

The background image shows a wide-angle view of a multi-lane bridge spanning a city street. The bridge has a concrete structure with a series of arches supporting it. Below the bridge, several cars and a motorcycle are visible on the road. In the distance, there are buildings and a traffic light showing a green arrow pointing upwards. The sky is overcast and hazy.

UDRI AND THE REVISION OF MUMBAI'S DEVELOPMENT PLAN SAGA 2008 ONWARDS

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The Urban Design Research Institute (UDRI) for the past few years has been building capacity to understand the city and how the different laws and regulations affect the quality of life in the city. UDRI successfully completed many research projects such as the Eastern Waterfront (EWF) and the Fort Management Plan (FMP) and is now pushing hard through bureaucratic and political channels to implement the recommendations of such studies. The Fort Pheri bus route is a shining example of such a process.

Since 2008 the UDRI has been looking at the city's Development Plan and has collected all available information on the issue of the Development Plan. To our surprise the implementation of the previous Development Plan was only 12% and hence it was imperative we question the strategies adopted for the Development Plan.

One of the key findings that came across was that the Development Plan process itself was an academic, bureaucratic process and largely esoteric as far as the common person was concerned. The plan which ideally lays out housing/sanitation/healthcare/education facilities for the marginalized people was unknown to them. The slum dwellers were blissfully unaware about the existence of the Development Plan itself. Some unclear answers about the plan come from the builders and architects who have to work through the system to get approvals. However there too there was a lack of understanding

about what exactly are the functions of the Development Plan itself other than increasing the number of departments they have to visit to get the required NOC.

Many of the NGOs and other active citizens though aware of the Development Plan for the city were unsure as to the implications the plan might have for them. Service delivery was thought to be the only problem that the city faced. Spatial thinking was an alien concept to the many NGOs doing great work in the city. Filing RTI applications to get tiny bits of information regarding only a small issue faced by the specific focus group was the norm.

The local government itself was not in any position to undertake the task of revising the Development Plan as there were no trained planners on its staff. The tasks were assigned to engineers who are ill-trained to undertake such a developmental mode of working. Besides there were no time for them to do the tasks that was required to revise the development plan as the MCGM was busy fire fighting with the provision of basic services for the enormous population of Mumbai. Our biggest fear was that the MCGM will out source this task and bring into the picture a complete set of strangers who would have no clue of the magnitude and nature of the problems that Mumbai was facing. This unfortunately happened. The task was indeed out sourced to a foreign firm with a subsidiary in Bangalore.

The UDRI carefully analyzed all these issues and came up with the idea that the process of revision of the Development Plan itself should be made into a public debate. It was time to think of Mumbai as whole and not fragmented into its factions such as transportation, SWM, heritage etc. Even if the revision was to be done by foreign consultants it was our task to prepare the city to define its needs, understand the correlations, suggestions and creatively comment on the proposals.

When the UDRI started working on the Development Plan officially from 2009 it started becoming clear that neither the architects/builders nor the activists have a clear idea as what are the aspirations of the city. Everyone has only a partial view of the city, much like the story of the blind men and the elephant. Hence the UDRI decided to invest its time and resources into conducting a survey to understand the aspirations of the city and get some firsthand information about service delivery in the city. Many of our findings were truly eye opening. The very fact that informality in the city has reached over 70% unofficially and 42% officially itself could be one of the greatest reasons as to why the Development Plan implementation was so poor.

Livelihoods was one of the greatest needs that has fuelled the city's growth and drives people to it like a magnet. However the informality it brings is in conflict with the more stable middle class in the city. The Development Plan has to address the issues of both the

street vendor and the corporate big boss. Our survey captured a snapshot of demands/aspirations and complaints that the people have towards their government.

There was also a need to build trust with the government and to be able to positively criticize the local government. The UDRI right from the beginning claimed no expertise in the fields of health/education/transportation/water supply and sanitation/housing/etc. hence it was only prudent that we engage the organizations which are experts in these fields and help the local government with the comments and suggestions from these experts but in such a way that they can be implemented directly in the Development Plan without much modification.

The UDRI along with about 250 NGOs and active citizens formed 11 stakeholder groups and the task assigned was to come up with the guidelines and planning principles for the Development Plan. Just as an example, there are three sets of guidelines for healthcare facilities such as NUHM, NBC and the local body Development Control Regulations. Sorting them out was a huge task in itself. Over 75 stakeholder meetings took place to come up with planning principles for each of the issues that the group was dealing with. Due to this process not only were we able to give the local government the guiding principles but also due to exchange of ideas there was a huge capacity building within the city. Many of the NGOs now have an

entire section that is actively monitoring the progress of the Development Plan. Mumbai is truly a juggernaut and we are happy that many of the other NGOs have taken up this issue and are finding different energies that the UDRI would not have been able to. The UDRI sent 12 different letters to the Chief Engineer Development Plan with the planning principles and a separate set of non-negotiables which have been endorsed by over 150 organizations representing easily over 1000 people.

The local government was adamant and closed door in the beginning but later produced many documents that were kept in the public domain. One such document was the Existing Land Use (ELU) maps and report which when the UDRI got a copy thereof found numerous mistakes. This led us to believe that there could be many such instances and hence a thorough check was necessary. The UDRI by itself found out 1200 discrepancies but that too was not enough. We made the maps available to all through our website and also conducted workshops to reach people as to how to identify the errors. We also prepared a guide for people to download before starting the analysis.

We are sure that with the format that we gave the people to identify the mapping errors it was very easy for the local government, the MCGM, to rectify the errors and the report on these errors was also published on the government website.

After the completion of the verification process the MCGM released the planning principles the MCGM was going to adhere to. In a Preparatory Studies Report UDRI started to analyse them and almost immediately it was clear that this was not a detailed report but just a glance over for the people. The only tool envisaged was that of FSI and the rationalization of FSI was presented. There is no indexation of the FSI to the local amenity provision. Hence it would make Mumbai a space with tall towers without any open spaces, clogged traffic, paucity of health care facilities, educational facilities and water supply and sewerage.

Though the vision statement aspires to make Mumbai a global city and to make it competitive, how the MCGM is going to manage this without following global standards and amenities provision seems a rather lopsided effort. The improperly planned and regulated construction in the city happens at the cost of amenities for its citizens. To be a global city, the lowering of standards is unacceptable and is a self-defeatist first step in a 20 year planning exercise. The Preparatory Studies Report also remains silent on the earlier DP implementation with no reference to earlier reservations. Thereby dual damage is caused: first, the city has no reference to what has been achieved already; and second, learnings from the previous planning exercise such as best practices are lost.

Slums have not been mapped in detail and hence it would further marginalize the slum dwellers. UDRI since its first comment on the ELU has been requesting the MCGM to include slums in the mapping exercise however these requests have fallen on deaf years. Mapping the slums in the ELU would have helped to reconcile this major discrepancy. Unfortunately the DP exercise has excluded slum mapping despite the Constitution providing the 'Right to Life'. Approximately 20% of the slum population or 10% of the city's population has disappeared overnight! (As compared to slum census data 2001, 2011) The responsibility for the provision of the above services, by the Municipalities, in order to promote a healthy life for all its citizens' is also enshrined in the Constitution of India. Article 21 of the constitution of India states that 'no person shall be deprived of his life except according to procedure established by law.' Right to life as enshrined in Article 21 means something more than just survival or an animal existence. It includes the right to live with human dignity.

With this as the background many of the civil society organisations including the UDRI were called for a meeting with the Municipal Commissioner. It was in this meeting that the UDRI and other Organisations requested the Commissioner to open up the Preparatory Studies for public comment and invite suggestions from the diverse range of people in Mumbai. After much deliberation it was finally decided that

the Ward office in Parel would be an ideal neutral ground for hosting of such public participation meetings and over thirteen meetings on focusing on subjects like Urban Form, Health, Education, Digital inclusion Transportation, etc. were held and many inputs were given to the MCGM for course corrections.

With the huge success of the Public Participation workshops the MCGM has now committed to holding similar meetings in each Ward so that a more detailed and localized discussion can be held and the comments be incorporated in the Planning exercise.