While trying to maintain a sense of caution and a double-consciousness about what might be possible in India's metros, or in small-town south India, still it proves impossible not to become drawn into imaginings of a different future for sex-gender dissident subjects. As soon as we choose to engage, we are engaged, from subject to subjectivated.

Euphoria for a New India?

Since the 1990s, economic liberalization and a changing demographic have been drivers in India's fast change, which is shifting social norms and expectations (70% of the Indian population is below the age of 35). Pre-liberalization, a few professions—teaching, medicine—were available to a few women, with manual work for the poor. Now, greater entry into higher education and a range of non-professional but non-manual mid-range jobs done in indoor respectable environments (call centers, shop assistants, computer data input clerks, etc.) make it possible for many respectable families to send women out (Jensen 2012). This might feel like a new gender regime coming in.

'Sexuality', too, has appeared—first as subjectively meaningful object and then as legitimate target of public sphere discussion and activity. The early optimism around the Section 377 campaign was part of an imagining of India as now properly postcolonial (activists stressed that the 1861 Section 377 IPC was part of colonial law[1]). It was also economic, connected to ideas that India—as emergent global powerhouse—would increasingly participate in liberal and individualizing lifestyles, impatient with the irrelevance of old structures and incubating a new range of choices and a falling away of old prohibitions. That optimism around 377 was also social-progressive, heavy with a sense that the time was right, that acceptance was already emerging,[2] that the appearance of phenomena like a gay press or some public gay figures signaled a possibility for sweeping away the old India—or of recuperating a precolonial Golden Age (Vanita & Kidwai 2008).

Even beyond the metropolis, we witnessed the rise of an emergent queer activism, and marveled at how fast public opinion seemed to have shifted and how much it was suddenly possible to see and hear. Having begun to work in a notoriously sex-gender conservative Kerala in 1989, it was extraordinary for me to receive notifications of a first Kerala Queer Pride in 2010. As Rao notes, the 'woman' question was being supplemented by the 'Queer question', and India seemed to be doing well all round (2014; Gugler 2015). However, the wonder and satisfaction was short-lived, as

decriminalization in 2009 was swiftly followed by reinstatement of Section 377, a story well told elsewhere and needing no recap here (Dasgupta 2015). Legal battles apart, the Indian homosexual subject had truly appeared and could not be made to disappear, and so too a new kind of young heterosexual was emergent. This was not the rural secret and illicit flirting—which nobody sane or moral ever intended to lead to marriage or mistook as a basis for lasting conjugal love—as recorded from way back (Dwyer 2004; Orsini 2006; Osella and Osella 1998), but was a confident and public form of heterosexual subject—desiring, flirting, dating and *known* to be having premarital sex (Mazzarella 2001) while enjoying a postmarital sexuality reaching beyond mere reproductive imperatives (Srivastava 2007).

Brosius is among those who chart the rise of hetero-romanticism and sexuality, through her story about Valentine's Day which, with its romantic cards and gifts, began to rise from the late 1990s. Valentine's appeared to open up several possibilities, including the bringing into public sphere of PDA (public displays of affection). As Brosius remarks, this individualized desire—'cornerstone of a predominantly neoliberal utopia' must be cultivated if subjects are to be drawn into the new consumer and lifestyle order; a key part of this has been the way that, 'the romantic encounter is pushed from courtship in the parents' home into the public sphere of consumption and new urban leisure topographies' (2011, 38–9). The orchestration of Valentine's day calls in the modes used for its images (clothes, gifts and bodies) and its language to an English-speaking, Western-styled young audience.

Another aspect of the new desiring hetero-subject is the rising acceptability of 'love marriage'. Plenty has been written here, and we have to be careful about overenthusiastic or strictly utopic evaluations of this, from several angles. The arranged-love hybrid, reported by many writers, remains the most acceptable and more common trajectory, such that Valentine's day and dating might still have little to do with later marriage (Uberoi 2009; Donner 2008). Then, 'love'—thoroughly deconstructable even in its most disguised and romanticized western liberal forms (Kipnis 2003; Lipset 2015)—still tends in India to be (as in Europe too) endogamous within a small group (Borneman 2005). And then again, new family forms centered on the conjugal unit as unit of romance and desire means yet another expectation on both husband and wife. Women still have to be housewife-mothers and impeccable family women, but also now forever youthful and sexy wives (C. Osella 2012; F. Osella 2012; Thapan 2004). Men have to be not just breadwinners and

householder-paterfamilias, but also good husbands, involved fathers—and the eternal romancers and seducers of their wives, as the controversial 'Like a Virgin' vaginal-tightening cream advertisement less-than-coyly indexes.[3] With economic liberalization, the performative demands on the consumer citizen of India who is called upon to showcase to the world at large the 'progress' which is being made all get ramped up another level: as usual, sex/gender is right at the heart as a field of power (Srivastava 2007; C. Osella 2012; F. Osella 2012).

Women in Public

In education and employment, in love and marriage, younger women in post-1990s India are stepping out and being seen—but with some clear gendered expectations on them, and with respectability remaining a key issue (Uberoi 2009; Donner 2008). Much has been said about the issue of harassment in public space, women's imperative to perform respectability, and their lack of safety even where they do so. 1990s woman can step out, but she must demonstrate moral purpose—she is off to work, to buy food, to pick up the kids from school and so on. She must also perform respectability on the street, by avoiding eye contact, looking busy, moving with purpose. We have many reports of sexual harassment, of the difficulties for women of renting property and living without a man or family, and of moving in the street, and Indian feminists note that Hindutva, Islamic reformist, Christian and Leftist secular modernist alike have all—all—been pushing for bourgeois respectability and decency (Devika 2009; Chant 2013). Despite female college and employment, regardless of the coffee shops and malls, still the 'bad public woman' and 'good household woman' binary are widely upheld.

This was made stark when on December 12, 2012, a 23-year-old physiotherapy student got on a bus with a male companion was raped by a group of men and violently assaulted to the point of near death, to die in hospital. Delhi, cyberspace told us, was not only the capital city and metropolis, one of the new India's lifestyle and consumer centers, but also notorious as India's rape capital. Activists spoke of police indifference, the failure of the courts to bring justice, the persistence of rape as something bringing shame on the woman and her family, the dread of salacious press and public gossip, and the ruined marriage prospects. Men from the elite classes have been untouchable in the courts, and many citizens held no faith in police and the legal system. In 1996, a 25-year-old law student was raped

and killed at her home, and the accused—son of a police inspector—was acquitted. In 1999, a fashion model was killed by the son of a member of parliament. Of 706 rapes reported in 2012, only one conviction was made. A much repeated statistic from the National Crime Records Bureau states that reported rape across India rose by 9% in 2014, with more than half of women raped being aged 18–30—part of the imagined 'new India youth demographic'. Valentine's day, 'love' and 'sex' in marriage and a rising rape culture seemed to be playing equal parts in the story of change. Just as in the USA, the limits of feminine respectability and masculine responsibility were up for debate (Wade et al. 2014), and the neoliberal utopic was revealed as not present tense but future conditional.

A key issue raised here is that of public space. In the face of sexual violence and public danger, how do Indian women handle public space, what stance can we take on it? One tactic we can identify as a form of counter discourse. This is what was offered by interventions like the pink *chaddhi* (pink panties) campaign and the blank noise project[4]. Some of the intent of some of the campaign work is basically saying—'Yes! We are indeed loose, alcohol drinking, cigarette smoking women and we will remain so, in your face. Get used to the new reality!' This new reality is probably, though, only really a feasible strategy for women of the metro upper middle classes. As Engebretsen notes, cities permit new and specific forms of new sociality (2012). We have to ask: what might work for a broader section—lower middle-class women who wish to hold onto respectability; small-towners anxious about gossip; homemakers not brought into the worlds of work and public space leisure? Here, the *Why Loiter* book and project crafted by Shilpa Phadke, Shilpa Ranade and Sameera Khan makes an interesting move (2011[5]). This project argues for pleasure and rights for all, not protection for women and demonization of males, and, while its engagement with caste could be more energetic, it takes care to point out the class angle at work in the neoliberal shopper's paradise of malls and coffee bars, where working-class young men are demonized and purged (see also F. Osella 2012, C. Osella 2012). The 'Why Loiter' project notes ways in which existing 'solutions' often focus on protection of women from men, which reinforces a gender divide, and infantilizes women, while demonizing a section of men. Phadke et al. propose that we think about friendly and unfriendly bodies in the city, noting that neoliberal clean city and safe consumer space rhetoric demonize the lower-class young men who loiter and catcall—but not the gossipy aunties who comment on young women, and ruin reputations by gossip and censure.

They remind us, too, that we overlook the importance of the class angle when we only genderize or chronotize the problems of the city, as 'stuck in the past' men versus 'modern women'. Sometimes, there is a class angle to harassment—lower-class men feel cut out of liberalization's bonuses and are resentful of the middle-class women earning, moving, shopping and taking leisure. Debates around campus harassment have also drawn this dynamic out, while taking more note of caste as independent dynamic (Rogers 2008). Sometimes, the problem can be diagnosed as the sense of inviolable privilege of wealthy or powerful men to do as they please around the city—but nobody is seeking to check their free movement, any more than landowning high-caste men could be easily constrained in rural economies (Ananadhi et al. 2002). Some recent work has gathered in examples of sex-gender violence to remind us that, for many subjects, this has long been an ongoing and banal reality—Dalits, women in conflict zones (Chatterji and Chaudhry 2014). Other writers have discussed the role played by neoliberalism's earning-and-spending gendered aspirations and the pressures it produces in ramping up gender divisions and helping to produce acts of thwarted masculinity and public violence (Desai & Andrist 2010; Srivastava 2012). Phadke and colleagues refuse terrified withdrawal into the private or more stringent (read violent) policing, and suggest simply—let us all loiter, and then see what happens.

Section 377, Discretion, Outing and Privacy

Meanwhile, another set of public issues around gendered violence force us to reevaluate the possibilities for choosing which aspects of India's new publics take center stage and what kinds of sexual citizen subject are being brought into being, which kinds are being purged or silenced with violence. Activists and academics have been critical of what they see as pinkwashing in states like Israel (Ritchie 2015 is an interesting review), and of the new homonormativity which walks comfortably and closely with late capitalism's grooming of young consumers (Puar 2006; El-Tayeb 2012). India's relationship with sexualness has been less than straightforward (sexualness being a very useful term, used by Khanna to point up the difference between 'sexuality' in the post-Foucauldian modern sense and a more complex Indian reality of sex acts which do not necessarily imply identity, stability, object choice, etc.—see Khanna 2013).

Even as activists were celebrating the 2009 reading down of the Indian Penal Code's colonial law, Section 377 (outlawing 'unnatural sex' and

used mainly against homosexual acts), a university lecturer at Aligarh was, in February 2010, secretly filmed engaged during sex inside his own private dwelling, and the resultant media used to shame and publicly destroy him, with the University authorities suspending his contract for 'gross misconduct' and charging him with 'immoral sexual activity'. Dr. Siras died in April 2010, and the situation was inconclusive, with police suspecting suicide, autopsy showing poison, six people—including University officials—arrested for suspected murder, and eventually the case closed for 'insufficient evidence' (Maureemootoo 2013; Singh 2016). Here, although the Supreme Court had been clear that Indian citizens have a right to privacy, and that Section 377 was dead, and although Dr. Siras himself had reportedly always wished to remain discreet, silent, hidden, he was, first, publicly outed against his will, then shamed and humiliated for perfectly legal acts which in many Indian circles were now possible for public celebration; he was then violated in his own home and finally had his life brought to a premature and violent end. A movie was swiftly made about the story.[6] NDTV's report on the case headlines itself 'When AMU

> What compounds Professor Siras' tragedy is that this happened to him in the period when homosexuality was decriminalised. The Delhi High Court struck down Section 377 in 2009. No one had any moral or legal right to 'raid' Professor Siras and film him. But they did. Sadly, society and his immediate surroundings were far more regressive than the law.[7]

This analysis pits the 'regressive' Muslim college against the progressive contemporary Indian nation, embodied in its judiciary. But this analysis plays into that 'tradition—modern' binary that we are suspicious of, and it refuses to acknowledge that by all reports, Dr. Siras was in no way a global gay subject, or wanting to be out and proud, or part of the same world as the anti-377 activists, such that naming him postmortem as 'gay' might be the least helpful thing we could do. The report also does not face the possibility that it is not tragedy compounded that utopian metro sexual freedom had not reached this 'backward Muslim college', but that this life and death are very much a part of neoliberal India's clear and violent setting of the terms on which sex-gender freedoms will be given. And even so, as El-Tayeb (2012) makes plain, homonormativity can be especially stringent against Muslim spaces, Muslims being a community deployed in Europe and in India alike as the most backward and antinational of subjects (Haritawarn et al. 2014). The signs of the out gay male metro

Indian, who loves, marries, consumes and courts respectability (Dasgupta & Dasgupta 2016), and who can be tolerated by the nation and celebrated by globalized gays, are not to be found in the story of Dr. Siras.

Anil/Mariya: 'When we embrace this freedom, the intolerant society can brutally end us'

I turn now to a hauntingly similar case, less well known because situated in Kerala, rather than spotlighted Delhi. Again, right in the wake of an imagined Indian neoliberal-enabled utopia of liberation, open-ness and sex/gender freedom, local society makes itself felt in the life of a non-conforming subject by way of a long history of harassment culminating in violence to the point of death, with the death marked—again—by scandal, morality discourse, cover-ups, activist protest and a police-judiciary refusal to engage, except via cover-up and denial. Again, we note the double standards at play in public life, where cisgendered and (apparently) impeccably heterosexual men in public life are able to continue even in politics and government, despite being tainted by involvement in illegal trafficking of young women drugged, raped and coerced into rape-sex rings, and where public culture makes plain that shame falls upon the girls and women who bring such events out of hiding (see e.g. Kerala's 'ice cream parlour case' and the 'Suryanelli sex scandal'[8])—while sex-gender dissident subjects receive zero tolerance, public scandal and a violence which is tacitly enabled and supported by many.

This story concerns an everyday Indian, someone who lived both as a man and as a woman and who found themselves caught in a way on a cusp moment, where older ways of being queer and trans in small town and rural south India are being supplemented by new globally legible identities and styles. Anil Sadanandan/Mariya was born in 1973, grew up, had an arranged marriage and lived in a small south Indian state which was moving from a society where—as I found during my 1980s fieldwork—some male-bodied people lived as oracles of the Hindu goddess (*velli-chapadu*), grew their hair long, wore saris, jewelry, became the goddess, possessed by her and dedicated to her. 1990s Kerala was transforming into a society where people might now name themselves—using English lexemes—as *gay* or *trans*-folk and might engage in wider social networks and more globalized styles of self-presentation and action. Anil/Mariya worked in local government but was also very active in several community groups from way before the pride movements began to gather speed. They

had been central in the early support group 'Loveland Arts Society (LAS)', and active in AIDS alliance, and HIV awareness and prevention work. Anil/Mariya asked for divorce, began to live their desires, and was in the forefront of organizing, planning and public representation when in 2010, Kerala held its first ever 'queer pride' march. In 2010, Kerala was the site of an emerging queer movement, and Anil/Mariya was among those who would now choose to self-name and identify with the global term 'trans—'. But here we need to pause: In her obituary, Sumathy Murthy notes that Anil/Mariya refused to sit simply in the space of gay male or transwoman but reached out to other groups facing harassment and hate, such as lesbian organizations (link below). Anil/Mariya kept both names and pronouns active, and shifted around a variety of trans—and gay identity moments and styles, keeping alive a gay male Anil and a transwoman Mariya (personal communication, Deepa V). Anil/Mariya's life and choice of shifting identifications speak to Khanna's 'sexualness' and ask us to allow a more nuanced, fluid set of life possibilities and analysis than a simple linear move from traditional ethno-queer to modern trans-subject. More helpful here than any meta-narratives is grounded work which traces the lived complexity of Tamil *aravani* engagements and disengagements with families, Hinduism, state, neighborhood, caste, employment markets and NGOs (e.g. Govindan & Vasudevan 2011; Rudisill 2015).

This was no longer Keralam's specific ritually marked or temporally spatially bounded space for male-bodied feminine folk, but part of a newly emerging possibility to participate in a secular everyday identity as trans—and queer, brought into a different part of the public sphere as an activist. Keralam's emerging 'queer pride' movement was part of that moment's bigger India-wide swell and push to remove and then celebrate the removal of the colonial section 377 legislation outlawing 'unnatural sexual acts', but used specifically in practice to harass people engaging in male-on-male sex acts. In 2011, Keralam's second queer pride event website notes:

> We celebrate the love that was decriminalized by Chief Justice A.P. Shah and Justice S. Muralidhar of Delhi High Court in the historic Naz Foundation verdict of July 2, 2009.
>
> We call upon the Supreme Court to uphold the judgment in its entirety and secure the fundamental rights of India's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender citizens to live a life of dignity, equality and free expression.[9]

Anil/Mariya's story sits then in a time-space where new gendered positions and identities are becoming publicly visible in Keralam, and where general public awareness is budding around questions of gender and sexual dissidence, claims for rights, questioning of familial authority to enforce arranged marriage, the voicing of demands to be allowed to make a livable life beyond the earlier range of choices: ritually sanctioned religiously inflected occasional cross-dressing, double lives of extreme discretion and concealment, despair and suicide, or flight to the metropolis such as Mumbai or Bangalore. Anil/Mariya then was one of a new breed of publicly identified and identifiable figures, out and proud, active and campaigning, but not naive about what this might entail. Anil/Mariya's Facebook quote about themselves was 'I Am Coming Out.' As many commentators noted, they well knew that this promise of freedom and right to live was also tinged with danger.[10]

As news reports recount, we have the barest of details about what happened. On May 9, 2012, in Kollam (Kerala) 39-year-old Mariya (Anil Sadananadan) was murdered, throat slit and stabbed in the stomach. Chili powder had been put onto the body to confuse police sniffer dogs. Several commentators note that 'hate pamphlets' had been distributed around the neighborhood where Anil/Mariya lived during the final weeks immediately before the murder, while after the murder, many noted the reluctance of press to either report it at all or to report it as specifically the murder of a queer/trans-person. When in some spaces the queer angle was allowed to surface, it did so in sensationalized and predictably hateful manner—with a suggestion that Anil/Mariya might have been HIV positive and revenge murdered by a lover angry at infection. This idea—knowing that Anil/Mariya had been a longtime fervent HIV and safe sex awareness activist—has absolutely no grounds and serves only to show how scandal, gossip and abjection stick to the abject right into the supposedly modern liberal public sphere of a vauntedly educated and modern state.

To date, there is still confusion around the murder, and the people arrested in its immediate wake were not confirmed and brought to trial. The queer and trans-community in Keralam was rocked by the death, coming just days after joyful and excited planning meetings for Keralam's 2012 Queer Pride. As with other events of sex-gender violence recounted above, local community, police, judiciary and press alike have not come together to identify and deal with perpetrators, but have come together to confabulate confusion and an inconclusive failure of justice. As in USA, where the Black Lives Matter protests continue to unroll in the face of

unspeakable and unchecked violence, neither liberal democratic state nor consumer free market seems to have much to offer those who seek utopia or even the more modest goal of a livable life.

Reactions to the events I have sketched point up for us some of the ways in which people are surprised, shocked and wrong-footed by gendered violence. Sometimes, it is analyzed as unexpected throw back; sometimes as exceptional spectacular tragic event; sometimes it is taken on as a banal repetition of the 'same-old same-old', even amidst the shiny coffee shops. But sometimes, gendered and sexual violence also gets understood as incrementally rising exactly alongside the rise of sex-gender 'freedoms'. This worrying possibility is raised by the temporal juxtaposition of events above, and given substance locally by claims that Kerala cis-patriarchal masculinity may actually be in a moment of violent 'manful assertions', to use Roper & Tosh's (1991) helpful phrase—reconfiguring and renaturalizing itself into a neoconservative neopatriarchy (Kumar 2016; see also Devika 2009).

'What Kind of Future?'

Kerala has a long history of acting as ground for utopic fantasies, within and beyond the state. When the state democratically elected a Communist government in 1957, it drew national and international Leftist attention and hopes for radical change (Jeffrey 2001; Krishnaji 2007). Activists and academics who confuse matriliny with matriarchy have long turned to Kerala in the hope of finding anything from a more sex/gender egalitarian society to 'empowered women', with disappointing realities (Arunima 2003). In the 1970s and early 1980s, the 'Kerala model' was produced, offered up and avidly consumed (especially in the global development industry) as utopia, based on a set of 'quality of life' indicators (Franke & Chasin 1992; Parayil 1996). Kerala scholars were forefront in disturbing the rosy picture and pointing out both the who-and-what left out of the model and the comfortable political implications of accepting the model, for a world which was looking for cheap conscience-salving rather than radical redistribution (e.g. Tharamangalam 1999; Raman 2010; Devika, J. 2009; Eapan & Kodoth 2003). From the 1980s, the Indian state energetically promoted itself (with subtext of superiority over neighboring Pakistan) as another kind of utopia. This model was not, as in Kerala, based on socialist state intervention and funding, but on free democracy, and a liberalizing economy bringing prosperity and development. There

is no need to re-repeat—as many have charted—the wide range of hopes for change which surfaced in the neoliberal moment and which have been bitterly dashed for many subjects.

But finally, I need to move back to the need for those of us who are counted in as 'western modern liberal' subjects to keep on provincializing ourselves (Chakravarty 2001). We cannot stand in front of this material and be in a space where we replicate some of the crude work done in 1970s and 1980s by feminists who basically took stance that 'the more they become like us, the better that is for them' (a familiar move and well critiqued by many, with Mohanty's 1988 'Under Western Eyes' as landmark text). As Mohanty reminded us, we cannot look at events like those above and find ourselves effectively saying—'Kerala culture is the problem', or 'Indian menfolk are the problem'. We do not want to produce the beloved subject of development—the perfectible woman—nor the demon subject of the developing world's hopeless lost cause—the indigenous unreformable conservative man. (The microfinance story is full of this problem.)

We can turn instead to political anthropologist Manuela Ciotti here, who critiques the long production of the 'naive sexless Indian' and who asks us to allow in a desiring subject who might not be the modern liberal individualized one nor the postmodern neoliberal consuming one (Ciotti 2011). This can bring us into coeval conversations across difference which are respectful of difference without being structured by self—other binaries, and which understand India's present as also our present, the dynamics of sexualized violence as worth a transversal analysis.

Trading off: The Modest Goal of a Life Worth Living

The rise of utopias of desire has been followed by—or simultaneously accompanied by—their vicious shredding. The events I sketched above remind us of some ways in which myths of freedom underwritten by democratic state and free market can take us beyond even the cruel optimism which persistently clings (Berlant 2011), and lead us onward and into urgent danger zones. Many have tried to untangle Kerala's notoriously high suicide rate. Questions of unreachable material aspirations, desire aroused but then thwarted, the pressure of modernist respectability and social-gender conservatism, and the falling away of traditional familial and therapeutic support are major themes to arise (Halliburton 1998; Chua 2014; Jayasree 2015). Suicides of movement protagonists

have also become part of this scene, as activists find themselves caught in the celebration-exhaustion, hope-despair, unity-splintering dynamics. As Kuldova grimly reminds us of our utopian desires, 'we cultivate them even when we know better' (Kuldova 2014, 21).

Perhaps, the question of what kind of future can only be answered for each subject, who in the end is forced to make decisions and maneuver, while framing such choice as they have within the span of a single life cycle. And here, the unquenchable modern human subject's desire for utopia, or freedom, or progress—or simply a more bearable life—has to make some tough and hasty decisions.

For some, migration out of India offers a partial line of flight. Who wants to fight their whole life? Paradoxically, it is in the non-democratic and hyper-neoliberal states of the Gulf that I have met and interviewed several widows, divorcees, discreetly same-sex desiring subjects, and members of Dalit, Muslim and Christian minority groups who tell me that they are able to build a safer and more flourishing life there, out of their unhomely homeland. These subjects eschew activism and utopia in favor of a low profile and the reassurance right here right now of bodily integrity and safety, livelihood and some small pleasures.

A UAE-divorced working Malayali woman who reported her migration as having freed her from a range of ills at home, which ranged from the gossip of jealous older non-working women, through attempts to control her life by various family members, blocks to promotion and career progress by insecure bosses, and even on to entrapment and rape attempts from male colleagues, told me: 'In India there is democracy but what is it worth? It does not bring freedom, it does not bring a well-run society.'

For many migrants, Kerala and India offer no sense of freedom, not even of safety. Economic development has not brought with it any kind of utopia, but not even, for many, their more modest—and surely reasonable?—goal of a livable life. In a world of trade-offs, migrants tell us that the new India is not underwriting livelihoods, safety on the street, privacy at home or specific freedoms deemed desirable. But this is not a problem only in India.

Western media reports on the Delhi rape which ignored Western rape cultures and/or imagine India as laggardly patriarchal, miss a chance to understand the moment which draws us all in, as coevals, to promises broken before they even begin to unfold (Griffin et al. 2012; Wade et al. 2014; Wilger 2015; Goel 2015). The NDTV report on Dr. Siras' death does not face the possibility that it is not 'tragedy compounded' that utopian sexual freedom had not reached this 'backward Muslim college', but

that this life and death are part of neoliberal India's clear and violent setting of the terms on which the new sex-gender freedoms will be given.

As soon as Valentine's day emerged, so too did violent resistance to it, in very modern forms such as YouTube shaming and street violence. Resistance to the threat of individualized self-chosen 'love' is part of a wider scene in which contemporary Indian marriage—like marriage everywhere—is tightly bound with questions of status, property, projects of social mobility and norms of propriety. Let us not draw a binary between the consumer-normative festival of the north American white wedding (Ingraham 2009) and an Indian wedding, for they are part of the same field, albeit differently inflected. The Indian gay wedding joins other global gay weddings as part of this project of normative respectability, as the news link below[11] eloquently demonstrates, with Mumbai Mother seeking a 'vegetarian groom for my son' (Dasgupta & Dasgupta 2016; Conrad 2014). The USA-Indian Seema & Shannon union is a perfect match in every sense.[12]

Anil/Mariya lived a life caught in a time-space moment between two difficult situations. Keralam's traditional way, like many societies, held a space for trans-subjects, but it limited this space as a ritual one, an occasional one, one which had to exist alongside Indian norms of family, marriage and parenthood. Keralam's post-2009 space was one in which Section 377 had been decriminalized and many imagined that they were on a straight line toward freedom, new possibilities. Queer pride events and that the possibility of resisting marriage, of coming out, were part of this. But modern free societies are no more accepting of trans-subjects and not less prone to sexual violence, *and arguably and possibly in some ways more prone*, than are imagined 'traditional' ones (Stotzer 2009; Griffin et al. 2012; Gavey 2013).

Indian women may become desiring and desired wives; their husbands may continue to enjoy the double standard and—if they are men of status and power—continue to escape the laws around consent, trafficking. Indian women may not easily take their sexy new underwear out of the marital bedroom and off to the pub or into a hotel room with a non-spouse. College professors or rural spiritual specialists may not continue a discreet and non-nameable, unremarkable, sexual and affective life, in the world where everybody must be known and named, and where a cross-class and homosexual act continues to provoke abjection. But equally, queer folk who act up and speak out have to be guarded and know themselves to be often at risk. In the face of such trade-offs, choosing the quiet life must be a blameless and respected option.

Dented Utopias

For activists in India, participation in cautious and wounded affective economies of hope and solidarity can help move on from violent events and back into action. Utopia is dented, the terms of the neoliberal present and the expectations about who will be invited to the feast have been stringently laid down, but still, the table is not set for all time, new guests may arrive unexpectedly, and whiffs of change are still giving hope of future nourishment.

Complex positionings and ambivalence mark events and any stories we tell will always be partial readings, always missing the point—because there can be no 'point' as such. In 2009, jubilation followed the decriminalization of 'unnatural sexual acts'; there was less notice taken of the Indian election commission's permission for a new third category beyond M/F on ballot forms. Activists debated the terms of claims for protection and rights, with many gay-identified people clamoring to enter the mainstream and to purge the public face of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans-(LGBT) into a recognizable 'global gay'—respectable, middle-class, forward caste Hindu. Such schisms, silencings, betrayals and abjections are wearily familiar in other spaces of sex-gender activism (see e.g. the rewriting of Stonewall events to replace historical protagonists with white gay males, Retzloff 2007; Lenon 2013). By 2014, Section 377 was reinstated, but India's Supreme Court recognized transgender as legal status beyond the binary, leaving an extraordinarily ambiguous legal and social paradox for activists to face.

June 2016. As I finish the first draft of this chapter, my Facebook status flashes up to me that Bharathi Veerath, Uber India's first female taxi driver, has been found dead in her home in Bengaluru:

July 2016. I asked a Kerala Queer activist to comment on this paper:

> yes …. the historical moment of Pride In Kerala, where suddenly we're seeing govt interventions on behalf of Trans people and wondering how meaningful these will be, and the same time sexuality is still criminalized under 377… And we r still watching our friends die.

August 2016. Kerala Pride has announced itself once more, for the seventh year, on August 12, with this wide-ranging call:

- My body, my right. My sexuality, my right.
- Don't imprison, criminalize or pathologize diversity.
- Implement and develop transgender boards and transgender policy.
- Justice and legal protection for gender and sexuality minorities against discrimination and harassment.

- Homosexuality is not a crime or mental illness: Amend IPC 377.
- Human lives are not limited to the binary of masculinity and femininity.

The largest-yet parade and march is planned for Calicut/Kozhikode—a place somewhere outside of both utopia and despair, known equally for its open-secret Men who have sex with Men (MSM) life and for its Islamic reformism (F. Osella 2012). Here, I end and invoke the spirit of Jose Munoz Esteban, who recorded ways in which we may find ourselves cruising utopia—not marketized and given ones, but utopias of our own making. We may well here be cultivating myths despite our better knowledge (Kuldova 2014), but we are trying our best to sidestep the cruelty of marketized promises and intervene as collectives in the crafting of our own desires, while refusing cynicism, nihilism or despair (Muñoz 2009).

Notes

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CHAPTER 13

Queerness's Domain?: Queer Negotiations, Utopian Visions and the Failures of Heterotopias in Bangalore

Jacquelyn P. Strey

The future is queerness's domain…Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality for another world.

José Esteban Muñoz[1]

Introduction: The Power of the Middle Class in Brave 'New' India

Speaking of queer women in India, scholar and queer feminist activist Amalina Davé said: 'Space is power, right? We don't have a lot of it… Public space is problematic when it comes to women. You find less and less queer females moving around in public spaces' (Misra 2015). Working in Delhi with Qashti, a collective for queer and transgender women, Davé's comments highlight the complex intersection between sexuality, gender and public space, a precarious position in which queer women in India live. This chapter investigates the negotiations and tactics employed by these

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individuals to access and claim contested spaces; it does so by focusing on the lived experiences of middle-class queer women in contemporary Bangalore. India's current position in both the global economy and wider queer consciousness offers an interesting context to examine the entanglement of neoliberalism and urbanity. This 'urban turn' in the anthropology of Asia and South Asia has treated the city as an important focus of scholarship in part due to the immense political and economic changes that occurred during processes of neoliberalization (Engebretsen 2012; Prakash 2002; V. Rao 2006). As Nair notes, these changes remade the city as 'a site that recasts the meanings of citizenship, democracy, and indeed modernity in contemporary India' (Nair 2005, 1). As citizenship becomes more rooted in Indian cities (Appadurai and Holston 1999), the diversity of emerging urban areas ensures that this process is deeply uneven and fragmented. Therefore, while formal national citizenship might stipulate the same rights to all, 'substantive citizenship (has) usually been inflected by class divides, and are often also racialized, ethnicized, and gendered in various ways' (Desai and Sanyal 2012, 8).

These divisions can be readily seen in Bangalore, where national neoliberalizing processes in the 1990s opened the way for a tech industry boom resulting in the city being nicknamed 'India's Silicon Valley'. This breakaway success of Bangalore in the tech industry left space for the growth of a new middle class which supported a view of India as a 'global nation' and 'brought an affluent transnational Indian middle class of IT professionals to the centre of a new nation building project' (Radhakrishnan 2009, 9; See also Upadhya 2009). This new 'global Indianness' makes possible the coalition of a patriotic Indian identity with the economic success of the West. At the same time, Hindu nationalism was gaining significant political power with the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The BJP, a right wing, conservative nationalist party, is founded on a longing for 'recognition of themselves and India by the Western powers through assertion of cultural difference' (Hansen 1999, 12). India's economic success, as well as the optimistic hopes for future success, resonates with the Hindutva ideologies of an India financially competitive as well as traditionally and morally superior to the West (Kuldova 2014). Exemplified by the BJP's campaign of 'India Shining' that took advantage of this economic confidence, the new Indian middle class was advertised to the global audience as a guarantee of future economic success (Sitapati 2011, 41). As Ravinder Kaur shows, this progressiveness was also marketed under the Brand Indian campaign 'to establish a viable and globally

competitive corporate brand for the Indian nation' (Kaur 2012, 604). This worked to both transform the imaginary Indian nation into a 'brand' to be sold to other nations and promote a vision of India that could counter the images of India as backwards and unclean. This 'New India' was therefore imagined with a clearly defined, prosperous future that was not only attainable in theory, but actually predetermined. In some ways, then, the success of this New India was tied with the successful branding of India within a globally competitive neoliberal market.

These new middle classes, at the intersection of both a booming economy and an ideological nationalist sentiment, have come to represent India's utopian future and exert tremendous ideological and symbolic influence within the Indian nation (Kaur 2012, 604; see also Baviskar and Ray 2011; Chatterjee 1990; Jaffrelot and van der Veer 2008). Although this growing middle class has garnered attention and focus both within India and by scholars abroad, the actual fact is that this middle class represents a small minority of the actual Indian population. A recent survey by the Pew Research Centre puts a global middle-income average at between ten and twenty dollars per day (Kochhar 2015). So even taking this generalized estimate, the middle class in India represents just two percent of the 1.2 billion Indians within the bracket, a very small minority of the total Indian population (Venkataramakrishnan 2016). This highlights the disproportionate amount of economic and symbolic capital this new middle class holds as the 'success story' of a rapidly progressing neoliberal India. As Fernandes notes, these visions also work to make invisible those marginalized social groups for which this 'global Indianness' is unattainable (Fernandes 2004). This 'politics of forgetting' refers to 'a political-discursive process in which specific marginalised social groups are rendered invisible and forgotten within the dominant national political culture' (ibid. 2416). Here, multiple and differential experiences of urban citizenship are highlighted, experiences which favor the middle classes. As Desai and Sanyal suggest, 'it might be useful to think about how emerging forms of urban citizenship in Indian cities are shaped by contestations over the different, overlapping urban spaces that people inhabit and traverse, since urban inhabitants certainly dwell in and move across multiple, connected spaces of the city' (Desai and Sanyal 2012, 23–4). A focus on these 'emerging forms of urban citizenship', many of which are at odds with the national imaginary of an upwardly mobile, globalized, Indian middle class and the spaces they dwell in, highlights a complex layering of power relations which work to include some citizens in the national imaginary and exclude others. While many studies focus on

the urban poor, this chapter asks what other forms of 'political-discursive' exclusions might occur in the Indian city? And what can a focus on these exclusions, and the strategies used to negotiate them, illuminate about the nature of urban citizenship in India? How might these spaces be used for imagining alternative futures?

Theoretically, this chapter is situated at the intersection of investigations into urban and queer geographies and focuses at once on the negotiations of queer lives within an urban location as well as the interactions of these individuals and cities within transnational and global relationships. It is important to view everyday queer lives as contextual, existing within, produced by and co-constructive of social structures and hierarchies. What does it mean to be a queer woman in Bangalore at a time when the conservative, nationalist BJP and its leader Narendra Modi has more total, political control of the country than ever before? How is the middle class situated at a time when Bangalore is growing at an unprecedented rate as 'India's Silicon Valley'? What does it mean to be a queer woman at a time when the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) community, arguably, has more visibility than ever before and yet homosexual behavior remains effectively illegal? And how do these questions relate to space, urbanity and spatial configurations, limitations and possibilities? Spaces and relationships can be for queer Indian women at the same time freeing as well as confining. The aim here is to investigate everyday experiences of middle-class queer women within an environment influenced by nationalist initiatives, neoliberal ideologies and advertisements, and access to public space, in order to facilitate an understanding of how these individuals create and use spaces in ways that signal a hope for a better future.

Queer and/or Middle Class? The Paradox of Position

In the same vein that a politics of forgetting works to privilege the middle-class urban citizenship and effectively erase the economically underprivileged, can this forgetting also extend to queer citizenship in India? As Arvind Narrain shows, citizenship is symbolically hierarchical based on both gender (male-ness) and heterosexuality (Narrain 2007; See also Bhan 2005; Ghosh 2015). In India, heteronormative citizenship is also legally defined by Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) that criminalizes any sexual activity 'against the order of nature'. Though this is generally read to mean male homosexual acts, this could theoretically be used against any party engaging

in non-procreative, non-marital sexual acts. From the early 1990s, the Indian queer movement has been demanding legal change to Section 377 and, in 2009, Section 377 was ruled unconstitutional by the Delhi High Court. In December 2013, this ruling was appealed and the case was brought to the Supreme Court of India, which upheld the constitutional reading outlawing homosexual intercourse. The court's argument was based on the queer population only accounting for 'a miniscule fraction of the country's population' (Majumder 2013). Importantly, the courts have stipulated that Section 377 does not render identities illegal, though the law is still used to blackmail and intimidate those with non-normative sexualities and gender expressions. In February 2016, the Supreme Court of India voted to refer curative petitions against Section 377 to a five-judge bench that will review the 2013 judgment and check for constitutional legitimacy (The Hindu 2016). While this referral could mean that a future court will 'read down' Section 377 from pertaining to certain homosexual acts, the law still stands. The case of Section 377 highlights the contentious location in which queer individuals live, particularly those individuals who are also poor, low caste, Muslim, homeless or any other precarious social minority. And yet, the women in my study were situated in the privileged urban middle class, meaning that in practice they are more likely to be awarded urban or national inclusion based on their economic status rather than their sexuality or even gender. Therefore, if citizenship is based on heteronormativity and neoliberal consumption, middle-class queer women are only ever partially included.

This chapter is based on long-term fieldwork conducted over the course of nine months between Bangalore and Mumbai. Working mainly with participants I met through activist, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (LBT), or queer women's collectives meant that all of the participants interviewed[2] spoke English, most were educated to university level, and a majority were working full time in either corporations or for non-profit organizations or charities. All but one lived in major urban areas, three live with their families or parents, while the rest had access to either private or shared accommodation. Seven participants owned or had access to cars, two owned motorbikes, and all owned smartphones and computers. I emphasize these particulars to highlight the broad notions of 'middle-class-ness' in India that signify access to private space, technology and the purchase of consumer goods and services, access that was attained especially after neoliberalization. In addition to economic or material capital, middle-class status is also embedded in caste and language privilege. As Fernandes and Heller argue,

> Because the middle class derives its power from cultural and educational capital, it actively engages in hoarding and leveraging its accumulated privileges and in reproducing social distinctions. In the Indian context this implies that caste and other cultural attributes (most notably command of English) become critical assets in the continuous struggles that define class fractions. Sociocultural inequalities and identities (such as those based on caste and language) are an integral part of the process of middle class formation. (Fernandes and Heller 2006, 496–7; See also Sitapati 2011).

Speaking English, owning cars, having a university degree—all of these things are markers of the Indian middle class and privilege. In the Indian queer community, even using the term 'queer' as a signifier of sexual identity designates a privileged position because of this collusion between language, access to information and contact with an increasingly globalized world.

In this chapter, queer refers to two connected but different things: the first is how queer is used as a positive, sexual identity category. This usage has a specific historical trajectory, one that originates with queers of color in the United States and has come to signify an umbrella term for any deviate or alternative sexual identity that transgresses hegemonic heteronormativity (Duggan 2012). In India, the term 'queer' in this sense has gained widespread use: Pride parades in many major cities are now called 'Queer Pride Parades'; there are 'queer' events and parties, and groups like 'Queer on Campus' run at various universities across India. Yet, while the usage of the term has spread, there still remains a small percentage within the queer movement who identify their sexuality as such. This is due to the view that to be 'queer' is elitist and designates a particular class and caste status (C. Shah et al. 2015, xxvii: See also Bhan 2005; Bhaskaran 2004; Bose and Bhattacharyya 2007; Narrain 2007; Tellis 2012). Using the term 'queer' then highlights both the tensions between and collusions with Western queer movements, intersections that have long been a focus of critique from both within and outside of the movement.

Second, 'queer' has come to signify any activity that challenges or critiques normative structures of power. As David Halperin shows, queer is

> whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. "Queer" then demarcates not a positivity, but a positionality vis-a-vis the normative… Queer in any case, does not designate a class of already objectified pathologies or perversions; rather, it describes a horizon of possibility whose precise extent and heterogeneous scope cannot in principle be delimited in advance. It is from this eccentric positionality occupied by the queer subject that it may

> *become possible* to envision a variety of possibilities for reordering the relations among sexual behaviors, erotic identities, constructions of gender, forms of knowledge, regimes of enunciation, logics of representation, modes of self constitution and practices of community (Halperin 1997, 62, my emphasis).

I argue that all women with dissident or 'alternative' sexualities in India that negotiate their worlds and lives to accommodate those non-normative desires are engaging in the creation of new spaces which reflect a desire to live a life worth living (Pfaller, ibid.). There are material and practical realities that Indian queer women must negotiate which may disallow them to *always* lead 'anti-normative' lifestyles and, in fact, these negotiations may actually engage in a politics of forgetting that exclude or make invisible other minority groups. For example, two queer women living together are not necessarily engaging in anti-normative acts if the structures that confine heteronormativity remain unchallenged, that is, tell a potential landlord they are friends or cousins. These acts do not necessarily problematize the structure in which women's independence and sexuality are produced and policed within a patriarchal family structure. As Grewal and Kaplan note, 'we cannot think of sexual subjects as purely oppositional or resistant to dominant institutions that produce heteronormativity…queer subjects are not always avant-garde for all time and in all places' (Grewal and Kaplan 2001, 670). Therefore, queer women's experiences in India cannot be labeled resistive or anti-normative without looking at the specific ways in which their subjectivities are created and lived. While I argue there is an optimistic queer potential in these actions, these negotiations need to be situated within a wider context to untangle this potentiality.

The New Indian Woman and Homonational Consumerism

Queer women in India live in spaces deeply influenced by patriarchal and heteronormative imaginaries, which are increasingly (re)produced and mobilized through imaginaries like neoliberal and nationalist ideologies (See Thapan 2009; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989). Notions of nationhood and 'Indianness' are often placed on women who are imagined to stand for tradition while their husbands are imagined as the representatives of modernity, a typically middle-class predicament. The changes that came with the New Economic Policy did not disrupt the symbolic

importance of the middle-class woman but changed the ways in which her importance was manufactured and mobilized. In the 1990s, this was evident as this 'New Indian Woman' was projected to the world through the Miss Femina beauty pageants (Bhaskaran 2004; See also Mayo and Sinha 2000; Mazzarella 2015; Parameswaran 2005; Runkle 2004; Thapan 2004). The contest was used to counter, on a global scale, the image of India as a 'poverty-ridden, snake infested country' (ibid, 40) as well as claims that Indian people, especially women, were impoverished, illiterate and backwards. These Femina Miss India contests redefined 'proper' femininity and reinforced heterosexual hegemony. In contemporary India, as Radhakrishnan shows, the new 'New Indian Woman' is one who works in the tech industry, signifying her connection with the global economic sphere where she also acts as representation for India as a nation, and yet one who at the same time prioritizes her family and nation above her ambitions of prestige or monetary gain (Radhakrishnan 2009).

The women I interviewed can be situated precisely within this paradox of subjectivity—her middle-class-ness situates her within the progressing Indian nation, her female-ness marks her as a repository of Indian tradition, and her queerness is either seen as upholding a progressive liberal ideal or it marks her as un-Indian and foreign. In her influential work, Jasbir Puar refers to these paradoxes as 'homonationalism' and notes how acceptance of and rights for certain LGBT or queer groups have become a marker of modernity and progressiveness (Puar 2007; See also Duggan 2002). Further, this inclusion of queer individuals appears to follow economic trajectories of neoliberal consumerism. The homonormative relationship between queers and the middle class 'problematizes sexual politics under neoliberalism, highlighting the increasing social acceptance of certain forms of sexual dissidence but not others' (Kanai 2014, 2). This focus on the queer consumer is perfectly exemplified by what is referred to as 'India's first lesbian advertisement', released by the Indian company Anouk Ethnic apparel in June, 2015 (Inani 2015). As producer Avishek Ghosh notes, the ad, titled 'The Visit', aimed to present a same-sex couple (two women) as 'normal', everyday Indian citizens. The two women are shown casually getting dressed yet speaking of their anxiety about an upcoming 'meeting of the parents' of one of the couple. Their conversation is set within a middle-class apartment complete with beautiful furniture and accessories, accentuating their modern, 'Indian' aesthetic, which likely reflects the merchandise Anouk sells. This selective inclusion of the

middle-class, comfortable, 'self-determining' female couple establishes an acceptable, queer 'ideal' located clearly within a modern India. Moreover, this idea of a 'modern' India is increasingly situated in urban areas, which can be seen by the proliferation of Pride parades, queer conferences, themed parties and film festivals in major metros like Delhi, Bombay and Bangalore.

In practice, queer individuals can contribute to this imaginary of modern India only as long as they exemplify the neoliberal ideal of the consumer-citizen who moves through society with ease, purchasing products to bolster the economy, while supporting the national government through act and deed (Sircar and Jain 2012, 11–2). This homonational citizen is designed to project the notion that any individual can be a legitimate citizen-subject of the state as long as such individuality adheres to certain codes of conduct that include self-regulatory behavioral practices and consumerism within the national and international marketplace (Cheng and Kim 2014). Further, this citizenship is based on a heteronormative ideal with women exhibiting 'proper' femininity and heterosexuality. As Rahul Rao notes, Indian queers are 'invited to engage in what Puar calls 'homonational spending', in which the market proffers placebo rights to (some) queers who are hailed by capitalism but not by judges or state legislators' (R. Rao 2015). This paradox is evident in what has been called the 'Pink Rupee' ('India's Gay-Friendly Businesses Compete for "Pink Rupee"' 2016; *The Hindu* 2015). Similar to pink washing, this occurs when businesses and corporations market a product via an insistence of their 'gay-friendliness', thereby engaging queer subjects through capitalism. The 'lesbian' ad is case in point: the video was made by a fabric and clothing company arguably to sell merchandise. And yet, the ad is clearly situated within a middle-class imaginary. Therefore, at the same time as queers are being encouraged to engage in consumerism which highlight and legitimate their status both as national and as international neoliberal citizens, Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code continues to effectively criminalize homosexual sexual relationships and practice. It is within these contested spaces that the queer Indian is normalized in through the neoliberal and nationalist framework of a forward-looking, consumerist ideology as well as the transnational and global trajectories of queer identity. The next section, then, specifically focuses on these contested and paradoxical spaces as places of potential to investigate Muñoz's claim: that 'the future is queerness's domain' (Muñoz 2009, 1).

Queer heterotopias and spaces to breath

How can a focus on queer uses of urban space in India allow us to investigate utopian hopes for the future? What is it about the everyday queer life that signals such visions? We can approach these issues via a discussion of Michel Foucault's notion of 'heterotopias' or, literally, 'other spaces' (Foucault 2008 (1967)). Here, Foucault attempts to investigate how certain spaces or institutions represent interruptions or fissures to 'the apparent continuity and normality of ordinary everyday space' (Dehaene and Cauter 2008, 4). For Foucault, these spaces were necessarily situated in the city, in urban areas like gardens, malls, schools and prisons. For example, this disruption can be seen in cemeteries where the abrupt disconnect between time, as the difference between life and death, and space, as both 'here' and 'not here', alludes to the disruption that heterotopic spaces highlight (See De Boeck 2008; Johnson 2008). Foucault notes that these spaces are 'at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal' (Foucualt in Dehaene and De Cauter 2008, 13). Heterotopias are connected to the 'real' by being grounded in 'everyday' spaces like the mall or the cemetery and, yet, completely 'unreal' by marking these spatial and temporal ruptures. For Muñoz, heterotopias disrupt, alter or confront normative practices in ways that may offer potential for a different, or indeed a better, future. If, as Massey notes, spaces both construct and are constructed by the actions of those individuals within and, as Muñoz shows, these actions can be challenging to normative structures, then I argue that heterotopic spaces are necessarily revealing the potential for a different future through a turning away from the normative 'here and now'. He notes, '(q)ueerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world' (Muñoz 2009, 2).

This brings into focus the nature of spaces as dynamic, being both created by and creating those individuals within. A perfect example here is the modern, Indian shopping mall. As Phadke et al. have shown, public space is overwhelmingly patriarchal and women have limited access relative to their male counterparts (Phadke, Khan, and Ranade 2011). The mall, she argues, becomes a semi-public space that, because it is exclusionary based on class and caste, middle-class women feel protected and safe. The mall in India is a bastion for middle-class women, a place, she notes, where 'women's body language…demonstrates a sense of belonging that is not really visible in other kinds of public spaces' (ibid 41). The

shopping mall, as a place of public consumption, encourages women to engage in neoliberal citizenship through consumption while at the same time allowing women a safe, semi-public space to congregate in. These spaces represent heterotopias in that they offer a markedly different experience of 'public space' than a non-middle-class Indian might experience. An airline stewardess recounted, 'I love hanging out in the malls…because here there are people of a better social class. I don't have to worry about bumping into those "roadside types"' (Phadke, Khan, and Ranade 2011, 42). Those 'roadside types', signified both by low class and by caste status that come to represent this woman's uncomfortability with other public spaces, are kept out of shopping malls through guards and security checks at the doors. Therefore, the mall comes to represent a 'real' space in Indian public life but one that is vastly spatially and temporally different to how or even if others inhabit these spaces. As Dehaene and De Cauter show, 'heterotopias interrupt the continuity of time; break up entrenched binaries such as private/public, ideal/real and nature/culture; provide a creative 'clearing'; and offer a protected space, refuge, haven or sanctuary' (Dehaene and De Cauter 2008, 90). Middle-class women's experience of the shopping mall signifies a layered subjectivity, one that is class and caste privileged and spatially dependent. In focusing on heterotopic spaces, then, we will ask: do queer, female spaces in Bangalore also create this layering? And, if so, how?

A particularly telling example here is the practice by many middle-class queer women in Bangalore of attending a weekly 'Ladies Night' at a bar near MG Road. Short for Mahatma Gandhi Road, this is one of the busiest roads and the biggest commercial centers in Bangalore. As opposed to Indiranagar Road, an upmarket shopping and eating district with brand name shops and high-end restaurants, MG Road is frequented by those looking for reasonably priced eating and shopping opportunities. The streets are filled with hawkers selling wares, shoppers meandering through the heavy crowds to enter both brand name and independent shops, and vendors selling Indian street food next to Western chain restaurants like Pizza Hut and McDonalds. MG Road was described to me as a 'student area' because of its affordability and, as the crowds thinned toward evening, this statement was bolstered by the large crowds of young adults making their way to a favorite haunt or loitering on the streets. The bar itself is set on the ground floor of a hotel and feels like a dive bar/Irish pub complete with large wooden bar, high-backed bar stools, smoke room and karaoke. The practice of

hosting a Ladies Night is not independent to this bar. Many bars and restaurants around Bangalore, like other metropolitan areas in India, host such a Ladies Night, that is, women get two free drinks upon arrival with food available for purchase (this is based on the assumption that men accompany the women and purchase drinks during the evening).

The queer women's group WHaQ![3] started the ritual of attending Ladies Nights shortly after they formed roughly seven years ago. WHaQ! began as a sister group to the long-standing group Good As You, one of India's oldest queer organizations ('Good as You Bangalore' 2016; 'WHaQ!' 2016). WHaQ! runs counseling and group sessions for queer women and has co-sponsored Bangalore's Pride march and the Bangalore Queer Film Festival. I was invited to attend the weekly Ladies Nights by one of the WHaQ! co-founders, Tanvi. Tanvi is a middle-aged, black, Muslim woman who moved to Bangalore roughly eight years ago from the gulf. She identifies as a lesbian and is married to an Indian woman. Tanvi became my connection to the queer women who frequent the WHaQ! events, vouching for me and introducing me to the larger crowd. When we arrived at my first Ladies Night, there were at least 40 queer women in attendance, all sitting in variously sized groups spread across different tables and booths. The original practice of attending this particular Ladies Night was to create a 'safe space' where queer women, regardless of political or activist affiliation, could gather and hang out without fear of repercussions or violence. Likewise, since the drinks were free and there was no cover charge to enter the bar, the practice was accessible to a larger socio-economic background of women than other queer events which charged a cover fee or for drinks (see Misra 2015; Shah 2015). So, while attendance was first initiated by WHaQ! members, the custom had grown far larger within the wider queer women's community in Bangalore. As noted previously, many of the women who accessed this space would be considered middle class: educated, English speaking, employed in corporations or other stable employment, having access to private space, and so on.

Much of WHaQ!'s work with the queer women's community involves creating safe spaces, whether in private or in public, where members can work toward the empowerment of themselves and other women. In practice, this can be claiming space in public parks to play cricket or football or meeting in a counseling group run by one of the founders. In this vein, attending Ladies Nights can be viewed as a political activity of claiming public space by a marginalized group. As Amalina Davé notes, '(t)o claim a public space is to claim that you exist in a public sphere. It comes down

to that…To be able to be in a space where you can coexist with people like you—that's validation'(Misra 2015). The drive to claim space in public therefore reflects a wider drive to be visible, even if the queer community represents a marginal community in India. In these instances, this visibility is not necessarily directed at the wider, non-queer population like the other patrons of the bar. Instead, this drive is an internal visibility where the women meet to 'coexist with people like them'. This behavior highlights the precarity of these women as queer even though they can adequately claim these bar spaces as both female (during Ladies Nights) and middle class. While it is entirely true that these bars and pubs are public entities, WHaQ! employs certain vetting processes to ensure that the community remains a 'safe space' for individuals within. This vetting process includes meeting face to face at least once, asking about the woman's background and contact with the queer community in Bangalore, and what they hope to gain from association with WHaQ!. This is done as often as possible, though Tanvi noted that of course there can be no 'formal' process of exclusion within this public space but she can ask individuals not to attend any WHaQ!-sponsored events if she thinks they will be a negative impact on the community. She went on to tell me that she or other co-founders try to meet all enquiring individuals before they come to group events to ensure both the physical and the emotional safety of the attending women. While this does not explicitly mean the Ladies Nights, these are the most regular and widely attended functions within the queer women's community making them important contact points with other community members.

These exclusionary practices also include informal self-policing behaviors. Internal politics like fights or breakups, and changing life circumstances like getting a new job with or moving all work to create internal, self-governing exclusions with or without the explicit knowledge of the larger group. Further, as Ladies Night is not explicitly a WHaQ! event, Tanvi cannot exclude persons from attending, though she can (and does) warn other members of actions she deems harmful to the community. In this way, Tanvi constructs these spaces in a particular way: through limiting or managing access to the spaces as well as relationships within these spaces. This internal policing or managing of boundaries is also at work when picking physical spaces or, in this case, the bar where Ladies Night is attended. Roughly a year after WHaQ! began attending Ladies Night, a new employee made many of the women uncomfortable, asking veiled questions about their sexuality or leering at them. She said that while

she was never explicit with the management that the group was of queer women, she did have a pointed conversation to make clear that there would likely not be many men attending with this group. The manager, whom Tanvi says 'must have known' that these were queer women, had always attempted to make their experience at the bar enjoyable and comfortable. He greeted many attendees by name and always came to the table to chat with the women. However, after the incident, Tanvi approached the manager and informed him that they would be finding a new bar due to this employee's behavior. For weeks after they left, the manager would contact Tanvi via telephone to ask the group to come back, ensuring that the employee had been reprimanded and would not cause issues in the future. When the group did eventually return after a period of months, they found the employee respectful and kind. The actions of the manager further add to these women's experience of this bar as 'safe' and enjoyable. It is safe to assume by his actions that the patronage of these women, through their purchases of food or additional drinks, mattered more to the manager than their sexual identity. It would be interesting to know if the women would be treated different were they not read as middle class.

The actions of the queer women in this space were not overtly 'rebellious' or resistive. No one ever talked about this practice as a political claim for queer rights or inclusivity. This was an 'ordinary' Wednesday night practice where women could congregate for free drinks, to socialize and meet new people, and to flirt with women they assume are queer. On a more basic level, these spaces reveal the drive for inclusion that many cannot find elsewhere. And, yet, the construction and management of these spaces, exemplified by Tanvi's actions with the manager of the bar or her vetting potential attendees, proves that these spaces are anything but ordinary. This layering highlights the heterotopic possibility inherent in these locations, layering in which Muñoz sees potential for imagining a better future. At Ladies Night, the group's desire to act and be read as 'normal' within these spaces highlights the desire for a world in which queerness *is* normal. It is a rejection of the heterosexual norm and the creation of a living space in which 'queer' is not something one needs to claim. By rejecting the implicit heterosexuality of the ironically titled Ladies Nights, these women are also rejecting certain socially prescribed pathways of living. And yet, this practice does not overtly contradict the heteronormativity of the event nor the class dynamics, which may exclude queer women of lower classes or castes from entering a bar. This paradox highlights the 'double logic' in which heterotopic spaces both sustain and undermine

'normalcy'. Therefore, I do not claim that heterotopic spaces need blatant, 'queering' subjects that always engage in rebellious actions nor do I see agency as solely represented by resistance. Instead, as Jones offers, the '"goal is to explore how individuals are attempting to queer space in emancipatory ways that do not necessarily realize a fixed utopia, but create potential for a queer future' (Jones 2013, 3). It is this potential that I find most interesting but this potential can only ever be fleeting, existing in specific times and places. Viewing the use and transformation of space in Bangalore as queer heterotopias allows an investigation not only the normalizing structures of those spaces but also the intimate, everyday ways in which individuals can change those spaces. However, as the next section will discuss: What happens when safe spaces are not 'safe' anymore? What happens if heterotopias fail?

Violence, rejections and failures of heterotopias

Positioning these queer spaces as inherently 'safe' negates or makes invisible the violence that can occur within. Focusing on the failures of heterotopic spaces highlights many forms of violence that are at work and which effectively recreate and sustain those imaginaries acting in the wider national and international spaces as well. Exclusions based on class, caste, gender, age and language are just a few examples of how these wider structures continue to act within heterotopic spaces. In searching for 'safe spaces', many queer individuals are looking primarily for places *away* from the violence they experience in their everyday lives. Many of the women I interviewed had experienced some form of harassment or abuse from their families, coworkers or strangers. One couple was threatened with eviction from their flat because the landlord realized they were in a same-sex relationship. Another participant came out to her father, whom she lives with, and is now either completely ignored or ridiculed for her sexuality. However, many of these occur outside of the heterotopic space. While attending my last Ladies Night in Bangalore, I noticed a small congregation in the smoking room, including Tanvi and a young woman I did not know who looked upset. It eventually came out that she had been sexually assaulted a week previously in the bathroom of the pub by an older, lesbian woman. Clearly, this young woman felt upset and she expressed to Tanvi that the older woman made her feel violated and uncomfortable. If these Ladies Nights are supposed to be 'safe spaces', what, then, does this experience speak to safety, including physical safety, in these queer spaces? I think it is important to note that I

do not believe these types of interactions are exclusive to queer 'safe spaces'. Instead, it is the *expectation* of these spaces that I find most interesting here. What does it mean to be a 'safe space' and safe for whom? What expectations do the individual women have and where do those expectations come from? Further, what types of exclusionary practices exist within these consciously inclusive spaces and on what grounds?

In short, what do the practices of these individuals reveal not only about the successes but also about the limitations of heterotopic spaces and of a queer utopian future? It is important to remember I am not valorizing the 'margins' (Spivak 1988) or searching for redemptive, rebellious actors in the queer participants I engaged with. Instead, a view of spaces and times ruptured in these heterotopic ways may point to what Gandy calls 'liberatory or experimental characteristics' (Gandy 2012). These characteristics disrupt the drive to find the always rebellious queer subject as a bastion of utopic potential. Therefore, it is also imperative to ask what it might mean to 'fail' in the creation or sustenance of heterotopic spaces. As Jack Halberstam notes:

> To live is to fail, to bungle, to disappoint, and ultimately to die; rather than searching for ways around death and disappointment, the queer art of failure involves the acceptance of the finite…rather than resisting endings and limits, let us instead revel in and cleave to all of our own inevitable fantastic failures (Halberstam 2011).

Not all actions are going to be subversive or rebellious and some may actively uphold and reinforce normative structures. In fact, many (successful or failed) practices will pass the notice of the 'normal' citizen. Does this mean these actions stop being 'queer'? Do they lose their utopic potential? How then can we talk of utopia here? For the young woman, who was sexually assaulted, calling this space 'safe' may actually be damaging, much less a space for utopic futurity. For the queer Muslim woman or the poor lesbian, for example, these spaces may not challenge the communal violence she may be accustomed to. Is this a failure of the heterotopic notion of space or a violent incursion into that 'safe' space? Further, does potential also exist in these failed spaces? What sort of utopic notions exist in the presence of such violence? By focusing on these actions as lived, as negotiated moments in times and spaces, these spaces begin to be seen as domains of potential without the trappings of utopic promises. In viewing 'safe spaces' as explicitly freeing zones, the expectations of the individuals may not reflect what the space can, in actuality, *do*.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the possibility of utopian potentials in the neoliberal urban space of Bangalore as investigated through the everyday experiences of middle-class queer women. Situated at intersection of the national ideal of an urban, consuming neoliberal subject and a 'miniscule fraction' of the Indian population and undeserving of constitutional change, the middle-class queer woman highlights the tensions between living multiple subjectivities that may be incoherent with one another. Through a discussion of heterotopic spaces, I attempted to show how these layered subjectivities resist an urge to see 'queer' as inherently redemptive and, instead, focused on the multidimensionality of action and actor within these spaces. Therefore, while Muñoz may claim that the 'future is queerness's domain', I remain less convinced. Queerness is definitely at work in the 'here and now' and, in fact, some of these 'queer' actions may *only* exist in a moment. This is not to say queerness does not hold within it a utopic potential. However, I believe that in focusing on this potential solely as the domain of futurity, we risk mistaking or rejecting actors that may reflect this potential in action. If we are constantly searching for the always anti-normative queer subject, we may miss the creation of spaces like Ladies Night in which individuals are actively pursuing their own optimistic visions. Instead, I find it much more useful to understand these spaces as lived and negotiated to approach an understanding of 'queer' as potential that remains aware, and sometimes in collusion with, larger hegemonic structures. It is only through focusing on the multiple ways that individuals negotiate norms and subjectivities that we can investigate the workings of power as varied and changing. In highlighting these women's partial inclusion in the Indian imagination, I aimed to showcase this contested ground.

Notes

1. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Theory*. New York University Press, 2009; 1.
2. Based on 12 in-depth, formal interviews alongside multiple informal interviews, participant observation, and a reflexive photography project.
3. WHaQ! Stands for 'We're Here and Queer!'

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CHAPTER 14

Epilogue: The Promise of Urbanity—How the City Makes Life Worth Living

Robert Pfaller

01

Urbanity is in the first place, as Lewis Mumford nicely puts it, a "promise" (Mumford 1961, 3)—in other words an ideal, a utopia. Not all utopias may be urban, but all urbanity is definitely utopian. Yet the designation that urbanity is utopian, or a promise, does not imply that this utopia has never and nowhere existed or that this promise has not ever been held. Jerusalem, Athens, Rome, Florence, Paris, Vienna, Berlin, London and New York, for example, have at specific heroic moments of their history provided to observers and theorists an image, an instance of what merits the name of urbanity. This raises of course, with increased challenge and urgency, the question of what the constituent features, the necessary conditions of this utopian quality of urbanity may be. Just as with pornography, also with urbanity it may therefore appear easy to tell once one sees it; yet it may turn out equally difficult to name the criteria—that is, the crucial features and the conditions required for this promise becoming reality.

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02

The first theorists who used the notion of urbanity were the ancient rhetoricians Cicero and Quintilianus. For them, urbanity is a human ethical behavior, a virtue. It consists of various kinds of refined attitudes including the ability to make witty puns and double entendres (see Cicero 1986, 17; 159, cf. Ramage 1973). Such cultural achievement could, according to Cicero, only arise in urban areas. Some 150 years after Cicero, Quintilianus restricted the meaning of the term to an element of speech—not without emphasizing once again that this witty style of speaking "exhibits in the choice of words, in tone, and in manner, a certain taste of the city" (Quintilianus 1988, 721; cf. Federhofer 2001, 12).

Of course, these early accounts seem to only describe some effects of urban life; they do not explain why it is the city, and why it is *only* the city that brings about such delightful forms of discourse. Or is it, under more favorable historical conditions, maybe possible that urbanity can as well be found outside the city—for example, due to spreading communication technology, or economic subsumption of the world's most remote corners under a globalized neoliberal capitalist economy? Can we have *urbanity without cities*? (see Dirksmeier 2009).

Equally, these remarks do not answer another, today's most plausible urgent question, namely: is the city always and by necessity able to provide urbanity? Or is it possible that, as many observers in the last decades have remarked, cities can quite easily fall short of producing urbanity? Can we face *cities without urbanity*? (see Jacobs 1961).

03

In the first place, the promising quality of urbanity appears to be connected to the city as a *polis*—a powerful, self-determined political unit that, as the only form of political organization in history (if we gently pass over the mostly bygone forms of egalitarian tribal communities as described by Pierre Clastres 1974), is able to bring about at least a certain hope for equality and more or less democratic decision-making. The Aristotelian political citizen, who endeavors to bother about the common good, as opposed to the "idiot" who only cares for his private well-being, is a product of this political unit that historically first appears in ancient Greece and Rome. To be precise, we should say: *the splitting between the political citizen and the idiot* (who go together in one and the same

person, seen under different aspects) is the specific product of the polis. The polis brought about the *bourgeois* containing the *citoyen*—the very specific citizen that felt in himself or herself not only private concerns but also a concern for the universal. It is precisely this universal concern of solidarity that, as Aristotle has stated, makes a human being's life worth living (see Critchley 1995). And the same as for the individual goes for the collective: the polis gave birth to the bourgeoisie—that very class that did not only promote its own interests but at least aspired and claimed to promote the interests of mankind. (The postmodern defamation of every claim of universality as such is therefore an attack, not just on "western, white, anglo-saxon, protestant, male, heterosexual, etc." claims, but on the principle of bourgeoisie;[1] just as neoliberalism is the economic attempt to wipe out that very middle class that once came up with the hope to one day become the only existing class.)

Therefore, the urbanity of the polis has always consisted in the fact that its citizens have felt to be citizens of the world, *cosmopolitans*. This can still be experienced today in some places in Europe, when even very small cities, like Cividale in Italy, or Telč and Třeboň in the Czech Republic with their charming, glamorous public places, provide the visitor with the impression to dwell right at the center of the world.

04

When in the Italian renaissance this political form of the city-state and, together with it, the bourgeois class came into existence again, it made an impression by showing its ability to resist the traditional feudal powers (see Engels 1884). On the level of ideology, this implied a detachment from the hitherto dominant, traditional forms that governed feudal communities. While these required their members to share one life-form institutionalized in one religion, the newly emerged cities, like Amsterdam at the time of Spinoza, allowed in their luckiest moments for the co-existence of many different religions and non-religions. The proverb that "city air makes free" (cf. Harvey 2003, 241) stems from this liberating power of urbanity that allowed to dispose of the traditional ideological bonds. Thus, urbanity can be seen, like its economic co-product, capital, as a force that brings about a situation as described in the famous passage by Marx and Engels:

> All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated

> before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind (Marx/Engels 1848, 16).

This liberating, "de-territorializing" and disillusioning power of urbanity is remarkable. Yet today, under neoliberal and postmodern conditions, one has to shift one's attention more to the opposed side: not so much upon the city's ability to "sweep away" or "melt into air" traditional relations and illusions, but upon its ability to replace them by new social bonds. When today the urbanity of the city itself appears menaced by the "sweeping" and "melting" powers of ruthless capital and its city-planning accomplices, one has to ask not so much for what the city was able to destroy, but instead what it was able to build up. One may feel reminded here of Spinoza's remark that a thing can always only be limited by a thing which is of the same nature (see Spinoza 1955, 45). The destruction of traditional social bonds by the city has only been possible due to the fact that the city established a new type of social bond. If city air makes free, then this freedom has to be understood precisely as the effect of a new type of solidarity brought about by this very air.

The loss of urbanity as it can be observed in many cities in India today like in the rest of the world since the 1950s (as observed by Jane Jacobs) stems from the fact that this new social bond, typical for urban life, and crucial for its making life worth living, gets destroyed. This leads us to the question what is the specific type of solidarity that characterizes urban life, and by which means is it achieved?

05

Following the distinction introduced by Emile Durkheim, one can say that the city replaced the traditional, "mechanic solidarity" by the larger, more flexible form of "organic solidarity" (see Durkheim 1988: 230, 108. Cf. Kraxberger 2010). Mechanic solidarity, typical for smaller social units such as families, tribes, villages, neighborhoods, clubs, sanatoria, and so on, unites people under the condition that they share at least one common feature (e.g., kinship, or religion, or age, or sexual orientation, or income class, or illness, etc.). Organic solidarity, however, allows people to unite even with foreigners whose features may be unknown.

The city is therefore the agent of "society", and the enemy of "community" (to follow the distinction introduced by Tönnies 1912). It is

therefore highly misleading, when cities cease to produce the organic solidarity typical for society, to try to reestablish this shattered social bond by reinforcing and reestablishing mechanic communities, as the school of the American "decentrists" have suggested (see Jacobs 1961, 20). The specific sadness that characterizes contemporary attempts to establish clean and safe neighborhoods in artificial upper-class "cities" or "gated communities" is the necessary outcome that derives from this misunderstanding that mistakes the solidarity of society for that of the community.

06

The enlarged capacity of the city for a more "tolerant", cosmopolitan bond between its inhabitants or visitors is achieved by a series of measures, or *dispositifs* which allow the city to exert its function as a specific "ideological apparatus" (see for this notion Althusser 2008). Ideological apparatuses establish a certain relationship to the individuals which, as a consequence, brings these individuals to relate to themselves in the same way. The city apparatus accustoms the individuals to a certain type of observation which then becomes their self-observation.[2] Only through this relationship of the individuals to themselves a strong constraint for certain social behavior is achieved which otherwise could not be achieved by any repressive force whatsoever. Ideology thus brings the individuals to "function"; it makes them, Althusser writes, "act on their own, without it being necessary to put a personal police officer behind their asses" (Althusser 1995, 212; own translation). The urbanity of the city has this power. Once it is lost, it cannot be established by enhancing repressive forces, as Jane Jacobs has perspicuously remarked: "No amount of police can enforce civilization where the normal, casual enforcement of it has broken down" (Jacobs 1961, 32).

Jacobs has nicely pointed out that for the city in order to create "civilization" or urbanity, it has to provide well-populated places like, for example, the street where people have the feeling to be in company and to be seen by others (see Jacobs 1961, 29ff.). Not only have there to be a certain number of people, but also a certain spatial structure that allows these people to see and to give them the feeling of being seen.

The city can thus be described as an *optical device*. The street, the apartment windows that go to the street, the square, the café on the square, and so on are crucial for engendering this populating the city and the specific form given to this populating. In the main squares of Italian Renaissance

cities, there existed even a special kind of theatrical space, the "loggia", which could serve both as a stage (e.g., for juridical trials) and as a kind of "VIP-lounge" for privileged observers of the public space.

This theatrical organization of public space by its optical structuring rendered it desirable to populate this space—a fact that can still be observed today in Italian cities where in the evening hours everybody is out in the main street and the main square, just in order to see and be seen. The fact that this creation served well for the purpose of market and exchange should not deceive: the market alone is not the sufficient condition for this. The utter sadness of today's shopping malls, "outsourced" to suburban areas, testifies for this fact. Although being perfect selling machines, these places are utterly unable to provide the joy of urban public space. On the other hand, old villages that had been markets long ago, like for example Hadersdorf am Kamp in Austria, still impress their visitors by their stunning urbanity. The "disinterested pleasure" of public space exceeds its mere "interested" purposes.

07

The structuring of the city as an optical device brings about urbanity as *theatrality*: the possibility to see and the feeling to be seen create a space of *appearance*, that is, *fiction*. The individuals who dwell in the city thus feel interpellated to play a *role*—that of "public man" (Sennett 1977). From the theatrality of urban space follows the split of the urban citizen into the two faces of private man on the one hand and public role on the other. This is the ideological prefiguration for the political split of the person into idiot and political citizen. The dignity of public man in his appearance is the preparation for the sovereignty of the decision-making inhabitant of the *polis*.

The theatrality of urban space brings about the fictious forms of polite, civilized behavior. Here, as people act *as if* they were benevolent, caring for the other ("How do you do?"), happy ("Thank you, fine."), beautiful, and so on, and *as if* they were able, at least for some moments, to leave their identitarian belonging as well as their personal whimsies behind themselves. Sennett writes, "'City' and 'civility' have a common root etymologically. Civility is treating others as though they were strangers and forging a social bond upon that social distance" (Sennett 1977, 264).

These fictions are kept alive, even if they are nobody's own fiction, even if they do not have a singular real believer. The urban role-play serves an "anonymous fiction", or an "illusion without owners" (see Pfaller 2014).

The importance of such role-play for ethical improvement has been emphasized even by the most serious philosopher of morality, Immanuel Kant (see Kant 2006 [1798], 44). The paradoxical effect that people really become more friendly, social and happy just by acting stems from the fact that public space not only suggests them an ideal of behavior but also provides them with a type of observation which then becomes their permanent self-observation.

The fiction of urban space is "anonymous" also in this aspect: the individuals then feel constantly observed in public space and obliged to please the agency of this observation, even if they cannot determine by whom exactly they feel observed, just as in ancient Greece people felt obliged to amuse the Olympic Gods.[3] This can psychoanalytically be described as "triangulation": one feels seen not only by the people one knows or sees but also by some anonymous, third agency. This agency is, as I have pointed out (Pfaller 2014, 231ff.), to be understood as a "naive observer" that only cares for appearances, but not for intentions. This is why urbanity brings people to care for *style*—for the appearance of their behavior, their costumes and their language. A lack of urbanity, on the contrary, occurs when this gaze is lacking; when people, like in small communities full of intimacy, know each other too well and only care for intentions but not for politeness or for being civilized. When cities today, under neoliberal conditions, tend to become too beautiful, or too proper, or gentrified, then the "triangulation" gets lost. We are, then, just among similar folks, and there is no need any more to satisfy the anonymous third gaze that improved so much our appearance and our pride.

This is in the last instance the reason why urbanity is inherently a promise, a utopia: for it is the fiction *of the city*, created by the city. Urbanity cannot occur but as this fiction of observation that a city creates of itself. This is the reason why people sometimes describe urbanity also as the fact that, at a certain place in a city, a movie could be shot. In more religious epochs or regions, places lacking the urban fiction of observation were described as "godforsaken".

Fictions which are nobody's own illusion are the crucial source of pleasure in culture (see for this Pfaller 2014). In places where they feel observed, people therefore like to dwell—not only because they feel safe (as Jane Jacobs has rightly pointed out, Jacobs 1961, 34f.) but also because it is a pleasure to be there. The "comedy of politeness" (Alain 1973, 45) to which urbanity seduces its dwellers fills them with "buoyancy" (Jacobs 1961, 4), serenity and happiness.

08

We have now become able to answer a question that has mostly remained unresolved in the attempt to determine the nature and conditions of urbanity—namely, what exactly the opposite, *the other of urbanity,* is. Is it the *rural*, as Cicero and his followers assumed? Or the *provincial*? The *village*? The *suburban*?

If it is correct that urbanity consists in the fact that a city is able to create a fiction about itself by providing individuals with the feeling to be observed and obliged to produce elegant behavior, then we can say: the other of urbanity is precisely the city falling short of producing such a fiction. Just as—according to a famous remark by the very urban Viennese author Alfred Polgar—nobody appears as much lacking a horse as a man entering Vienna's legendary Café Central in riding clothes, nothing lacks urbanity as much as a city that does not encourage to civilized appearance.

Just as humor is, as Sigmund Freud has remarked, a quality that is only available for adults who have a psychic apparatus divided into different agencies, and not for children, also urbanity is a quality that is only available for cities, and not for structures composed of mechanical forms of solidarity. Therefore, a lack of urbanity can only occur in cities, just as a lack of humor can only occur in adults. Children, on the contrary, can do well without this quality, as Freud remarks (see Freud [1905c], 236).

09

The comparison between urbanity on the one hand and humor and adultness on the other is all but arbitrary, for adultness and humor are required for one's engaging in fiction that nobody believes in. Humor is, as Freud has nicely pointed out, the ability to get at a distance from one's own ego (see Freud [1927d]). For the ego, it may appear easy to indulge in "serious" fictions that it can believe in, that is, that it can identify with. But it may appear most difficult to maintain playful and seemingly "silly" fictions such as politeness, elegance, style, glamour or pride, that is, fictions that are by their very nature "anonymous" illusions that (as Kant has remarked, see Kant 2006 [1798], 44) nobody can ever believe in.

In order to serve anonymous illusions, one has to assume a subject position that is at a distance from the ego and from what this ego considers as serious. Humor is thus the adult ability to go at a distance even from what the ego conceives of as adult. It allows people not to stick in a childish way to their adultness but, on the contrary, to gently let go what

they themselves believe in and instead please the naive observer and serve his illusions. Humor can thus be defined as the capacity to redouble the principle of adultness: it allows people to be adult *in an adult way*.

Only such redoubling of a principle can save it from a fatal dialectics that leads it to unexpectedly turn into its opposite (see for this Pfaller 2011, 148ff.). This can easily be seen, for example, with precocious children: nothing appears as childish as their desperate attempts to be adult all the time. They just behave adult *in a childish way*. The same goes for a couple of typical postmodern politics which, by childishly sticking to a certain principle instead of redoubling it in an adult way, bring this very principle to turning into its opposite.

For example, when under the impression of terrorist attacks, security is posited as the key principle for which everything else has to be sacrificed, then not only everything else gets sacrificed for security, but in the last instance even security itself: when police is everywhere and people are constantly scanned and surveilled, they start to perceive situations permanently as dangerous, and each other primarily as a threat; eventually they arm themselves and thus become themselves what they initially feared. Or, as some sad examples such as one from London after the subway attacks show:[4] when in the name of reinforced security measures police forces are told to shoot at the moment of the slightest suspicion, it becomes hardly avoidable that they hit innocent people.

Such childish fetishization of a principle that allows this principle to turn into its very opposite is today a key threat to urbanity. The same goes, too, for the fetishization of principles like "inclusion" or "respect". They, too, can today serve as pretexts for the destruction of urbanity. For what has to be included or respected in a city is precisely not someone's identity or idiocy. Urban inclusion and respect, on the contrary, by principle rely on a primary exclusion and a fundamental disrespect: it is excluded that one presents one's personal issues or identitarian belongings, and the respect for everybody consists precisely in respect for the role, and not for the real person of the other. Urbanity thus is not just a promise, but also a challenge—yet one that can be mastered. The challenge consists in the rule that everybody dwelling in urban space should be able to leave their "idiocy", that is, their personal or identitarian issues, behind—at least by acting as if they could do so. The fact that the ancient rhetoricians considered witty speech as an instance of urbanity, witnesses of this fact: for them, speaking wittily was genuinely urban—since it presupposed the polite assumption that everybody was able to get a joke, or at least to politely act as if they did so.

Notes

1. The problem with the claims for universality never consisted in their particular historical *roots*, as postmodern ideology suggests. Yet, it consisted in their specific colonial *function*. Colonialism precisely did not allow universal principles to be implemented universally, but reserved them to Western countries only (one could say, these modern principles got used in a postmodern way). Slavoj Žižek has clearly pointed this out: "British colonialism did many horrible things in India, but the worst among them was resuscitating the oppressive Hindu tradition of caste. Before British colonization, the caste tradition was already disintegrating because of the influence of Islam. But British colonizers understood very quickly that the way to rule Indians was not to make them like us or to bring to them our modernity. No, a much better way to rule them was to resuscitate their own traditional, patriarchal, authoritarian structures. Colonialists did not want to create modernisers" (Žižek 2016).
2. In this sense, and with fidelity to its etymology, one could generally conceive of ideology as "video-logy": as a specific type of observation of individuals and subsequent self-observation that turns them into subjects.
3. See for this Johan Huizinga's comments and his reference to Plato: "I say that a man must be serious with the serious", he says (*Laws*, vii, 803). "God alone is worthy of supreme seriousness, but man is made God's plaything and that is the best part of him" (Huizinga 1950, 18).
4. See for this: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_of_Jean_Charles_de_Menezes (accessed: 2016-09-11).

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[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' denote end notes.

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