The World Class City Concept and its Repercussions on Urban Planning for Cities in the Asia Pacific Region[†]

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Abstract

In a uni-polar world few global institutions – UNO, IMF, World Bank, WTO, etc. – have dominated almost all spheres of global and national development policies. In the market economy thus developed, infrastructure projects are being built by international bidding companies which prove costlier than the earlier arrangements. Deregulation and decentralization of governance has given rise to mafias, who, with ever-increasing prowess, are operating in the real estate business, too. The role of various actors affecting the shape and politics of the cities in this context has been elaborated in this paper. The neo-liberal urban development paradigm, thus gave the concept of world class cities, which, though accepted universally, has shown serious implications be it Delhi, Hochiminh City, Seoul, or Karachi. Elaborating the case of Karachi, the paper suggests alternate to the world class city concept highlighting the need for a humanist and environment-friendly approach.

Introduction

The welfare state model in Europe was born out of an uneasy reconciliation between capitalism and its opponents. Its principles were adopted by most of the newly independent countries (who did not belong to the Soviet block) in the post-Second World War period. The ethos of the model survived because of the division of the world into socialist and

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capitalist entities and because of the presence of a revolutionary China and a militarily powerful Soviet Union in the UN's Security Council. In these circumstances a global market economy was simply not possible. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the repercussions of the failure of the Cultural Revolution in China changed all this and in political terms capitalism came to dominate the world.

As a result, we are governed today by three global institutions. They determine global politics, culture, finance and development and as such most national development policies and concepts as well. These institutions are all undemocratic in nature and hence their decisions and policies cannot be changed through existing rules, regulations and procedures that determine their functioning. These institutions are: one, the UN which is controlled by five members of the Security Council who won the Second World War and who can individually veto any decision of the UN General Assembly; two, the International Monitory Fund (IMF) and World Bank, which function on the basis of one dollar one vote; and three, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which was born out of the G-7 green room negotiations that led to the creation of GATT and is controlled by the G-8.

Collectively these organisations have promoted what has come to be known as the 'free market' economy, the most important aspect of which is the freedom of capital to move across national borders and seek investment wherever it can multiply. The structural adjustment process, which many poorer countries had to undergo in the decade of the 90's, facilitated the growth of the free market economy and helped in this process. Structural adjustment demanded from national governments the regulating of then balance of payment and returning loans taken from the IFIs. To make this possible countries undergoing structural adjustment agreed to remove subsidies on health, education and housing; increase taxation on utilities; sell their industrial and real assets to the private, national or international corporate sector; and remove restrictions on imports and exports. The resulting national economic crunch meant that the poorer countries could not invest, and in many cases even subsides, infrastructure projects and these had to be built by the international or national corporate sector through international tendering. As a result, there has been a big boom of international companies bidding for these projects. The Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) and the Build-Operate-Own (BOO) processes were invented to make infrastructure development possible through this system. Both systems produce infrastructure at more than twice the cost of government produced infrastructure and in addition national governments have to give sovereign guarantees for the investment made by the investors.

A whole new terminology and concepts has been developed to support the market economy. Concepts such as 'it is not the business of the state to do business', 'cities are the engines of growth', 'direct foreign investment', and the concept of linking economic well being with GDP growth have had a major impact on national policies of Asian countries. In search of growth and DFI, they have invested in a big way in the creation of industrial zones (instead of in their people) and accepted the concept of 'corporate' farming. India is one of the emerging economic giants who have followed these policies since the mid-1990's. As a result, its economic growth in the last decade has varied between 7 and 9 per cent. However, it is estimated that as a result of the creation of 500 Special Economic Zones (for attracting Direct Foreign Investment (DFI) and corporate farming (both promoted by the World Bank for GDP growth) about 400 million people would willingly or unwillingly be forced to move from rural to urban areas by 2015.[1] This is twice the population of the United Kingdom, France and Germany put together. This process is also being promoted in other Asian countries and is in many cases being resisted by the farmers.[2] It is replacing food crops by cash crops and in the process increasing the cost and shortage of food; creating agricultural refugees; and making the state vulnerable to corporate sector pressures and interests.[3]

To promote DFI, the three undemocratic global institutions have also promoted the decentralisation of governance systems, giving considerable power to local level institutions. Increasingly this power is being used for accessing DFI and identifying projects independently of the provincial or central governments. It is too early to evaluate this process. Maybe an audit after one more decade will help us decide as to the benefits of the system – at present it is a mixed bag.[4]

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[1] Devinder Sharma, *Displacing Farmers: India Will have 400 Million Agricultural Refugees*. www.dsharma.org.

[2] In Pakistan a major movement of share croppers has struggled successfully against being evicted from their farms in the Okara district of the Punjab province over the last five years. Meanwhile, the Pakistan government has identified 7 hundred thousand hectares of agricultural land for lease to foreign countries. For details see, Ahmed Rafay Alam; *Leasing Out Land And Food Security*; *The Daily News*, Karachi, 04 September 2009.

[3] Devinder Sharma, *op.cit.*

[4] David Satterthwaite, 'Understanding Asian Cities', Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, Bangkok, October 2005. The paper asks two important questions. These are: 'Does decentralisation give city governments more power and resources and thus capacity to act?' and 'If city government does

IFI pushed political reforms and deregulations have also had a major impact on property markets and have reshaped the politics of land development. Trading across borders in gold and contraband goods is no longer lucrative. As a result, the gangs and mafias involved in these underworld activities have become involved in the real estate business and linked up with their underworld partners abroad for this purpose. This has skewed the land market and promoted massive speculation.[5] The process has been further facilitated by regional conflicts, increasingly porous borders (both for capital and individuals) and the narcotic trade. All this has introduced an element of violence and targeted killings and kidnappings of opponents, rivals and social activists in the land and real estate sector.[6]

The state in almost all cases has responded to these market pressures and made land available for development through landuse conversions, new development schemes and the bulldozing of informal settlements.[7] NGOs and CBOs who have challenged this process have faced two constraints (apart from their own internal organisational weaknesses and culture); one an unsympathetic international media and the other an absence of laws to prevent environmentally and socially inappropriate land conversions. Even where such laws do exist, rules, regulations and procedures and institutions to implement them are often missing. As a result, courts often deliver judgements that promote inequity, poverty and social fragmentation.[8] Media too is increasing being controlled by the global giants, who promote the new paradigm. Richard Mindoch has predicted that very soon there will only be three global media grants and his company will be one of them. In 1983 there were over 50 such corporations. By 2002 they had fallen to nine.[9] National medias, where journalists and the intellectuals are fighting for reform and justice, are responsive to social and environmental issues but

get more capacity to act does this actually bring benefits to urban poor groups?'

[5]   Liza Weinstein' 'Mumbai's Development Mafias: Globalization, Organized Crime and Land Development,' *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 32:1 (March 2008).

[6]   *Ibid.,* Planners in different Asian cities have voiced similar concerns to the author.

[7]   Arif Hasan: *Understanding Karachi: Planning and Reform for the Future* (Karachi: City Press, 2000).

[8]   Tripti Lahiri, 'A Nightmare Grows on Ruins of India's Housing Shortage', Daily *Dawn*, Karachi, 14 May 2008.

[9]   John Pilger, 'The Invisible Government', speech delivered at the Chicago Socialism 2007 Conference on 16 June 2007.

their owners are subject to both state and corporate sector pressures that they cannot resist.[10]

Poverty in the countries who did not have the means to respond positively to the free market, has increased and the rich-poor divide has increased in all cases. The most damaging aspect of this divide is promoted by the privatisation of education. This is introducing two systems of education, private for the rich and public for the poor, and has very serious long term repercussions.[11] To rectify this increasing divide, the IFIs have promoted the concept of safety nets for the poor for which loans are being provided and the role of NGOs in these programmes is being encouraged. Safety nets are serving a very small percentage of the effected population and NGO involvement with big funds available to them is adversely affecting NGO culture and its relationship with development policies and poor communities.[12] Loans for infrastructure projects have also increased, especially for road projects. There is an increasing questioning of these loans and aid programmes and the projects they promote by civil society organisations in the South.[13] There is evidence that shows that most of the projects are either failures or unsustainable, expensive and that much (in some cases most) of the loans go back to the North in the shape of technical assistance, overheads and contractors' profits promoted by the concept of international tenders.[14]

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[10] The electronic media in Karachi in 2006-2007 gave considerable coverage against real estate development projects that were going to privatise Karachi's beaches. The media was forced to discontinue this coverage when the real estate companies threatened to withdraw their advertisements.

[11] Arif Hasan, 'The Neo Urban Development Paradigm and the Changing Landscape of Asian Cities', *International Society of City and Regional Planners Review*, No.3, The Hague, 4 June 2007.

[12] Arif Hasan, discussion document for UN University event on 'Sustainable Urban Future in an Era of Globalisation and Environmental Change', New York, 9-10 July 2007.

[13] These include the Independent People's Tribunal on the World Bank Group in India; People's Voice in Karachi and Cambodia Development Resource Institute in Cambodia.

[14] See Stephanie Gorson Fried and Shannom Lawrence with Regina Gregory, 'The Asian Development Bank: In its own Worlds – An Analysis of Project Audit Reports for Indonesia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka', ADB Watch, July 2003. Also, Arif Hasan, '*The Neo Urban Development Paradigm and the Changing Landscape of Asian Cities*', *International Society of City and Regional Planners Review*, No.3, The Hague, 4 June 2007. Also, according to research carried out by the Orangi Pilot Project in Karachi, the government develops infrastructure at 4 to 6 times the cost of labour and material involved. When loans are taken from IFIs the cost goes up by 30 to

What has been elaborated above has had a profound effect on the shape and politics of our cities. The shape that our cities are taking and the reasons behind them are the result of a powerful nexus of developers and investors (many of dubious origins); compromised government institutions and bureaucrats; and politicians seeking global capital for shaping their cities in the image of the 'West' – an image that is promoted (implicitly or explicitly) by the three global institutions I mentioned in the beginning of this paper. To promote this paradigm, which I call the neo-liberal urban development paradigm, the concept of the world class or global city has also been promoted. It is a powerful concept and has almost universally been accepted by national government policy makers, the newly emerging middle classes and academia, especially in the West.

The world class city concept and its repercussions
Karachi, Bombay, Hochiminh City, Seoul, Delhi all aspire to become world class cities. Some wish to become like Shanghai and others like Dubai[15] although the context of Shanghai or Dubai is very far removed from them. The world class city has been defined beautifully (also sympathetically) by Mehbubur Rahman in a brilliant paper and in other literature.[16] According to the world class city agenda, the city should have iconic architecture by which it should be recognised, such as the highest building or fountain in the world. It should be branded for a particular cultural, industrial or other produce or happening. It should be an international event city (Olympics, sports fairs). It should have high-rise apartments as opposed to upgraded settlements and low-rise neighbourhoods. It should cater to tourism (which is often at the expense of local commerce). It should have malls as opposed to traditional markets. For solving its increasing traffic problem (the result of bank loans for the purchase of cars) it should build flyovers, underpasses and expressways rather than restrict the production and purchase of

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50 per cent due to foreign consultants and related purchase conditionalities. Where an international tender is also a condititionality the cost can go up by an additional 200 to 300 percent. Thus something whose cost is US$ 1 in material and labour terms is delivered at a cost of US$ 20 to 30.

[15] See (Karachi: City District Government, *Karachi Strategic Development Plan 2020,* 2008) and *Transforming Mumbai into a World Class City*, State of Maharashtra, Chief Minister's Task Force, 2004. Author's conversations with politicians and planners in other Asian cities support this contention.

[16] Mahbubur Rahman; 'Global City – Asian Aspirations', paper read at the DAP, NED University Karachi seminar on *Planning in a Globalising World*, Karachi, 30 May 2009.

automobiles and manage traffic better. Doing all this is an expensive agenda and for it the city has to seek DFI and the support of International Financial Institutions (IFIs). For accessing DFI, investment friendly infrastructure has to be developed and the image of the world class city established. For establishing this image, poverty is pushed out of the city to the periphery and already poor-unfriendly byelaws (which are anti-street, anti-pedestrian, anti-mixed landuse and anti-dissolved space) are made even more unfriendly by permitting environmentally and socially unfriendly landuse conversions. The three most important repercussions of this agenda are that global capital increasing determines the physical and social form of the city and in the process projects have replaced planning and landuse is now determined on the basis of land value alone and not on the basis of social and environmental considerations. Land has unashamedly become a commodity.

The agenda for opting for high-rise redevelopment rather than the upgrading of settlements; relocating old informal settlements to the periphery of the city; and making room for mega projects and mega events has resulted in a massive increase in evictions all over Asia in the last five years.[17] Over 500,000 persons have been evicted in Delhi for the preparation of the 2010 Asian Olympics alone.[18] All studies show that the evicted population was not consulted in the eviction and/or relocation process; that there was always an element of subtle coercion and often of brute force; and that the evicted and/or relocated population became poorer than before and often in debt whereas before they were debt free.[19] Children's education too has always been disrupted as a result; jobs lost and travel time to and from work increased to over five to six hours in many cases, thus effecting families and social life, health,

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[17]   ACHR Monitoring of Evictions in seven Asian countries (Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines) shows that evictions are increasing dramatically. Between January to June 2004, 334,593 people were evicted in the urban areas of these countries. In January to June 2005, 2,084,388 people were evicted. The major reason for these evictions was the beautification of the city. In the majority of cases, people did not receive any compensation for the losses they incurred and where resettlement did take place, it was 25 to 60 kilometres from the city centre. Ken Fernandes, 'Some Trends in Evictions in Asia', ACHR, March 2006.

[18]   Tripti Lahiri, 'A Nightmare Grows on Ruins of India's Housing Shortage', Daily *Dawn*, Karachi, 14 May 2008.

[19]   For details see *ibid.,* and Han Verschure, Arif Hasan and Somsook Boonyabancha, Evaluation & Recommendations for Infrastructure & Resettlement Pilot Project Tan Hoa-Lo Gom Canal; Ho Chi Minh City, 28 April 2006.

recreation and entertainment activities.[20] The result of the above policies, along with an absence of appropriately subsidised land development and social housing, has seen a phenomenal increase in informal settlements.

Politicians and government planners justify the high-rise redevelopment approach by insisting that a modern city has to be high-rise with open areas in-between. They also insist that high densities, needed for a well-functioning city, cannot be achieved by upgrading and densifying existing neighbourhoods.[21] The image of a city is governed by the perception of what it should be. One can discuss and disagree on it. However, a recent International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) supported study by the Urban Research and Design Cell at the Department of Architecture and Planning (DAP), NED University, Karachi, of Karachi settlements and apartment complexes has conclusively established that the same densities as prescribed by the Karachi Building Control Authority (KBCA) can be achieved by building row houses of ground plus two stories (along with required social infrastructure) without damaging the environment or adversely effecting social life.[22]

The study of a resettlement and upgrading project in Hochiminh City (considered as one of the better ones) illustrates the problems with the high-rise option as opposed to upgrading.[23] The average compensation given to apartment dwellers in the project is about US$ 5,400 which does not include the loan required to bridge the gap between the compensation and the actual price of the housing unit. It does not include the cost of external infrastructure either. The apartment option, given Vietnam's economy, is not sustainable except through massive IFI loans. The upgrading option on the other hand works out to US$ 325 per household and is manageable. Communities also prefer upgrading to apartments for they cannot perform economic activities in apartment blocks. Out of 72 households who had moved to apartments in the project, 50 were in debt as a result of moving, whereas previously none were in debt. One of the reasons was that they were paying the

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20   Arif Hasan, *Livelihood Substitution: The Case of the Lyari Expressway* (Karachi: Ushba International Publishing, 2006). According to the estimates of the Urban Resource Centre Karachi, the building of the Lyari Expressway adversely affected the education of 26,000 children.

21   Government planners from Delhi, Phnom Penh, Hochiminh City, Seoul and Karachi have repeated this in their conversations with the author.

22   Arif Hasan. Asiya Sadiq, Suneela Ahmed, 'Density Study of Low and Lower Middle Income Settlements in Karachi', unpublished study prepared for the IIED, UK, 22 June 2009.

23   Han Verschure, Arif Hasan and Somsook Boonyabancha, *op.cit*.

equivalent of US$ 8 per month for utility and maintenance charges and US$ 21 instalments for the apartment against an average monthly earning of US$ 75 per month.

The world class image of the city has no place in it for informal businesses and hawkers except as organised tourist attractions. The link of these hawkers and businesses with low income people (for whom they make life affordable) and with commuters is not recognised and as such large scale evictions of informal businesses and hawkers have taken place without any compensation in all the major cities in the Asia-Pacific region. This has impoverished millions of families.[24]

The free market economy led in the last decade to considerable liquidity in banks and leasing companies. This has been utilised for providing loans for the purchase of cars. Evidence suggests that these loans were provided as a result of an understanding between the automobile industry and global banking and financial sectors. Many billion dollars of loans have increased the population of cars in many Asian mega and secondary cities in the last decade by over 80 to 100 per cent. In Karachi alone banks and leasing companies gave the rupee equivalent of US$ 1.8 billion for the purchase of an average of 506 vehicles per day in the financial year 2006-2007.[25] As a result of this automobile industry-banking sector nexus, traffic in the larger cities of the Asia-Pacific region has become a nightmare. To solve this problem, city planners have initiated a massive programme for the construction of signal-free roads, flyovers, underpasses and expressways which have aggravated the situation and in addition made life difficult for pedestrians and commuters. In addition to these traffic related projects, non-motorised means of transport, used mostly by the poor (such as cyclos, rickshaws, animal drawn carts) have also been banned in many cities or their movement restricted to the periphery or to low income

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[24] For details see Arif Hasan, Asiya Sadiq Polak, Christophe Polak, *The Hawkers of Saddar Bazaar* (Karachi; Ushba International Publishing, 2008) and S.Bhowmik, 'Social Security for Street Vendors: A Symposium on Extending Social Security to Unprotected Workers' Volume 568, December 2006 (quoted in Liza Weinstein, 'Mumbai's Development Mafias: Globalization, Organized Crime and Land Development', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 32:1 (March 2008).

[25] Arif Hasan, 'The Neo Urban Development Paradigm and the Changing Landscape of Asian Cities', *op.cit..* According to government officials (in conversations with the author), 1,700 cars per day were registered in Bangkok and 1,300 per day in Delhi in the financial year 2006-2007.

settlements.[26] Mass transit light rail projects meanwhile have failed to provide an adequate or affordable alternative to the poor since they are essentially projects and not part of a larger comprehensive transport plan.[27]

As a result of the above and related processes, the once poor-friendly cities of Asia have become poor-unfriendly, both for the migrants (mainly agricultural refugees) and for communities who have lived in them for decades if not for centuries. Land, construction costs and rentals have multiplied manifold as compared to daily wages for unskilled labour.[28]

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[26] Madhu Gurung, '*Delhi's Graveyard of Rickshaws*', *InfoChange News & Features*, September 2006. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi has destroyed 60,000 rickshaws which it had impounded for violation of registration related regulations. The rickshaw owners could not pay a fine of Rs. 325 plus a storage charge of Rs. 25 per day at the municipal yard to get their rickshaws released within a period of 15 days. Impounded cars have to pay only Rs. 100 per day and if the owner does not pay this sum, the car is not destroyed.

[27] Cities such as Bangkok, Manila, Calcutta have made major investments in light rail and metro systems. Other Asian cities are following their example. However, these systems are far too expensive to be developed on a large enough scale to make a difference. Manila's light rail caters to only 8 percent of trips and Bangkok's sky train and metro to only 3 percent of trips and Calcutta's metro to even less. The light rail and metro fares are 3 to 4 times more expensive than bus fares. As a result, the vast majority of commuters travel by run down bus system (for details, see Geetam Tiwari, *Urban Transport for Growing Cities*, Macmillan India Ltd., 2002 and Arif Hasan, 'Understanding Karachi's Traffic Problems', Daily *Dawn*, 29 January 2004).

[28] The seriousness of the situation can be judged from the fact that in Karachi (which is a far more poor friendly city than the other Asian mega cities) land costs in peri-urban informal settlements in 1991 was Rs. 176 (US$ 2.35) per square metre or 1.7 times the daily wage for unskilled labour at that time. Today, the cost of land in such settlements is about Rs. 10,000 (US$ 133.33) per square metre or 40 times the daily wage for unskilled labour. In 1991, the construction of a semi-permanent house in an informal settlement was about Rs. 660 (US$ 8.8) per square metre or 6.6 times the cost of the daily wage for unskilled labour. Today, the cost is Rs. 5,000 (US$ 66.66) per square metre or 20 times the cost of the daily wage for unskilled labour. In 1991, such a semi-permanent house could be rented for Rs. 350 (US$ 4.66) per month or at 3.5 times the daily wage for unskilled labour. Today, the rent for such a house would be Rs. 2,500 (US$ 33.33) per month or 10 times the daily wage for unskilled labour. Arif Hasan,

The struggle against the negative aspects of the world class city

I do not know of any city or country in the Asia-Pacific region where the neo-liberal urban development paradigm has been challenged as a paradigm or an alternative vision for the city has been promoted. However, projects promoted by the paradigm have been successfully challenged in those countries who have a populist political culture and strong civil society organisations and networks.

Global capital, as has been said earlier, has desperately been looking for a home. Real estate development for the new rich and for tourism offers the best opportunities for investment especially in countries where regulatory frameworks are weak. Tourist resorts and condominiums along the beaches of Asian cities are prime locations for this development. For commercial plazas, the inner city informal settlements, if evicted, promise lucrative returns. National and the newly empowered city governments have clandestinely sold or arranged to sell these assets to national and/or international companies without the knowledge of the residents of these settlements and without developing any procedures for resettlement of the evicted population. According some reports,[29] almost half of Cambodia has been sold to foreign investors between 2006 and 2008, including seven islands off the coast and a large number of beaches and the homes of residents bulldozed. As a result, there was an increase of over 1,500 per cent in 2007 over the preceding four years in DFI. This investment has impoverished the poor and made them jobless and homeless. It has benefited the investors, their local partners and politicians.[30] Cambodia is a poor country, still recovering from years of devastation, genocide and war and as such with an almost non-existent civil society movement. So this clandestine sale was possible, with little or no organised resistance.

'Housing Security and Related Issues: The Case of Karachi', unpublished paper prepared for UN-Habitat, October 2008.

[29] Ardian Levy and Cathy Scott-Clark, 'Country for Sale', *The Guardian*, 26 April 2008.

[30] According to a paper by the Cambodia Development Resource Institute titled 'Technical Assistance and Capacity Development in an Aid-Dependent Economy, Working Paper 15, 2000. In 1992, 19 percent of all aid money was spent on technical assistance, in 1998, it had increased to 57 percent. Also, according to Tom Coghlan; *Consultants Reap Wealth from Afghan Chaos*; *Daily Telegraph*, 26 March 2008, almost 50% of British aid to Afghanistan since 2001 has been spent on consultants and contractors. According to Afghan MP Shukria Barakzai, only 11 cents out of every dollar goes to the Afghans – the rest goes back to the West.

Pakistan is also a poor country but it has a comparatively strong civil society, nascent environmental laws and tribunals and a populist political culture born out of repeated struggles for the restoration of democracy. In 2007, the Prime Minister of Pakistan agreed to sell two islands off the Karachi coast to a Dubai based company against an investment of US$ 43 billion. In addition, he agreed to providing about 33,000 hectares of coastal land to another Dubai based company for a US$ 500 billion project with an initial investment of US$ 150 billion. Another project of US$ 1,500 million, aimed at privatising 14 kilometres of beach has also been proposed and part of it has been initiated. In agreeing to sell the land and beaches the Prime Minister bypassed existing laws and procedures. In addition, the projects (which were exclusively for upmarket condominiums, 5 star hotels and marinas) were to adversely affect the livelihood of 200,000 fishermen, evict about 36 villages and prevent lower and lower middle groups access to the beach. At present, over 300 thousand persons visit the beaches over the weekend. Beach development projects have also tried to force lower income groups (and those who serve them) off the beach by preventing informal eating places and activities on the beach and replacing them with expensive formal food stalls.[31]

Civil society organisations in Karachi formed a network to oppose the beach development and island sale projects. The network included fishermen's organisations, community organisations from low income settlements, schools, NGOs, academia, prominent citizens (including ex-judges of the Supreme Court) and the print media. The sale was also opposed by a number of senior bureaucrats. As a result, the sale of the islands has been put on hold, the Limitless project cancelled and the US$ 1,500 million project considerably modified. Earlier, through the same process networks, backed by organisations that work with low income groups, had objected to the 1994 Karachi Mass Transit Project as a result of which modifications were made to it.[32] A US$ 100 million Asian Development Bank (ADB) loan was also cancelled for a waste water management project when an NGO, working with communities in informal settlements presented and lobbied through a network for a US$ 20 million alternative.[33] Professional bodies representing architects and

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31 See, Arif Hasan, 'The Partitioning of Clifton Beach', *Planning and Development Options for Karachi* (Islamabad, 2009 Sheher Saaz), See also, website of Fisherfolk Forum www.pff.org.pk.
32 Urban Resource Centre website: www.urckarachi.org.
33 Orangi Pilot Project website: www.oppinstitutions.org.

planners were conspicuous by their absence in these processes although a number of architects did take part individually in the movements.

A similar process to that in Karachi has been followed in Bombay. The Maharastra state government, of which Bombay is the capital, put out an advertisement for an 'expression of interest' for the redevelopment of Dharavi, an inner city informal settlement. The developer was to survey the settlement, carry out the urban design exercise and relocate and/or provide housing for the displaced population. Dharavi's population is over half a million and its informal businesses and industry serve the formal ones and generate the rupee equivalent of well over US$ 500 million a year. In spite of this, the advertisement called Dharavi a pocket and asked the investor whether the prospect 'turns you on'.[34] The people and businesses in Dharavi were not consulted regarding this advertisement and had no knowledge of it. Also, for such a huge undertaking an EIA was required under Indian law which was not carried out. What made the issue even more serious was that the developer was being asked to carry out the survey. Already there were major differences between government and NGOs surveys of Dharavi. Government listed 55,000 houses but no businesses whereas NGO surveys listed 81,000 structures and 120,000 businesses and households.[35]

A network consisting of the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) (a national level organisation of 500,000 households), NGOs working with low income groups such as SPARC, concerned citizens and organisations formed specially for opposing the government plan, was formed. International academics, artists, researchers and NGOs also expressed their concern. Meanwhile, the president of the NSDF offered a partnership to the state government for the development of Dharavi and also threatened agitation if the government plan went through. As a result of this movement, negotiations took place and an NGO, Mashal, has won the bid for carrying out a survey of Dharavi with the support of NSDF and Society Promotion for Area Resource Centres (SPARC).[36]

All successful movements against insensitive projects have a number of things in common. One, the existence of a large network or organisation of poor communities; two, the existence of organisations

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[34]   Society Promotion for Area Resource Centres (SPARC) website: www.sparcindia.org.

[35]   Sheela Patel and Jockin Arputham, '*Plans for Dharavi: Negotiating a Reconciliation Between a State-Driven Market Redevelopment and Residents' Aspiration*'; Environment & Urbanization, 20:1, 2008.

[36]   *Ibid.*

that support these communities with information and managerial and technical guidance but do not control or direct them; three, research on social, technical and planning issues that question the project in an informal manner and present alternatives; four, support from concerned and prominent citizens, professional bodies, academia and media; five, no one group owns the network and its successes as theirs. Another aspect that has emerged from a number of case studies is that violence or threat of it, unfortunately, is the only form of dissent that is acknowledged and accommodated by officialdom.[37]

The bleak picture above has to be supplemented with hope. This is provided by the Baan Mankong nation wide slum upgrading project of the Community Development Institute (CODI). It is a Thai government project. Under the project communities (organised through a process of savings and credit) identify and acquire land for their housing and house building or upgrading through a government system of subsidies and loans through revolving funds. To prevent speculation the strategy of collective rather than individual ownership has been adopted. A search is also on to find ways to develop new social systems on the basis of the relationship established in the process of the savings process and that of land acquisition. Local governments, professionals, universities and NGOs are involved with poor communities in the CODI process. Between January 2003 and March 2008, over 1,100 communities (53,976 households) in 226 Thai cities had benefited from the programme.[38]

An alternative to the world class city concept?
What is the alternative to the world class city concept? An inclusive city based on the principles of justice and equity? A pedestrian and commuter friendly city? By what process do you develop a vision? And then there are a number of sub issues. After developing a vision how do you promote it? Or will it be born out by the processes that challenge (successfully and unsuccessfully) the projects promoted by the neo-liberal urban development paradigm? Maybe we need to discuss this but in the meantime what should one do?

In the case of Karachi, I see projects replacing planning for the foreseeable future. I have tried to promote some principles on the basis

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[37]   This has been observed by the author in at least three cases in Karachi and the struggle of the tenant farmers in the Punjab. This has also been mentioned to the author by Sheela Patel of SPARC for Bombay and by Prof. Yves Cabannes for cases in Latin America.

[38]   See CODI website: www.codi.or.th.

of which projects should be judged and/or modified. These are: one, projects should not damage the ecology of the region in which the city is located. Two, projects should as a priority seek to serve the interests of the majority who in the case of our cities are lower and lower middle income groups. Three, projects should decide landuse on the basis of social and environmental considerations and not on the basis of land values alone. And four, projects should protect the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the communities that live in them. This would in my opinion produce better projects. But you cannot effectively follow these principles if you do not have affection and respect for the natural environment and for the people who form the majority in your cities.

However, the question is whether the megalomania and opportunism of politicians and planners will accept a new and more humane paradigm that curtails their profits and decommoditises land? I do not think they will unless they are pressurised by city wide networks armed by alternative research and an alternative vision. The key to bringing about a change lies in the nature of professional education, I often think that it might help if graduating architects, planners and engineers should take an oath similar to those of doctors and if they do not follow the terms of the oath, their names should be removed from the list of practising professionals. In 1983, after evaluating the environmental damage that some of my work had done, I promised in an article.[39]

> '*I will not do projects that will irrepairably damage the ecology and environment of the area in which they are located; I will not do projects that increase poverty, dislocate people and destroy the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of communities that live in the city; I will not do projects that destroy multi-class public space and violate building byelaws and zoning regulations; and I will always object to insensitive projects that do all this, provided I can offer viable alternatives'.*

I have tried to keep that promise and I think I have succeeded.

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[39]   Arif Hasan, 'No to Socially and Environmentally Development Projects', *The Review*, 1983.