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“Bourgeois Utopias”? The rhetoric of globality in the contemporary suburban landscape of Calcutta

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Abstract

In scholarly as well as popular imagination, the term “suburb” conjures images of Anglo-American suburbia. The notion of the suburb as a residential enclave of the bourgeoisie is deeply embedded in Anglo-American thought, and continues to serve as a model for good living. Half a century of critique directed towards its social bases and ecological impact has done little to impair the image or practice. The post-WWI American suburb, in particular, has been considered the paradigmatic example of suburban development under industrial capitalism, and coterminous with modernity: a built form that best represents “the spirit and character of modern civilization”.ⁱ Suburbs are, in Robert Fishman’s words, “bourgeois utopias”.ⁱⁱ

This imagination of the suburb, of course, ignores suburban development in other parts of the world. Neither the nineteenth-century Parisian suburb, nor the suburbs of Latin American and Asian cities would easily fit the model of American suburbia. Rather, the bourgeoisie and the wealthy residents of these cities claimed neighborhoods in the city proper, and often the city center, relegating poorer residents to the city’s margins.ⁱⁱⁱ In a seemingly contrary move that appeared to have turned the model of the Anglo suburb inside-out, Baron Haussmann’s infrastructural refashioning of Paris as a modern city in the 1870s pushed the Parisian working class to the city’s outer limits. Such center-periphery models, however, are usually inadequate for characterizing suburban development; the topography of privilege is more variegated and complicated. What such models do suggest is the way land in the city’s margins are imagined and valued. The positive valence given to the city’s outer limits in American imagination and the negative valence attached to the periphery in Parisian imagination are indices of their respective cultural attitude towards the countryside. Despite differences, both share the vision of the city as infinitely expandable into the surrounding environs; the city seems to have a natural claim upon the countryside. In other words, the two models are merely the flip sides of the same capitalist/colonialist relation between city and country. Also, in both cases, the suburb works as a tool of class-based residential segregation.^{iv} The significance of suburbia resides in the vision of socio-economic relations it assumes and projects. The form it takes and the process by which it is materialized, in turn, become poignant indicators of social solidarities and fissures in that particular society.

Contemporary suburban development in Indian cities offers an interesting case study in this regard. In the last decade, the housing market has flourished in the peripheries of Indian cities, swallowing up vast tracts of erstwhile countryside. As metropolitan boundaries expand and morph into a new

vision of suburbia, it continues to inform us about the changing dynamics of class relations in India and the fragile relation between city and country. What is intriguing about the new suburbia in India is the contradiction between the model it seems to be espousing, that of the Anglo-American suburb, and the physical form it is taking. The contradiction between marketing rhetoric and built form prompts several questions. What are the factors fueling suburban expansion in India? What is indeed the model for this development? What are the socio-spatial consequences of the new suburbia? This paper seeks to unpack these queries in order to highlight certain characteristic of contemporary suburban development that are symptomatic of the socio-economic restructuring taking place in the Indian metropolis.

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The Latest Real Estate Boom in India

The cover story of the 2005 Feb 7 issue of *India Today*, the leading English language news magazine in India, carried the heading: “Real Estate: Can the Boom Last?” Making a distinction between the on-going real-estate boom and the “speculator-driven” booms of the early 1980s and early 1990s, the editorial noted:

(T)he upswing in the economy, higher household incomes and easy availability of housing finance has boosted the real-estate market to unprecedented levels. . . . Favorable government policies on housing loans, falling interest rates and tax rebates on property purchases coupled with low investment returns in other areas are also channelling money into the property market. . . . This time all the signs point to a genuine property boom where demand meets supply and the choices are far more varied, not to mention prices. From Rs. 25 lakh for a decent apartment to over 3 crore for a luxury villa, there’s something for everyone.^v

The magazine cover gives us the image of this “everyone”: the current target buyer (and his wife and dog) – male, average age 35, professional, with an annual income of over 5 lakh (Figure 1). This profile would leave out not only the vast majority of India’s population, but most of those who were until recently considered the bulk of the “middle class.”

The cover story of *India Today* provided additional statistical sublime on the 29 per cent growth of the housing finance market in 2003-4 that had reportedly disbursed Rs. 60,000 crore on property worth Rs. 80,000 crore.^{vi} In Bangalore’s suburban market 5.2 million sq. ft. has been added between 2003 and 2005. In Chandigarh, a government auction on Dec 11, 2004, created history, with 250 sq. yard plots fetching Rs. 87 lakhs, Rs 22 lakhs more than the previous year (Figure 2). It noted:

In Gurgaon, the upcoming Sahara complex, with starting prices of Rs. 1.3 crore, promises buyers German floors, Italian kitchens and bluestone bathrooms. . . . The trend of demanding and getting only the best began with commercial properties where MNCs looked for world-class buildings to improve the working environment and employee efficiency. This then got replicated in premium homes. New features such as a clubhouse, swimming pool, power back up and modular kitchens are considered commonplace. The must haves are remote controlled smart homes, Internet cabling, massage shower panels in bathrooms, parquet flooring and concierge facilities.^{vii}

This is not merely confined to the large metropolises, *India Today* tells us: “A drive through Jaipur’s Bapu Nagar reveals majestic old bungalows yielding ground (excuse the pun) to prettified high rises.” It is true, it added, the “middle-class buyer has been crowded out of a market such as Chandigarh’s, where the prime buyers are NRIs (non-resident Indians) attracted by the lucrative investment options of the Chandigarh-Panchkula-Mohali axis.”^{viii} The middle-class now has to seek housing in private developments 15-20 km outside the core region.

India Today’s cover story duly noted that the punch of the real-estate boom lies in “suburbia.” “Expanding city limits simply means more space,” remarked Anshuman Magazine, the MD of the multinational real-estate company, CB Richard Ellis South Asia, with imperial innocence: “The mass private development of metro suburbia has gone a long way in making good housing available to young buyers looking for a better quality of life.”^{ix} The report noted the threesome that has made this boom possible: “the new mindset of the buyer (in search of the best deals and no longer bothered about getting into debt); the developer (looking to compete in the Asian market and far more accountable than before) and the government (playing a supportive role by releasing land into the market and making conducive policies)”.^x Government concessions include the revamping of land-use laws, and repeal of the Rent Control Act and the Urban Land Ceiling Act.

The rise of suburbia, of course, can only be sustained, with the building and maintenance of appropriate infrastructure. Gurgaon has apparently seen a 40% rise in residential property prices between January 2004 and 2005, and yet cannot treat more than 20 per cent of its sewage and can barely meet 50 per cent peak power demand.^{xi} There is significant pressure on central and state governments to invest in infrastructure and facilitate the construction industry to make the new suburban boom possible. CEOs, economists, planners all seem to agree that the key to a sustained economic boom lies in the hiking of consumption and the removing of infrastructural hurdles. The household data of the 2001 census of India seemed to have been premised on this assumption. The census data is daunting and intriguing, particularly when read with the present real estate boom in mind.

In the country as a whole, there are 179 million houses for 192 million families. Forty percent of Indian families live in one-room houses, and 53% of families use firewood to cook. Sixteen million houses are vacant, 3.3 million vacancies in Delhi alone. Only 52% of the people in the country live in houses with permanent walls and roof, while 88% of urban households and 44% of rural households have electricity. In most states, more houses have

televisions than toilets. According to the pundits, however, it is not insufficiency of income, but inadequate infrastructure that inhibits the consumption of consumer products.^{xiii} With consumer goods consumption becoming the indicator of the nation's well being, it is perhaps not a surprise that city and regional planning authorities have taken to re-fashioning the infrastructure with a vengeance. The term "infrastructure" has become a catch-all for channeling various forms of subsidies, tax-breaks, and land rights to large corporate developers. The demand for feeding consumer goods to the middle-classes and to those that have slid beyond middle-class hegemony has unleashed a peculiar spatial logic that must confront, and even proliferate a range of socio-structural inequities on a daily basis. The production of such inequities is fueled by the desire for international "translatability".

Planning Perspectives

The concessions granted by the state governments to real-estate developers must be seen in the larger frame of urban planning visions in India. The urbanization objectives and rhetoric of the last Five Year Plan offers a sense of this vision. The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) commenced its 2002 statement on urban development by noting its disappointment in the "modest urbanization of the country", given that urbanization was supposed to have been "a key determinant of economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s, boosted by economic liberalisation".^{xiii} In this context the modest pace of urbanization refers to the declining growth rate of urban centers, though the proportion of people living in urban areas is increasing.^{xiv} Before the report set out to identify the obstacles to rapid urbanization, it did acknowledge that there is "no runaway migration from rural to urban areas", attributing the reason to the success of rural development programs.^{xv} Urbanization here is a tool for industrialization, rather than being prompted by industrialization, and is geared towards creating conditions conducive to the "free market". In such a view urbanization as metaphor and practice is interchangeable with modernization and economic prosperity. The Indian Planning Commission's "India Vision 2020" even claimed, "growing urbanization is a *natural* phenomenon and despite all its implications has beneficial effects on economic growth" (my emphasis).^{xvi} It continued with the projection that India's urban population would grow to around 540 million over the next two decades, resulting in the emergence of 60 to 70 cities with population of more than a million. Having detailed the adverse consequences that might ensue

from such urban explosion, it provided a snapshot of the urban dream with a hint of pride:

The increasingly congested urban traffic will be motorized as never before. Two wheelers will be ubiquitous and cars will be considered essential for most middle-class families . . . Urban congestion will accelerate the movement of business, middle class families and even government offices into new *self-contained suburban centers* (my emphasis).^{xvii}

This paragraph could have been lifted from the pages of urban planners in the early twentieth-century U.S. Urbanization as economic determinant, commensurable with a particular vision of economic structure and management, overrides concerns of social and ecological well-being.^{xviii} The important point here is that 60 new cities with populations of a million each is not merely a consequence of industrial and economic policies. The central government has issued the mandate to settle 100 new cities of 0.5 million each by 2021 as part of the policy. There is more to it. The larger significance resides in the basic assumptions about land typology and land values, and is demonstrated in the attitude towards the “rural” and “urban” as concepts and practice. Cities and villages in this worldview occupy two different times, not just spaces, and it assumes that rural “backwaters” must be brought within the time and spatial regime of the urban. Citing the case of Delhi which contains a village protected as a “heritage” area, the Tenth Five Year Plan pointed out: “the presence of urbanised villages in the middle of the city is an anachronism”.^{xix} It would be incorrect to assume from this comment, however, that the objective is to get rid of green space in cities; the objective is to get rid of the village as an economic/social entity. The village space then could be claimed for high-yield real estate that would benefit an entirely new class of people. This process ensures that the concept of green and nature also undergo a transformation. The rural landscape that one finds on the edges of Indian cities is destined to be replaced by manicured landscapes functioning as zones of recreation for the upper classes.

The argument for this new urbanization touches upon various issues, including housing and employment, that have been relevant to planning authorities since the 1950s, and articulated in terms of urban needs of the nation from at least the Third Five Year Plan.^{xx} Reflecting on the failure of urban development authorities to meet the housing needs of urban residents, the Tenth Five Year Plan reiterated the role of the Urban Land (Ceiling and Regulation) Act, the Land Revenue Act and Reforms Act, the Stamp Duty

Act, the Rent Control Act, and Urban Development Authorities Act/Town Planning Acts in “hampering” the availability of land for housing and other construction, “pushing up land prices”:

There is a need to take measures to ease the availability of land so that growth can take place through increased construction and housing activity, and land prices can be brought down to moderate levels making affordable shelter available to the *lower income groups*. This will also prevent the proliferation of unauthorised colonies.^{xxi}

The report did not care to clarify what historical precedence would lead to the belief that more land on the market will ameliorate the housing situation for the poor, nor cared to admit that some of the biggest “unauthorized” squatter settlements proliferated when three of these Acts, namely the Rent Control Act, Land Reforms Act, and Urban Land Ceilings Act were not in place. What mechanism within the free-market system would generate residential accommodation for the poor is left to conjecture. This is startling considering the Planning Commission’s statistics: 90% of housing needs in urban India are among the economically weaker sections.^{xxii} It is relevant to mention here that contrary to the assumptions of planners, economists and politicians, real estate prices, rather than dropping in the last two years, have more than doubled, and the Indian Reserve Bank has been forced to raise interest rates twice during this period to cool speculation.

The Tenth Plan report also noted that “more flexible zoning regulations to permit change of land use where justified, easier subdivision regulation, and extension of trunk services to new areas/new townships will help to reduce congestion and develop the cities in an orderly fashion”. “Unless the conditions relating to land procurement are made simple”, it cautioned, foreign direct investment (FDI) will not be forthcoming:

In urban areas, especially those with Master Plans, the needs of urbanisation should have precedence of land revenue and land reforms legislation in which land ownership, transfers, and land use are incorporated in order to prevent the conversion of agricultural land.^{xxiii}

The chapter on real estate put the point across more clearly: “With the urban land ceiling removed in most parts of the country, the agricultural land holding ceiling with respect to land in the periphery of towns needs to be looked into”^{xxiv} and added: “conversion of rural land at market prices should

be completely de-controlled and left to the market The curbs on the expansion of urban limits into surrounding villages should be removed”.^{xxv}

What is at stake here is not merely the expansion of city limits, or making land available to the people, but making room for large-scale real estate developments that would invite international real-estate players and FDI. The argument for a real estate market economy of scale and the finances needed to support developments at such scales is worth summarizing: local real-estate developers do not have national presence nor the technical expertise to handle large scale real-estate and township development; therefore foreign real-estate experts have to be invited to shape the real-estate market in India; and to ensure the investment of foreign developers, urban and agricultural Land Reforms Acts have to be repealed, completely freeing up land from state restrictions.^{xxvi}

Among the important reasons cited for inviting FDI is that it is not possible for public and state agencies to generate the vast finances required for infrastructural development to serve the liberalized economy. FDI will meet at least part of the infrastructural needs. The initial investment and demonstration of commitment, however, has to be made by the local municipal or state bodies. This is by now considered an essential part of the package with which to woo foreign investments and multi-national corporations (MNC). At some point, however, the vision and rhetoric of the MNCs and foreign investors become interchangeable with that of the state and local agencies and developers. Since the vision of the foreign players in the Indian real estate scene is wrought from their home-grown experience, it is useful to review the vision crafted by the model suburban development in the west. It would also clarify some points of difference in terms of zoning controls that U.S. suburban expansion assumed as its cornerstone.

The Model Suburban Dream

Robert Fishman, in his book, *Bourgeois Utopias* has charted the stages of suburban growth in the Anglo-Saxon world. Beginning with the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century development around London, to its development and replication in the streetcar suburbs of late nineteenth-century United States, followed by the post-war American suburb and finally urban agglomerations that he has named “technoburb”, he argues that one factor connects them – they were/are all a means of class-based social segregation.^{xxvii} He suggests that it was not merely the growth of the city that led to suburbs; that is, it is not an organic process or an “inexorable” process.

^{xxviii} Rather there are four reasons behind the growth of Anglo-American suburbia: changes in the structure and conception of the bourgeois family; reformulation of privacy and gendered roles within the household; the desire to live away from the business world and dangerous mix of classes and ethnicities in the city; and the claim of a new moneyed class to the pleasures of country life enjoyed by the old aristocracy. The suburban house, he notes is “the sign of superior socio-economic status.”^{xxix} The form that expresses this status is the single-family detached house. It is important to recognize that suburbia is not simply important by what it includes but what it excludes.

The process of exclusion, however, is not any organic desire among the bourgeoisie wanting to live apart from the lower classes, but prompted by market conditions created by the real-estate industry in its aim to maximize profit. Pointing out zoning as a key instrument of suburban expansion in the twentieth-century United States, Christine Boyer has identified the main factors that created the grounds for suburban segregation.^{xxx} The need to boost the U.S. economy, which was showing signs of weakness following WWI, prompted large investments in the construction industry, and led a search for new methods to boost housing construction. New needs had to be created to continue high rates of production in consumer goods, which in turn required the expansion of markets to prevent overproduction. Suburbia, with its multiplication of individual family needs, came to occupy central importance as a market in consumer goods. Planners also sought to establish a new consumer market in housing by encouraging urban tenants to transfer their savings into home investment through an easy monthly credit system.^{xxxi} The instrument that secured this investment was zoning. Zoning laws were created to protect the owner’s investment in stable neighborhood communities where undesirable properties could not encroach, contributing to the design of homogenous suburbs in terms of house form as well as class. Zoning laws ensured that real-estate prices in the city’s core became out of reach for most of its residents, fueling a move outwards. The process was revived with vigor after WWII to pump savings into residential investment to support the building of suburbia by giving generous subsidies to developers, along with massive state investment in infrastructure, chiefly motorways. The idealization of the suburb as the place to raise a family thus followed economic imperatives. The economic interests merely capitalized on an already-established image of upper-class living – the detached single-family house located in a green space outside the city. More critically, segregation of uses determined by zoning laws also meant “economic, social, and racial segregation”, turning socio-economic distinctions into “disciplinary legalized

regulations”.^{xxxii} What distinguishes eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Anglo-American suburbs from the phenomenon of twentieth-century U.S. is the intervention of the state in support of suburban investment. The role of the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) in providing housing models, streamlining planning processes and removing investment hurdles cannot be overstated.

Although the history of the Anglo-American suburb from the point of view of American authors begins with the eighteenth-century suburban residences outside London, the narrative ends up in the twentieth-century United States, as the “logical” outcome of suburbia as a capitalist phenomenon. Twentieth-century suburbs in Britain have a somewhat different history. Town and Country Planning regulations in the U.K. have contained suburban sprawl in the twentieth century, based on a clear distinction between city and country and in favor of semi-detached and terrace models of residential development. This notion of suburbia, for the most part, has also been successful in keeping working class residential units – “cheap bungalow construction” -- outside its ambit.^{xxxiii} The result is, as Anthony King claims, the working class has been mostly confined to multi-story apartments in the city’s center and edges. Even if this model of urban growth does not apply to all regions of the U.K., class-based residential segregation is an established fact.

If we compare contemporary suburbia in India with that of the model established in the U.S. or U.K., the differences overwhelm similarities. The form of Indian suburbs continues to contradict some critical features of the Anglo-American ideal. The contradictions point to the peculiar combination of profit incentives, weak state intervention, and the existing socio-spatial inequities that the current development is exacerbating. In the balance of the paper I want to focus on these contradictions as they appear in the suburbs of Calcutta. Unlike most Indian cities, Calcutta developed the notion of suburbs, early on, in the eighteenth century, and allows us to follow the long historical development of the concept. The contradictions, I argue has as much to do with land politics, the increasing freedom with which land use and zoning laws are being altered, as with urban-rural visions and architectural and planning practices.

Old Suburb, New Suburb

In the late eighteenth century, Chowringhee, a neighborhood that is now part of Calcutta’s central business district (CBD), was considered a suburb – an elite housing locale with large bungalows in sprawling premises. On the west,

the city's boundary was marked by the Hooghly River. The city's administrative and commercial core hugged the river in proximity of the fort and docks. The outlying country to the north, east, and south was dotted with "garden houses" and contributed to a patchwork pattern of suburban settlement.^{xxxiv} The garden houses acted as weekend retreats for the wealthy residents of the city, both British and Indian; only a few made garden houses their primary place of residence. The choice of such retreats in the country was informed by both the Indian and British notions of the rural landscape as a site of leisure. The suburban patchwork, however, was spatial as well as socio-economic: agricultural and fishing villages were interspersed among the garden houses. On the east, the suburbs halted at the edges of the Salt Lakes where solid ground merged into marshes and low-lying areas, considered by the British to be unwholesome for settlement. James Ranald Martin, writing in the mid 1830s considered it necessary to drain the lakes for reasons of health and sanitation and provided a description of the extent and nature of the lakes:

The salt lake lies about three miles east of town, extending upwards of four miles north and south, it is divided into two portions, the eastern division averaging three feet in depth, its area being seven square miles or about 12,000 beegahs, the western is two feet in depth, and its area five and a half square miles or about 10, 630 beegahs. The borders are generally under rice cultivation, with occasional patches of reed grass.^{xxxv}

Martin noted that these lakes did not resemble those of Scotland, or Canada. Rather, they are "extensive jheels, which may be either denominated shallow lakes, or deep morasses". He added:

A large proportion of these in the dry season contain little or no water, but during the rains present immense sheets, over which the boats of the greatest magnitude may be navigated, and some are navigable to a certain extent throughout the year.^{xxxvi}

Three canals were dug towards the lakes in the course of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries creating drainage channels and streams for boat transportation connecting the docks and markets on the Hooghly with the inland markets and river routes. While residents living in the eighteenth century suburbs delighted in the view of the lakes from their verandahs and terraces, the lakes were also seen as a natural barrier for habitation unless completely drained and filled.

In the early nineteenth century, when commercial development secured its way into the area around Chowringhee, the suburbs receded farther to the south and east, encroaching on the fringes of the lakes. The suburbs still wore the look of the countryside; localities of Alipore and Ballygunge boasted of a country ambiance with extensive orchards and gardens. From the late nineteenth century onwards, marshes and low lands to the east and south, and to a lesser degree to the north, were filled up at a rapid pace to make room for residences for the wealthy. Organized private platting of the 1910s in the areas of Alipore, Ballygunge and Tollygunge, although it expanded the reach of suburbia, retained a suburban model of spacious houses set amid lawns, creating generous spaces for the socio-economically privileged. Suburbs were no longer merely weekend retreats; they had become the primary place of residence among those who preferred the spaciousness that was no longer to be found in properties within the city. Here we have the beginning of a more compact sense of suburbia, although the Salt Lakes continued to function as fisheries and agricultural land largely undisturbed into the early twentieth century.

In the 1930s the Calcutta Improvement Trust (CIT) took up the task of suburban platting for the middle classes in the areas next to Southern Avenue and the Dhakuria Lakes, and just outside the city's ward area in New Alipore, in addition to various housing projects in the north and north-eastern edges of the city. This marked an important shift in the nature of suburban development, ending the long first phase of mostly unplanned suburban growth. The lot configuration of these suburbs in the second phase implied a tight knit urban fabric. The Bengali middle class that settled in these localities also developed a system of neighborhood community facilities -- schools, clubs, markets, tea shops, libraries -- that eroded the primarily residential character of these suburbs. Their subsequent absorption in the larger commercial network and public life of the city was a logical outcome of such practices.

If suburbs may be thought of as a tool of class-based residential segregation, in this early twentieth-century phase, this was neither the primary objective, nor the outcome. The urban grain of much of the southern part of Calcutta, that has resulted from the early twentieth-century building activities, consists of a fairly consistent density -- low to mid rise tight-knit middle class residences and public buildings, with significant pockets of low-income residences and slums in close proximity. The latter had provided these middle-class neighborhoods with a range of services, and therefore their close symbiotic relationship had been spatially and politically supported.

The mass-migration to Calcutta after the Partition of the country in 1947, that gave Calcutta its first massive housing shortage and began the process of refugees settling in the fringes of the city, inaugurated a further shift in the concept of the suburb constituting what may be called the third phase. This was, in part at least, meant to control unplanned squatter settlements in the outlying areas of the city. Government reports claimed that Calcutta was unsuitable for “family life,” and the two planning priorities were to be the demolition of slums, and the creation of industrial satellite towns either adjacent to or in the vicinity of Calcutta. “Such satellite town must necessarily be properly planned on a modern conception with adequate amenities, social, cultural, and recreational, etc, with employment potential by the establishment of industrial undertaking,” the report added.^{xxxvii}

The larger Calcutta Metropolitan District was itself seen as a major industrial hub with a cluster a small industrial towns stretching north and south of Calcutta. The idea from the very beginning had been to consolidate the industrial potential of these towns into bigger units. In the 1950s Kalyani in the north was designated as an important industrial town and Haldia in the South as a major port city, and plans were undertaken to develop these towns (Figure 3). Later, a larger number of towns were targeted for potential development (Figure 4). This trend continues in the *Vision 2025* plan crafted in the 1990s, although the latest perspective plan offers a slightly different consolidation of urban growth patterns (Figure 5).^{xxxviii}

In 1958 a plan of “New Calcutta” was proposed. It was to be akin to “New” Delhi that marked its separation from the “Old”. However, New Calcutta was slated as an industrial city – a Chandigarh-style city of mega-sectors, divided into superblocks, sprawled over 59,000 acres of agricultural land. The location was south of New Alipore and Garden Reach stretching along the Diamond Harbor Road to the fringes of the Sunderbans. As may be expected, the key terms in these planning documents were “congestion” and “de-centralization,” the latter being the antidote for the former defect. It mattered little that much of the planning was enhancing the importance of the city as a core that must dominate and expand a hinterland. Planning projects hatched in the 1950s and 60s prodded by the World Health Organization and the World Bank made no bones about occupying vast agricultural land next to the city.

The idea of Salt Lake City planted on reclaimed marshy land and fisheries on the eastern fringes of the city had already been inaugurated in 1953. In comparison with the scope and area of the New Calcutta plan, Salt Lake City was small. Prepared by consultants from the Netherlands and Yugoslavia, Salt

Lake City was designed as a primarily residential community of 350,000 people in the high and middle-income groups. In the initial plans of the 1950s, small-scale industries were located in the periphery. In the 1960s the land use pattern of the town was changed to make room for recreational use in the northern sectors and for industry and industrial housing in the southern sectors next to agricultural land. It was not until the 1980s that Salt Lake City was substantially built up, when the state authorities took the initiative to move many of its administrative offices from Calcutta to the new city. A 1976 report outlining this latter need, claimed: "Salt Lake must not be viewed as a township in isolation but as a metropolitan expansion – a New Horizon of Calcutta and nothing less than that."^{xxxix} Every development since then has had to make this claim of retaining contact with the "old" city. Salt Lake was also the first substantial move to expand the city along the E-W axis. Indeed, vast stretches of the erstwhile lake is now filled in and planted with settlements of both the planned and unplanned variety.^{xl}

There are three discernible traits in the manner of settling the city's fringes since the 1930s. Firstly, no planning distinctions were made between city and country, the country seen as absorbable within the dynamics and the needs of the city. It worked on a core-periphery model of expansion. The idea of agricultural land succumbing to "brick and mortar" was noted with satisfaction even in the 1951 census of Calcutta.^{xli}

Despite the pre-independence nationalist literature's role in valorizing the Bengal countryside in its productive, aesthetic, moral and affective capacities, it amounted to little more than a cultural gesture among the city-based elite. This thesis could be extended without great difficulty to the rest of the nation. In nationalist thought, the country remained a sign of backwardness, a deficiency that the first two Five Year plans had set out to eliminate. Notwithstanding the personal visions and village-improvement efforts of some of the most important leaders of the nation including, Vinoba Bhave, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, to mention a few, nationalist thought was hijacked in the project of developing rural India in line with an industrial urban future that failed to lend equal valence to the country and the city. Nowhere does one notice the stark failure of Indian nationalist and post-colonial imagination than in the inability to produce a robust positive ideology of the countryside.

Secondly, a corollary of the faint distinction between city and country in Indian planning is the absence of a pronounced *vision* of suburbia. Here we need to differentiate between residential development in the city's fringes that were referred to as suburban merely because of their outlying location, and

development of suburbia per se as a planning concept. The early twentieth-century and post-independence middle-class house was undoubtedly seen as a site of consumption (product advertisement loudly proclaimed this idea). Yet, no organized effort on the part of either the building industry or the state was made to convert the housing stock in line with the consumer goods market, as was done in the early twentieth century U.S.

Thirdly, there was no effort to segregate residential accommodation based on class, though class distinctions were rather starkly signaled in state-sponsored projects in the concept of housing for the HIG (higher-income group), MIG (middle-income group) and LIG (lower income group). The income-based distinctions were supposed to not simply stage class difference, however. Their primary objective was to subsidize housing for the economically weaker sections of society by drawing revenue from the higher income groups. Public welfare was very much a component of the ideology of urban development.

The spatial pattern that resulted from these planning decisions lacked overall socio-economic and formal coherence – a clear vision of what the city must “look like”, and failed to reign in unplanned growth. At the same time, and perhaps because of it, the settlement patterns accommodated a multitude of class and functional needs. With the latest spate of suburban development, which appears to come with a “vision” of sorts, most of the social assumptions that underlay settlement in the city’s fringes have been done away with. There are, however, some remarkable continuities that come into sharper focus because of the poor fit between visions and established practices.

Township Visions

The example of Rajarhat New Town, a state sponsored planning initiative, exemplifies contemporary development in the fringes of the city. The New Town is envisioned to prevent the ills of unplanned growth, unauthorized settlements, and urban sprawl, to relieve the congestion of Calcutta’s CBD, and to ensure “effective utilization of land”, although the chief planner of the West Bengal Housing and Infrastructure Development Corporation (HIDCO) under whose aegis this planning is being undertaken tried to de-emphasize the importance of congestion in the city center in my recent conversation with him.”^{xliii} A project report of 1999 notes that this is “dovetailed with the Government of India’s declaration towards establishing 100 new towns of population 0.5 million by 2021.”^{xliii} It also forms a part of the mega city program for Calcutta worked out under the directive of a

Planning Commission set up by the Central Government in a document titled *Vision 2025*. Planned with a major arterial connection between the Eastern Bypass and the Airport as the central spine, the township was meant to house a primarily residential population, with provision of some “clean industries” on the fringes.^{xliv} In recent iterations this has been changed to offer a significant amount of land to IT corporations, both national and multi-national. The new business district of the town will be located 10 km from Calcutta’s CBD and 5 km from Salt Lake City’s CBD. The basic module for the residential sectors is a neighborhood unit based “around some services and amenities like parks, schools, convenient shopping, etc.,” and “planned for a community of 20,000 to 30, 000 people”^{xlv} (Figure 6). Crisscrossed by a hierarchical road network, the plan emphasized vehicular access to each house, with very little provision for purely pedestrian access.

Initially designed with a project area of 3,075 hectares, it is now planned for 4,300 hectares and possibly more. Vast fishing and agricultural land to the east of Salt Lake City has been acquired, with more land acquisitions under way. Most of the land was touted as fallow or of low productivity: “(About) 68.36% of the area consists of agricultural land with its majority (about 87%) being unirrigated,” leading to a lower paddy yield than the rest of West Bengal. “Land not available for cultivation,” a category designed by the research report, claimed to occupy 31.64% of the project area.^{xlvi} An expected removal of 1000 persons from their land was considered negligible. The few existing villages (note location on map) that have been found too expensive to pay for compensation/rehabilitation have been allowed to remain on the assumption that either the remaining residents will be squeezed out due to market pressures, or that they would form a service population. These existing villages are surrounded on all sides by the new township, making the threat of market pressure tangible. “Service villages” accommodating lower income people were planned in the early stages, with an acknowledgement that the upper class accommodations to be built in New Town would require a population to serve in the capacity of domestic servants.^{xlvii} In fact, it was simply assumed that the farming families dispossessed of land to build the township would become this service population, in addition to the inhabitants of those villages that have not been acquired. It is fair to think of this practice as a continuation of a nineteenth-century Calcutta model of fostering *bustees* (slums) close to middle and upper class residential neighborhoods. There is one difference: the formation of a menial labor force at Rajarhat New Town has been inaugurated by the process of dispossessing that very population of land and livelihood. It is interesting to note that such service villages are

enumerated among the infrastructural highlights of the project. This is important, particularly because the nearest railway station is 6 km away from the southern fringes. This is too long a distance for domestic workers to walk if they have to commute from other locations, and they would not be able to afford the bus fare from the rail station to the new township.

Initial planning of the township claimed “balanced neighborhoods for all income groups.”^{xlvi} While some lower-income housing was built or lots provided for such housing as compensation to the people dispossessed of land, the new versions of the plan have done away with this provision. On a broader level, residential provision for lower income (LIG) and economically weaker sections (EWS) have been abandoned in recent actualization of the township plans. In other words, there has been a discontinuity or disjuncture between initial claims and outcome. The larger social welfare for which land for the township needed to be acquired as a public good has been abandoned to benefit a more privileged group of people.^{xlix} It would be incorrect to surmise that the only objective behind these changes is to benefit middle- and high-income groups. Surely these upper class groups are important constituencies for any political party in power, but there is more to it. This change of policy is designed to bring planning goals in line with market profitability. It is not in the interest of developers to build housing with a low profit margin. This is the inevitable result of relying on the market to provide a housing solution for the population at large. This is one of two critical features that signal a rupture from previous planning practices in the city. The other is the wholesale commodification of nature.

The advertising literature on the town claims that the southern fringes of the new settlement, bordered as it is by “protected wetlands” will forever retain the view from and breeze to the settlement. At present only Action Area I has been initiated, while plans are under way to overturn the High Court injunction that prevents any development in the wetlands. The idea is to turn the wetlands into a recreational facility, partly to be privately developed, and partly under the aegis of an “environmental institute.”

Rajarhat New Town is not an isolated instance of these trends. Real estate advertisements in the city help us gauge the depth and extent of the transformation. They also lend a measure of understanding to a parallel disjunction: between the advertised image and the built artifact. It is commonplace knowledge that product advertisements overstate or dramatize the product on sale. In this case, however, the gap between image and artifact turns out to be a critical indicator of the nature of topographic transformation.

Selling Suburbia

The most common imagery of “good-living” promoted by real-estate developers in Calcutta is the idea of the “country home.” Hundreds of advertisements in newspapers, magazines, television, and billboards are selling the idea of living in a luxuriously “green” space away from the bustle of the city – names such as “Sunny Dew,” “Silver Spring,” “Hiland Park,” “Lake District”, “Daffodil Park” attest to this fictional landscape. The majority of the buildings depicted are multi-story apartments that claim enormous landscaped greens, shadows of Corbusian schemes of tall buildings set amid a natural landscape (Figure 7).

Several advertisements, however, invite the consumer to buy “cottages” or “bungalows” in the country, to return to one’s “roots.” Of course such a “lazy journey” to the roots is meant to be “laced with visits to the inbuilt gym or the snooker table”. “You even get to enjoy a film show or may be a nice barbecue in the open”, the advertisement for “Country Roads” notes (Figure 8). The advertisement even claims that the weekend cottage, 40 minutes to an hour away from the city center, is a novel idea. In the advertisement for “the bungalow estate,” the consumer is told to imagine “a lawn in front and garden in back,” and “sprawling acres of estate with a vast central garden, broad metalled roads, pebbled walkways, and high walls.”¹ The imagery is carefully chosen to avoid appearing like the Bengal countryside – they are almost all borrowed, being copied from fairly generic images of western-style suburban and park landscape. The actual image could be from any location in the world, New York or Singapore. If occasional reference is made to the Bengal countryside, it is always in a gesture of superceding its “deficiencies.” The en masse use of English names for these projects confirm the desirability of appealing to a particular clientele for whom good living is synonymous with living in the west. At present the language of Indian capital at the national level is certainly English, thus reversing earlier attempts by the central government to promote regional languages. What we see in these advertisements, even those produced for the state government, is an attempt to make oneself legible to national and international capital. Interestingly the few Bengali names invariably designate projects on the less expensive range of the market.

There are two issues here that bear closer scrutiny: the rush to cover the semi-rural fringes of the city with the *image* of a foreign landscape, and the idea that “good living” is necessarily “western”. While the former comes as a surprise to a generation that has been taught to sing lyrics in praise of the beauty of the Bengal countryside, the latter marks a significant departure in

the architectural ethos of the designer and vernacular landscapes of two decades ago.^{li} Contemporary suburban architecture in India seems opposed to the urban and architectural solutions crafted by Indian architects in the 1970s and 1980s, namely climate sensitive buildings and mid-rise high-density urban form that invoke the formal vocabulary of Indian vernacular architecture in a modern idiom. The architectural ethos of these decades, represented by the work of Charles Correa, Lawrie Baker, Balkrishna Doshi, Raj Rewal and others, was to a large degree a reaction against the mid-century International Style, and championed innovative solutions in terms of materials and building *parti*.

What is being built at present not only differs from the designer ethos of previous decades, it does not always correspond to what is being advertised either. The brochures of Rajarhat New Town, perhaps, offer the most telling contradiction between image and artifact (Figures 9, 10). Three different brochures have been produced for three different economic groups: HIG, MIG, LIG, thereby seemingly working within the logistics of state-sponsored/subsidized housing. The HIG brochure contains the image of a 3-car-garage suburban American home built of wood, and the MIG brochure contains images of smallish condos with wood siding and roof finish. The images come without labels, making it impossible to judge whether they are being used as promises of future buildings, or if they are merely teasers. Given that wood as a building material (except for interior finish) is not used in Calcutta, the images are particularly striking in their remoteness to local building practices. But the choice of residential imagery upholds a standard that people must aspire to.^{lii}

Those complexes that are within metropolitan boundaries, rather than promoting the notion of the “suburb,” however, appeal to the idea of a gated “unspoilt nature right in the heart of the city”(Figures 11, 12). Another claims to have “blurred the difference between residence and recreation.” All developers suggest amenities at par with “international standards,” which is seen as a good in itself. The narrative of “South City,” a mega complex built on previously industrial land has this to offer:

If you're looking for a home in Kolkata with international-standard amenities, come home to South City, a 31 acre mini township that offers an international lifestyle experience in 24 acres of natural surroundings. . . . South City will have the four highest towers in Eastern India, with high-speed lifts, state-of-the-art firefighting facilities, intelligent security systems and world-class professional facility managers for maintenance and upkeep.

South City also offers South City Mall, India's largest shopping mall. The 600,000 sq. feet mall will feature top brands, hypermarket, a six-screen multiplex and more. You'll also find The South City Academy, a school for 2000 children, equipped with a learning resource center, cafeteria, and multipurpose auditorium.

The South City Club, a resort-style club with social, entertainment and sporting facilities features India's largest swimming pool, tennis and squash courts, indoor cricket arena, health club, spa, fine dining restaurant and pub lounge.

An inset in the middle of the full-page ad confirms that out of the 1100 flats already sold, 30% has been booked by NRIs.

This complex that claims to be a full-service mini-city within the city, is a joint venture of five corporations, and has secured astonishing concessions from the state government. This includes the release of industrial land for residential/commercial purposes, and the prompt completion of the Lake Gardens flyover to facilitate quick passage to the project from Southern Avenue, one of the major city arteries.^{liii} While the city has expanded to the south of Southern Avenue since the 1950s, the arterial connections between the locality of Southern Avenue, a new suburb in the 50s bordering the Dhakuria Lakes, and the city beyond had taken time to develop. The once desirable suburb, of course, now appears as part of the metropolis itself, and with which the new project feels the need to connect, while retaining its distinction as an exclusive enclave.

When we compare the developments inside the city proper with that of the fringes, there seems to be little difference in spatial organization of the apartment block or the apartment itself. Driven by the need to maximize profit and prompted by the vision of housing amenities that demand open space for recreational facilities, the majority of the buildings are tall structures. This new building trend is changing the skyline of the eastern fringes which until recently was characterized by low and mid-rise (4-5 story) construction. The projects may be roughly divided into two groups. One that continues to follow the spatial template established by state and municipal housing authorities in the country three decades ago, now supplemented with amenities such as a "club", gymnasium, and swimming pool to spruce up the image of the old product. The other group constitutes projects that have little bearing with the local context.

On the upper scale of the first group are projects such as Shraichi Development Group's "Greenwood Nook" and "South City Gardens". The former manages to pack in as many apartments as possible along a continuous

corridor, the individual units being tightly configured, lacking dimensional flexibility. Only one side of these apartments are open, the other side containing the living/dining, toilets and kitchen opening onto a shaft that overlooks the main corridor of the complex. The advertisement for South City Gardens, about a 10-min drive from the South City complex discussed above, claims “there is no need to step out of the complex”. It emphasizes “environmental harmony”: “so close to the city and yet so far from the madding crowd”.^{liv} While the brochure is generously supplied with full page spreads of swimming pools and landscaped parks from other locations, the accommodations themselves, ranging from 920 sq ft to 1900 sq ft are all designed in a formulaic manner (Figures 13, 14). The apartments under 1200 sq ft only have limited cross ventilation, with bathrooms and kitchen ventilated through a service shaft. The “penthouses” are larger with at least two sides open, but with no finer spatial detailing. The penthouse level is identifiable by an envelope that wraps around the top-level apartments. Interestingly, all the interior images focus on furnishing and appliances rather than a connection between interior space and exterior space.

The second group of projects, with a far more pronounced “secessionist” agenda, caters to a different clientele. “Rosedale Garden”, one such project has real-estate offices in the U.S., U.K., and UAE, and presents the housing complex as an “exceptional investment opportunity”. Claiming to be “conceptualized by NRIs for NRIs, and designed and perfected by world-class architects, interior designers and landscape artists”, the complex consists of 6 towers of 26 floors with 4 apartments in each floor, spread over 16 acres in Newtown, Rajarhat. It invites buyers to the “gateway to a new shining Kolkata”.^{lv} The cover of the information brochure, as well as the perspective image of the project with its curved glass towers, assures the investor of the project’s international provenance (Figure 15). The Singapore-based architects try to match the spatial treatment with the claims made by the text:

Rosedale Garden is probably the largest project of its kind providing all facilities and amenities enjoyed in the West. The development offers large and airy rooms with windows overlooking lush green lawns. Encompassing a gamut of services and amenities which is seldom present in a single housing estate, Rosedale Garden will house, built in amenities like fridge, gas, etc. A 7-hole golf course, an old age home, airport transfers, swimming pool, tennis courts, food park, office spaces, 24x7 coffee shop, multi-cuisine restaurant, dedicated housekeeping service, in house grocery cum departmental (sic) store, qualified medical attendants with 24x7 ambulance service and many other amenities.^{lvi}

Other amenities include modern car wash facilities, travel agent and foreign exchange conversion house. As a housing complex that appears more like a club or resort facility, its difference is marked as much by its architectural gesture as by the size of the apartments that range from 1718 to 3866 sq ft (plus, 1575 sq ft terrace) priced between Rs. 48 lakhs to 1.2 crores. The plans demonstrate an attempt to fit in the formulaic spatial components of a U.S. suburban house within the shape of a modernist style apartment design (Figure 16). An “extra” is a servant’s room next to the main entrance of each apartment. The glass-encased building, with provisions for air-conditioning in bedrooms and living/dining only, could not have given the weather of Calcutta much consideration in its design. Most striking, however, is the last entry on its list of amenities that announces that Rosedale Garden is in the process of “tying up with various prestigious schools, colleges, engineering and medical colleges for quick admission.” That admission to “prestigious” institutions could be facilitated, rather guaranteed, through investment in expensive real estate is rarely stated with such clarity. It also strangely differs from and by far exceeds suburban design goals in the U.S.

Conclusion

It is fair to say that much of the contemporary advertising rhetoric and imagery are only nominally tied to facts on the ground. But the rhetoric of globality is symptomatic of larger happenings and problems. The need for global viability has become a means through which vast amounts of land and resources are being transferred to domestic and foreign corporations, and large populations are being dislocated without any hope of rehabilitation. Global here is also a euphemism for “western”, even if the building model is borrowed from the west via Singapore, and in terms of means and objectives, very little in fact separates this global from the colonial/imperial of a hundred years ago. The actors are different, however, and this factor itself stages a problem that we must deal with. The global rhetoric and the suggestion of universality not merely delineates a process of aiding foreign investment, nor does it simply hide an increasing social-economic gap between the rich and poor. The rhetoric itself is producing the cleavage in class relations. The transformation affects not only those who are already in economic distress, but as a result of this transformation, the middle class is also being split in two – a more privileged section and the underprivileged section that will suffer the downside of this real-estate bonanza. The new spatial organization is built upon three conditions: displacing the poor from the land they owned or

occupied previously in the city; creating residential enclaves that seek to be detached from their surroundings, despite needing the poor for domestic and service labor; and uneven spatial development and skyline because of the slackening of land reforms and environmental laws. The new topography is undoing the hegemony that the Indian middle-class had generated in the post-independence period by crafting an urban fabric that made room for economically weaker sections of society, even if in an imperfect manner, as it continues to burden the ecological capacity of the city's fringes. The two are linked phenomenon and will have far flung social consequences.

Footnotes

- ⁱ Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 3.
- ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*
- ⁱⁱⁱ See discussion in Fishman, 14, 103-115.
- ^{iv} *Ibid.*, 82-84. Also see Dolores Hayden, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).
- ^v Aroon Poorie, *India Today*, Feb 7, 2005. Rs. 25 lakh is approximately \$62,500 and Rs. 3 crore is approximately \$750,000. The latter is, of course far from the upper end of the housing market. This range refers to apartments (group housing) and semi-detached and detached residences (the "villas") within housing complexes.
- ^{vi} *Ibid.* One crore is 10, 000,000.
- ^{vii} *India Today*, Feb 7, 2005, 40.
- ^{viii} *Ibid.*, 45.
- ^{ix} *Ibid.*, 46.
- ^x *Ibid.*, 43.
- ^{xi} *Ibid.*, 46.
- ^{xii} "How we live," Report on Household Survey, *India Today*, July 28, 2003.
- ^{xiii} *Tenth Five Year Plan*, Chapter 6.1, p. 613.
- ^{xiv} *India Vision 2020*, Planning Commission, Government of India (New Delhi, 2002), 58.
- ^{xv} *Tenth Five Year Plan*, Chapter 6.1, p. 613.
- ^{xvi} *India Vision 2020*, Planning Commission, Government of India (New Delhi, 2002), 65.
- ^{xvii} *Ibid.*, 93.
- ^{xviii} It is apparent that there is disagreement on this point among the members of the Planning Commission. For example, Amitabh Kundu has expressed his reservation about the model of infrastructure management espoused by contemporary planners and economists. See his "Infrastructure Financing and Emerging Pattern of Urbanisation: A Perspective".
- ^{xix} *Tenth Five Year Plan*, Chapter 6.1, p. 613.
- ^{xx} The Third Five Year Plan was approved in 1961.
- ^{xxi} *Ibid.*, 616.
- ^{xxii} *Tenth Five Year Plan*, Chapter 1, p. 18.
- ^{xxiii} *Ibid.*, 617.
- ^{xxiv} *Tenth Five Year Plan*, Chapter 7.6, p. 836.
- ^{xxv} *Ibid.*, p. 837.
- ^{xxvi} *Ibid.*
- ^{xxvii} Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias*.
- ^{xxviii} *Ibid.*, 31.
- ^{xxix} *Ibid.*, 45.
- ^{xxx} M. Christine Boyer, *Planning the Rational City* (MIT Press, 1988).
- ^{xxxi} Boyer, 148.
- ^{xxxii} *Ibid.*, 166-7.
- ^{xxxiii} Anthony D. King, *The Bungalow* (London: Oxford University Press, 1995)
- ^{xxxiv} For more details see Swati Chattopadhyay, "The Other Face of Primitive Accumulation: the Garden House in British Colonial Bengal", in Peter Scriver and Vikram Prakash (eds.), *Colonial Modernities* (London: Routledge, 2006)
- ^{xxxv} James Ranald Martin, *Notes on the Medical Topography of Calcutta* (Calcutta: Bengal Military Orphan Press, 1836), 69.

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- xxxvi *Ibid.*, 90-91.
- xxxvii Scheme for Development of Calcutta and the Hinterland. Oct. 1960 (Calcutta: Government of West Bengal).
- xxxviii *Vision 2025*, Perspective Plan for KMA 2025, Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority.
- xxxix Salt Lake Township Report, West Bengal Government, 1876.
- xl See Keya Dasgupta, "A City Divided? Planning and urban sprawl in the eastern fringes of Calcutta", in Annapurna Shaw (ed), *Indian Cities in Transition* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2007).
- xli The Calcutta Census, Census of India, 1951.
- xlii New Town, Calcutta, Project Report (West Bengal HIDCO, May 1999), 6.
- xliii *Ibid.*
- xliv *Ibid.*, 9.
- xlv *Ibid.*, 14.
- xlvi *Ibid.*, 8.
- xlvii *Ibid.*, 15.
- xlviii *Ibid.*, 14.
- xlix The website of West Bengal HIDCO continues to claim that the township is meant "particularly for middle and low income groups.
- l Advertisement for Sanjeeva Town, "The Bungalow Estate", Calcutta.
- li The 1970s and 80s in India saw a significant attempt by architects and planners to "discover" an Indian ethos of building, one which inaugurated a serious effort to understand regional variations in architecture.
- lii At least in one case the advertisement contained a photograph of Kanchenjunga Apartments in Bombay designed by Charles Correa – the lone "Indian" example I have found.
- liii The latest South City advertisement proudly announces, "Now you can reach South City from Southern Avenue in 5 mins flat."
- liv *A Revolution Touching New Alipore*, Brochure for South City Gardens.
- lv It is useful to mention here that the description is borrowed from the Hindu fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) election slogan "India shining" intended to woo upwardly mobile Indians. The BJP lost the elections because rural India decided to challenge BJP's economic agenda.
- lvi Brochure of Rosedale Garden, Axiom Estates.

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Figure 1

Cover of *India Today*, Feb 7, 2005



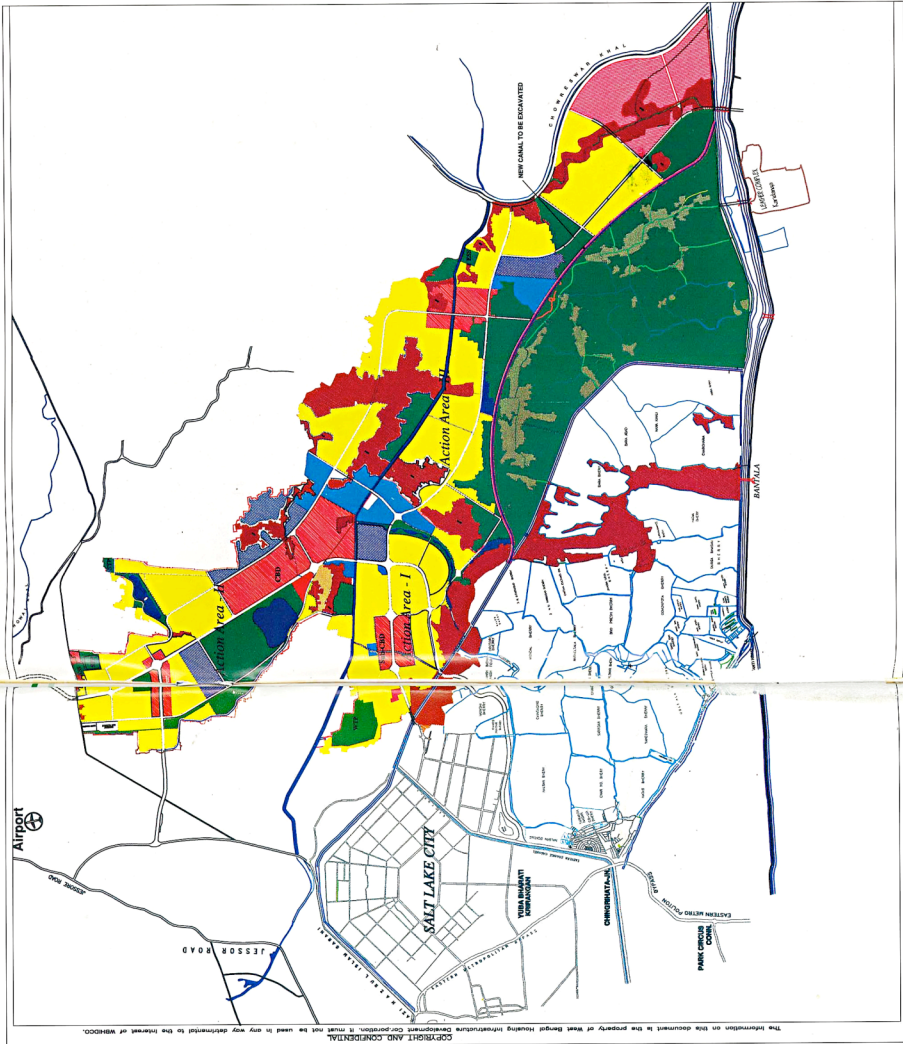
Figure 2

Summary of suburban development, *India Today*, Feb 7, 2005



Figure 6

Plan of Rajarhat New Town



LEGEND :

- Existing Settlement
- Existing Water Body, Canal etc.
- PROPOSED LAND USE**
- Residential
- Residential Rehabilitation site
- CBD, S.I.D.-CBD With Other Facilities/mixed use
- Industrial**
- Cultural / Educational, Health
- Information Technology
- Greenway & Water body
- Major Roads**
- Inside the Project
- Outside the Project
- Lake & Water Bodies for**
- CBD - Central Business District
- ESS - Electric Sub-Station
- WTP - Water Treatment Plant
- STP - Sewage Treatment Plant

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NEW TOWN, KOLKATA
Drawing No. H1DCO/IMP 1
**Title : REVISED-2 (Modified - 1)
MASTER LAND USE PLAN**

| | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| DATE : 04 - 01 - 2005 | Drawn by : <i>S. Pandey</i> | Architect Planner: Physical Planner | C. M. (T&CP) |
| | | | |
| Salt Lake Stadium Complex, Gate No.1, Sector II, Salt Lake, G-8/1 CAD FILE NO. D:\gishd\mlup\Planing\dm\mlup_REV_2\MLUP_COMPETITION_R1.dwg | | | |

Figure 7

Advertisement for "Silver Spring", highrise residential complex, Calcutta



Figure 8

Advertisement for "Country Roads", country homes, Calcutta

THE DREAM HOME GUIDE

AN IN-DEPTH, COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE INTO KOLKATA'S REAL ESTATE WORLD

COUNTRY COTTAGES – FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

In the modern world survival is a fine art. High stress, strain of survival against the demands of both home and work, erratic eating habits born out of stretched time schedules and the unending demands of the modern social world combine to form a potent fatal environment; an environment which demands and extracts with merciless precision. This is true across age groups and makes no discrimination between the sexes.

The net result is everyone today is overworked, tensed & yearning for a break. A break where he or she can relax and blow away the accumulated stress. Now, the only breaks available in the city are occasional visits to the shopping malls, cinema halls, parks or even cafeterias are the only so called breaks available today. The other option is, of course, an occasional trip to some exotic "holiday destination".

However, one does not really have the break one yearns for. The local trips to entertainment centres are less than fulfilling. The long holiday trips are fraught with uncertainty and are costly. If only, there was one such way where an individual could de-stress oneself regularly without spending too much energy & money.

Enter the weekend cottage. This novel concept having cottages near the city fringes backed with generous doses of nature and amenities for relaxation promises to be such an answer. These places are located not too far away from the city center, maybe, only a drive of 40 minutes to an hour away. You find these places settled right in the heart of nature. Once you reach the place, the positive nature opens to welcome you back into its fold. Nice cottages, which do not jar the senses, stand out like pretty maids in a green meadow. The red

guard of honour. You get down from your vehicle, look out and the silence overwhelms you. You feel the tension at the end of your spinal chord drawing away. The trill of a flying woodpecker breaks the silence and your eyes feast on the blue green sparkle of a darting kingfisher. The small garden at your doorstep seems like a riot of colours. Your reverie is broken by the delighted shouts of your child running on the green expanse – he's just experienced a touch of what it feels to be born free. Your wife settles on the garden swing, her eyes lost in some forgotten childhood memories.

The weekend passes like a dream.

other and the family bond remains, as it should be – bonded. No competition, no pressures, no target, no time bound rush – sheer relaxed bliss. A lazy journey to the roots laced with visits to the inbuilt gym or the snooker table. You even get to enjoy a film show or maybe a nice barbecue in the open. The inbuilt restaurant tickles your taste buds, but you can also try your culinary skills with the locally available fresh vegetables.

After two days, your batteries are recharged. While returning, you

you need time with yourself you would come back.

Today, this concept is no longer a pipe dream, but a startling reality. About 40 minutes' drive from the heart of Kolkata we have fantastic country houses coming up, in the luxurious lap of nature and complete with every modern amenity that one could think of. That day is not too far when you could possess your own little paradise.

And say goodbye to a lifetime of stress.






Figure 9

Advertisement for Rajarhat New Town, MIG Brochure



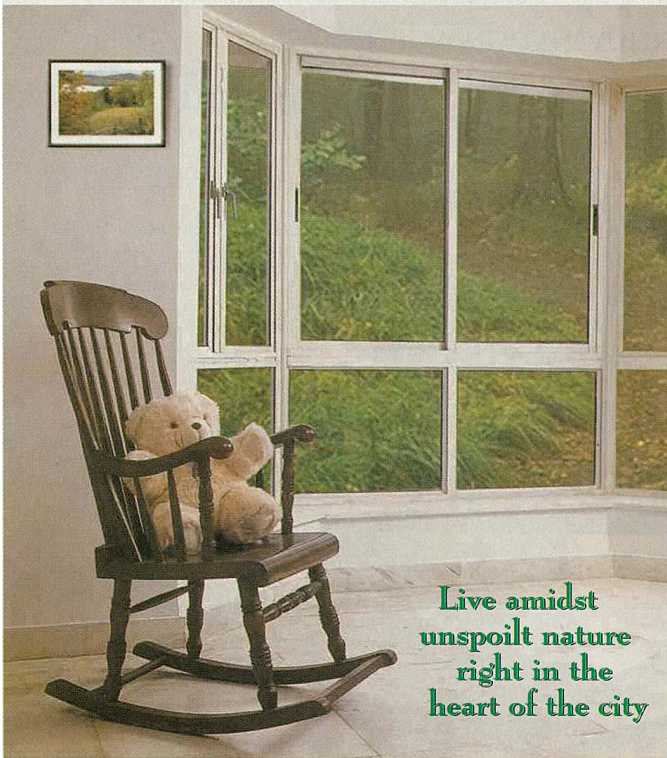
Figure 10

Advertisement for Rajarhat New Town, HIG Brochure



Figure 11

Advertisement for Lake District residential estate.



Live amidst
unspoilt nature
right in the
heart of the city

A vision of natural bliss topped off with complete accessibility. That is what Lake District embodies. It is yet another mega project of the Prasad Group. A housing complex comprising 2, 3 and 4 bedroom flats. So hurry, take a look at our furnished model flat now.

features

- Picturesque landscape covering 70% of the total area
- Shopping arena
- High speed glass elevators
- Marble flooring
- Surveillance system with closed circuit cameras
- Uninterrupted power supply
- Corporation water
- Water filtration plant
- Only 18.5% super built area

Xanadu - A lifestyle club

- Multigym with sauna, steam, Jacuzzi
- Entertainment centre with Discotheque and indoor games
 - Lawn Tennis Court
- Swimming pool and kids' pool
- Coffee shop, fast food centre
 - Children's corner
- Air conditioned community hall



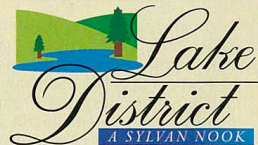
Opposite Swabhumi, near Salt Lake Stadium

- Progress of construction work before schedule
- Possession of Phase - I by next year
- Free hold land



Office : Prasad Group, Trust House, 5th Floor, 32 A Chittaranjan Avenue, Kolkata 700 012; Ph: 2237 2597 / 98, 2225 2763, 2236 3084, 2234 6979 / 80. Site: Lake District, 74 & 74/1/Narkeldanga Main Road, Kolkata 700 054; Ph: 2353 1700, 2353 8383, 2363 1224; Fax: 2237 9684; Visit us at www.prasadgroup.net

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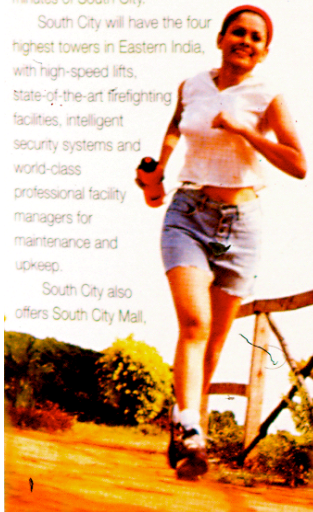
- 35-storey earthquake resistant residential towers
- World-class multi-facility club
- Modern school with its own football field
- International standard mall with 1300 car parks
- Multiplex, Food Court, Entertainment zone.
- A park bigger than Eden Gardens*
- World renowned design team

If you're looking for a home in Kolkata with international-standard amenities, come home to South City, a 31-acre mini township that offers an international lifestyle experience in 24 acres of natural surroundings.

Located just opposite Jodhpur Park, on Prince Anwar Shah Road, South City promises a home in the midst of stunning scenic beauty with a cascading waterfall, walkways and even a hillock! Very recently inaugurated, the Lake Gardens flyover connects Prince Anwar Shah Road to Rabindra Sarobar and places Sarat Bose Road and Southern Avenue within minutes of South City.

South City will have the four highest towers in Eastern India, with high-speed lifts, state-of-the-art firefighting facilities, intelligent security systems and world-class professional facility managers for maintenance and upkeep.

South City also offers South City Mall,



Out of 1100 flats already sold, 30% has been booked by NRIs from USA, UK and the Middle-East.

India's largest shopping mall*. The 6,00,000 sq. ft. mall will feature top brands, hypermarket, a six-screen multiplex and more.

You'll also find The South City Academy, a school for 2000 students, equipped with a learning resource centre, cafeteria and multipurpose auditorium.

The South City Club, a resort-style club with social, entertainment and sporting facilities, features India's largest swimming pool*, tennis and squash courts, indoor cricket arena, health club, spa, fine dining restaurant and pub lounge.

Appropriately enough, the people behind this are the biggest names in the business.

The principal architect is the renowned Dulal Mukherjee. The design consultants are Smallwood, Reynolds, Stewart, Stewart & Associates, Inc. from USA. The landscape architect is Peridian Asia and the structural consultants are Meinhardt, both from Singapore. And the team of developers includes the people behind Emami Landmark, Merlin Residency, Merlin Manor, Metro

Plaza, Orbit Heights, J K Millennium Tower, Rameshwara Apartments, Shrachi Garden, Greenwood Nook and 22 Camac Street which houses Pantaloons and Westside.

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Cricket field in the stadium in the heart of the city

Figure 13

South City Gardens, Plan of Complex

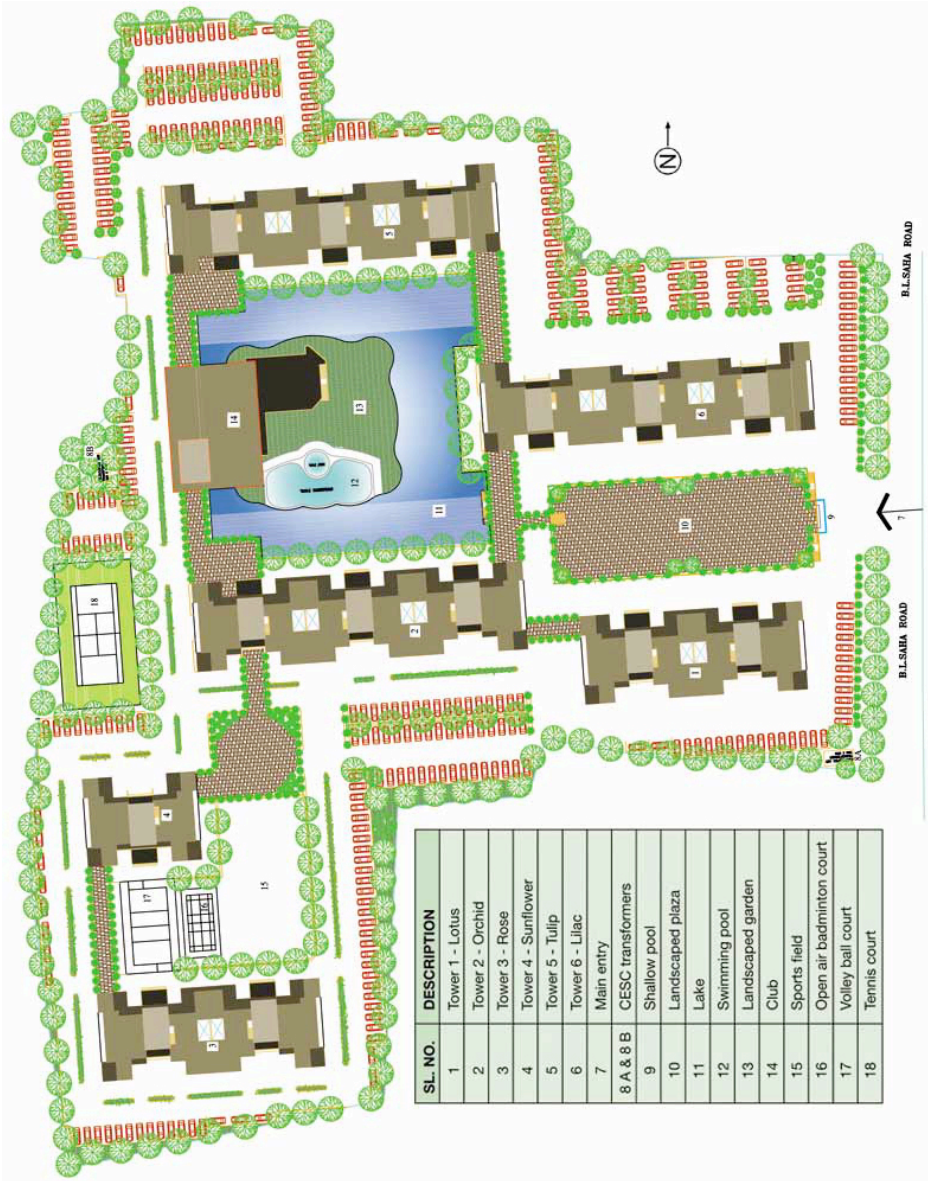


Figure 14

South City Gardens, Apartment Plan

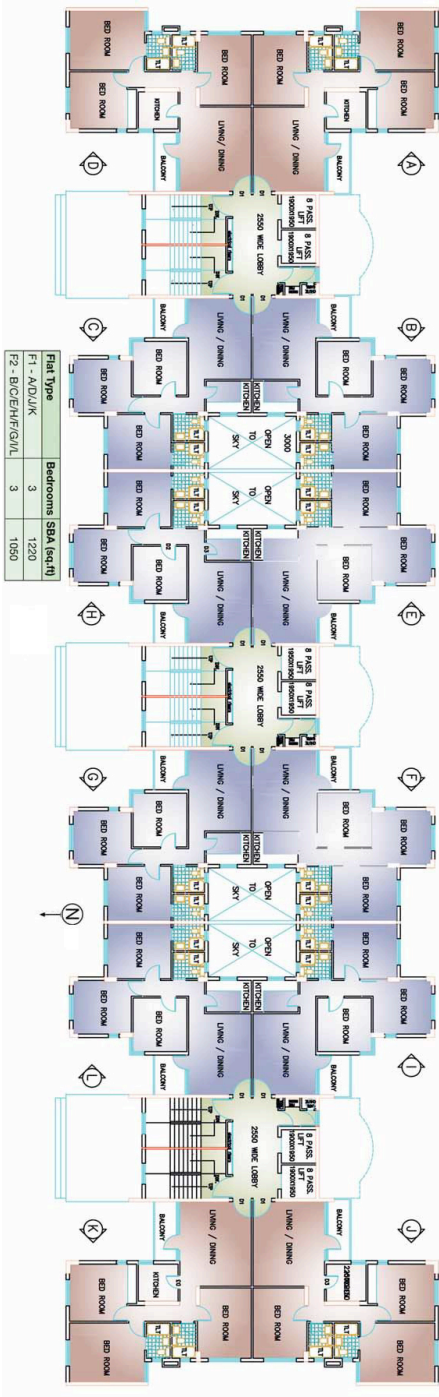


Figure 15

Rosedale Garden



Figure 16

Rosedale Garden, Apartment Plan

