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Publication Date

2006-04-14

Disconnecting Experience: Making World-Class Roads in Mumbai

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written for the CASA Graduate Seminar 'The Postcolonial City', Prof. Amita Baviskar, June 2005

*presented at the Breslauer Symposium: The Right to the City and the Politics of Space, UC Berkeley.
April 14, 2006.*

Imagination

The Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, said on Wednesday, that his Government has plans to transform Mumbai into a world-class city... "In the next five years, we want to make Mumbai the number one city people talk about when it comes to development and modernisation," he said. Addressing the media during his first visit to the metropolis after he took over as Prime Minister, Dr Singh said it was his dream to see Mumbai transformed into a city like Shanghai. He said the Centre would focus on improving communication and urban transportation... (Financial Express, October 7, 2004).¹

Speaking to a group of industrialists on the eve of the state assembly elections, the Prime Minister of India brought with him promises of a renewed global modernity. Widely identified as the architect of India's economic liberalization in the nineties, his claims were not entirely surprising, nor could they be dismissed by cynics as the unkept promises of vote seeking politicians. The references to Shanghai carried particular meaning for the audiences he was addressing. Only weeks earlier, an industrialists and 'citizens' forum, Bombay First, came out with their own *Vision Mumbai*. The thirty-page report, prepared by international consultants McKinsey and Co, detailed the sorts of interventions necessary to transform Mumbai into a world-class city, on the Shanghai model. By referencing Shanghai, it was clear that Singh had done his homework. In the months to come, the metaphor of Shanghai and the "Vision" circulated in the press, and in social circles of the city's elite, particularly its financial newspapers. By the time his party won the elections and gained political power in the state, its Chief Minister resuscitated the dream by proposing a Rs. 31000 crore infrastructure program to "upgrade Mumbai to global standards" (Financial Times, Jan 31, 2005), a significant proportion of which was allocated towards building new roads in the city.

In this paper, I wish to pay attention to how the developmental state in Mumbai is intent on producing the modern 'world-class' city through the construction of roads. In doing so I shall argue that the idea of the 'global' city is itself situated and contested. It serves

¹ A word about the quotation style. I have italicized all quotes about the city of Mumbai in italics, including those contained in planning documents as a way of showing that they are particular claims emerging out of situated experiences of their authors.

to effect particular changes in the built landscape. The coincident yet differentiated imaginaries of the city's business and political elite point to the work each does in reinforcing the other's role in development processes (cf Mitchell 1991). The recent commitments to the expansion of road infrastructure are the latest in a series of commitments to make Mumbai a modern city by producing roads and increasing communication. Paying particular attention to the imagined city contained in plans, documents and press reports, it is possible to see how roads are central to how the city is imagined by its officials. I shall argue that the bridges, overpasses and uninterrupted 'traffic' build on an imaginary of flows and connectivity central to the modern liberal city and the ideas of public space on which it is predicated.

Yet as several scholars have noted, implicit in the liberal idea of public space are a series of rules and exclusions (Tarlo 2000, Chatterjee 2004, Ghannam 2002). As modern spaces, roads not only connect but also disconnect populations, citizens and subjects. By examining road projects, plans and proposals in Mumbai, we see how they exclude a wide range of users from not only traveling in the city, but living in it. These disconnections as produced by 'dividing practices' (Foucault 1995) as bureaucrats seek to clear up the confusion of the street and reorder them according to the parameters of efficiency.

Roads are planned and made by people who have subjective experiences of class and situated imaginaries of communication. They are produced from visions, experiences and practices of different citizens in the city, especially those of bureaucrats and industrialists. Therefore, I shall also show how the situated imaginary of connection and the experience of congestion are dialogical, working together to produce 'apolitical' and administrative planning interventions that seek to transform Mumbai into a world class city. As Steven Gregory (1998) argues in his study of New York, the work of making a world class city is never complete. Fundamentally dependent on the poor and the politics of class it tries to hide, the city will never be modern enough. Disjunctions between homogenized urban desires and the material effects of chronic inequality will continue to provide grounds for interventions and exclusion of already marginalized peoples, both in the city and outside of it.

Connection

Bandra- Worli Sea Link Project has been one of the most highly recommended project (sic) of all the transport studies done for the metropolitan region during the last thirty years. At present, Mahim Causeway is the only link connecting the western suburbs with the island city of Mumbai. Therefore this existing North - South traffic corridor is very congested and during the peak hours results in a bottleneck at Mahim Causeway... Construction of the project link will provide an additional fast moving outlet from the island city to the western suburbs & thereby providing much needed relief to the congested Mahim Causeway. This link will also form a part of the western freeway (MSRDC 2005).

"We've constructed many flyovers in the recent years. But that is not enough. We need real highways where there won't be traffic blocks during peak hours", the MMRDA commissioner says (Hindustan Times, February 13, 2005).

Plans for the expansion of Mumbai's transportation infrastructure have been a critical component of its development strategy for the last decade.² Instituted as the regional planning authority for Mumbai in the seventies, virtually every one of the projects of the MMRDA has focused on construction of transportation infrastructure, and a parallel interest in 'decongesting' of the city. Active transportation infrastructure projects proposed or implemented in Mumbai over the last decade include the Mumbai Urban Transport Project, the Mumbai Traffic Improvement Mega-project (also known as the 50

² The city has a variety of agencies that work on different governmental projects. With reference to infrastructure along The Mumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) oversees various projects including the maintenance of roads (and the thriving commerce that takes place on them), provides garbage collections services, and maintains the city's water lines and hospitals. The Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC), an independent state level corporation has overseen the construction of road overpasses in the city. MSRDC both awards road building contracts to private construction companies and to itself, manifesting a critical conflict of interest. For a period in Mumbai's road development history MSRDC would also be the consulting agency carrying out the feasibility study for the same road projects it would farm contracts out for. The BEST manages the electricity supply in the city, as well as its public buses, and two Railway agencies its suburban train lines. Another agency, now privatized, the BSES administers electricity in the suburbs. Finally, the Mumbai Metropolitan Regional Development Authority (MMRDA) has proposed, planned and implemented a series of urban development initiatives. Broadly conceived, most of its interventions fall into one of two categories: plans to 'decongest' the island city, and (b) transportation infrastructure projects. Each of these city administrations has its own program priorities, which through the MMRDA are sometime vaguely coordinated. As a thirty page document prepared in under six months, Vision Mumbai is situated in an complex urban development plan landscape: its simplicity (eight steps) itself a promise from the world of uncoordinated and tangled bureaucracy to private efficiency (see World Bank 2002).

flyovers project), the Bandra- Worli Sea Link, and most recently the Mumbai Urban Infrastructure Project (MUIP).

I shall not go into a detailed genealogy of the various projects here.³ However, it is important to note that it is not a linear and continuous string of projects- but one marked by contradictions, for example, between the priorities of public and private transit.⁴ The plans, and debates around these plans, need to be situated in the political topography of the city that includes the various levels of state and city government, the World Bank, and the interests of private enterprise. Interests are diffuse and divergent. None of the groups I just described has a coherent set of interests, and the divergences and collaborations that these produce over particular projects would be the subject of a different paper. Yet, by focusing on ways that the idea of connection and connectivity play a central role in the justification of all these projects, we get an important sense of how the modern city is imagined by those who make plans for it.

When the projects for transport infrastructure are bundled together, their significance is immediately apparent. Even before Rs. 33000 crore was allocated for the MUIP, budgets for Mumbai's different transportation infrastructure projects worked out to approximately ten thousand crores (D'Monte 2001), roughly equivalent to the entire annual budget for Maharashtra *state* (Government of Maharashtra 2005). In comparison, annual cost of the free lunch program for the ten million school children of the *state* accounts for roughly 2% of the cost of Mumbai's infrastructure projects, built largely for

³ Emerging out of Comprehensive Transportation Strategy (CTS) commissioned by the MMRDA in 1994, the Mumbai Urban Transportation Project is being funded by the World Bank (World Bank 2005: 6). Largely focused on expanding the capacity of public transportation systems in the city, it was shelved for some years when the erstwhile Shiv-Sena BJP government set up the MSRDC to construct 50 new road overpasses in the city, and the Bandra-Worli sealink- a sea bridge that is to run parallel to Mumbai's coastline, connecting the western suburbs to central Mumbai. The MUTP has been resuscitated in the last two years, even as a new project, the Mumbai Urban Infrastructure Project is being conceived with the main objective of road improvements in the city (MMRDA 2005).

⁴ For example, upset that the state government formulated and initiated the flyover project despite transportation research and World Bank studies to the contrary, the World Bank expressed concern at the state government's decision- leading to an impasse between the two over the future of transportation projects for a number of years.

the benefit of the one million private transport users in the city (Government of Maharashtra 2005, World Bank 2002).⁵

Therefore, it is important to take these infrastructure projects, and the imaginaries that justify them, seriously. Underlying the rationalization of road projects is the language of *connectivity* (cf World Bank 2005: 6; Bombay First 2004: 16; MSRDC 2005). Roads connect. For urban planners and dreamers, Mumbai urgently needs north-south and east-west connectivity (MMRDA; Bombay First 2004:17). Towards this, they argue for the need to construct an “express ring freeway” to circle the city “such that a freeway can be accessed from any point in the city in less than ten minutes” (Bombay First 2003). “Quick entry and exit”, and “efficient traffic dispersal” (MSRDC 2005) are seen as critical to the smooth functioning of the city. In the embodied city, roads are imagined to be the blood vessels of the city (sometimes even called *arterial* roads)- conducting and facilitating the circulation of people and commodities from their origins to their destinations. The language of “eliminating bottlenecks” and to allow for uninterrupted and efficient mobility (MMRDA 2005) is based on an imaginary of free *flowing* traffic. An essential part of the condition of modernity (and post-modernity), smooth flowing and fast traffic post a compression of both spatial and temporal worlds (Harvey 1989: 228). Project documents reveal a special concern with such ideas of flows and connection. For healthy and modern cities, the free flow of goods and ideas is critical.

Ideas of connection have long been central to the creation of modern urban space. Writing about the transformation of European cities in the middle of the nineteenth century, Patrick Joyce describes how the idea of free circulation was central to the reconfiguration of the city. As an “arena of modernity”, the city was “the cradle of voluntary association”, “juxtaposed against the backwardness and stupidity of the rural world” (Joyce 2003: 64). Defined in opposition to fixed feudal relationships, the city was imagined by liberal philosophy to be an arena which facilitated the freedom of movement. As Joyce shows, the trope of fluidity is central to the idea of the city. The

⁵ Unlike capacity increases for public transportation services, road projects disproportionately benefit the wealthier sections of society who, by using cars are the primary consumers of road space in the city. Further certain road improvements like flyovers (or bridge overpasses) structurally exclude buses by virtue of their positioning and location. They bypass important intersections and also, therefore, important bus-stops.

passionate support for roads in Mumbai emerges from this inherited legacy of urban connectivity.

When I was home for the vacations in the summer of 1995, people were talking of the ambitious plans that the new state government had for the city. They built fewer than a dozen flyovers in the fifty years since independence, my father said, now they are going to build fifty in five years. The flyover project, was billed as a 'mega-development project', a fast-forward button that pressed Mumbai into the post-liberalisation era of modernity. Everyone was talking about the project. Sitting in very crowded train, a fellow traveler was talking excitedly with another commuter, with pride about the 'bada bridge' they planned to build in the sea. The next day Patil said as much, ab bahut development chalu hai, he said referencing the flyovers. Working until eight pm, Patil was part of the nine-tenths of the city that used a network of trains and buses to do his work- commuting on them for four hours every day. Patil was unlikely to ever own a car through which he could enjoy these new projects. But that did not seem to dampen his enthusiasm.

Chakrabarty points out that the imaginary of the modern city was not only a product of nineteenth-century European thought, but also shared by postcolonial elites (Chakrabarty 2002: 66). Making space for the particular in a narrative of modernity, its aesthetics nevertheless privilege the ways in which connections enable the experience of freedom.⁶ Among officials in Mumbai, this freedom is sought via the construction of freeways and roads. Infrastructure is packaged as the harbinger of the modern global city. But such desires are not only the privilege of the postcolonial elite. Evident in the celebrations of modern roads prevalent among non-users, the lower middle-classes and the poor also celebrate new projects. The dreams of new possibilities and promise through connections and interactions are central to urban identity. Also, as Baviskar points out, road projects are seen as material manifestations of state led development. Satisfied that the state is finally doing 'something' citizens do not calculate opportunity costs of road projects. "All projects are perceived as beneficial because the question of alternative modes of organizing spatial economies (and other

⁶ When Chakrabarty describes the rise of the liberal in Europe, and its celebration of public space, he describes how those enjoying this liberalism were implicitly assumed white and male (Chakrabarty 2000). As Chatterjee argues, liberalism, and the rights of citizenship did not apply to slaves, to the unpropertied, to women, and it was these very exclusions that enabled the flaneur to experience the 'safe' and free city.

ways of spending scarce financial resources) are not considered” (Baviskar, personal communication). Second, rather than produce opposition, ‘megadevelopment’ road projects extend and expand patronage relations between political leaders and the construction industry. As each makes the other viable and profitable, they ‘bridge’ their private interests through the imaginative talk of infrastructure projects for the public good.

In the quote at the beginning of this section, the MMRDA commissioner argues that real highways do not have traffic in peak hours. The authors of *Vision Mumbai* assert that “all world-class cities have express ring freeways”. Yet neither of these assertions is true. Not all world-class cities have ring freeways. And those that do, have plenty of traffic in peak hours (e.g. New York). Those that claim the virtue of modern roads therefore are not basing their claims on a careful evaluation of physical infrastructure of what they call world-class cities. These truth claims emerge from a situated imagination of modernity coupled with a material economy of (public private) interest. Taken together they produce a powerful demand of what global cities *should* have- Mumbai should have express ring freeways if it is to comply with what every global city demands.⁷

Congestion

1. *The action of gathering or heaping together in a mass; a crowding together; accumulation. b. concr. A heap, pile. Obs.* 2. *Med. The accumulation of blood or morbid matter in any part of the body. Hence congestion of an organ: an abnormal accumulation of blood in its vessels, by which its functions are disordered.* 3. *transf. and fig. A crowding together or accumulation which disorganizes regular and healthy activity: congested or overcrowded condition, as of population, traffic, etc. (Oxford English Dictionary, oedonline.org).*

In a brilliant analysis of ways in which good circulation becomes central to healthy cities, Joyce describes the how a healthy public health was imagined to coincide with healthy persons. “The sanitary city involved a social imaginary of the city as a place of flows and movements and as a site of free circulation (Joyce 2003: 145). Given this imaginary, congestion marks both unhealthy individuals and unhealthy cities. If circulation marks world class cities, then congestion marks cities that are ‘not yet’ modern (Chakrabarty 2000). In this section, I shall show how the situated experiences of

Mumbai's planners mark certain sorts of practices as 'congestion' - a state of disorder that prevents Mumbai (and its planners) from experiencing a healthy global modernity. Congestion threatens the performance of modern urban life. It represents a pathological condition that, if unchecked, threatens to choke the city and the people that live in it.

The sea hits you as you enter Mumbai. Wave upon wave of nameless, faceless people rushing to nowhere in particular. If you've somehow extricated yourself from the shoulder-and-elbow-rub routine in sardine-packed trains, waltzed your way through bumper-to-bumper traffic, negotiated potholes of varying circumference in one clean sweep... well, you've arrived. (Gurbir Singh and Girish Kuber, Economic Times, March 4, 2005).

When people talk about congestion in Mumbai, they describe it in different ways. First they do so in terms of the numbers of people that jostle for space on the city's streets and in its markets, engaged in various kinds of public and private activity. This also includes pavement dwellers, frequently castigated for taking up valuable street space. Second, congestion is described as the lack of space on buses and trains. Third, congestion is talked about in terms of automobile congestion, of 'traffic' that prevents urban mobility.

Mumbai is repeatedly described as a congested city; that its roads are 'clogged' with traffic. Congestion describes both the quality and the quantity of crowds. In part because of a shortage of space, and in part emerging from a history of practice, the residents of Mumbai continue to use the street in ways that challenge the intentions of modernist planners and postcolonial elites. "Streets, for good or bad, all too often become, effectively bazaars, and melas combine the different purposes of pilgrimage, recreation, [transportation] and economic exchange" (Chakrabarty 2002: 71). As people blur the boundaries between public and private space by living on the street, buying and selling, eating, drinking tea, playing cricket or even just standing, urban planners point to how these activities impede traffic and cause congestion. Mixed-use street spaces are seen as imbued with danger. On one hand to the city, as 'its' spaces are encroached by private activities that are supposed to be carried out in marked and separate home and workplaces, and on the other to the 'public', who risk disease, sickness or physical injury by living on the street in these different ways.

Public spaces are not designated for an ambiguous public but a defined one. Therefore, in modern cities, public spaces are not 'open' spaces in which everyone can do what they wish. State planners imagine that 'there is a time and place for everything'- even (or especially) public activities (Ghannam 2002). Buying and selling must take place in municipal or private market spaces, and prayers must take place in houses of worship. Public spaces also describe the particular uses that are legitimate.⁸

Along these lines then, roads are marked public spaces exclusively for people going somewhere. Good public behaviour means that no person should obstruct the passage of another person while they are on the road. People must be disciplined in their use of public space. Writing about the expansion of disciplinary techniques, Foucault (1995) describes how disciplinary practice divides up complex realities into more manageable pieces, "...discipline fixes; it arrests or regulates movements; it clears up confusion; ...it establishes calculated distributions (Foucault 1995: 219-220). Therefore, clearing and ordering the congestion of Mumbai's streets is central to the making of a modern road. For Mumbai's elite, a road that connects Mumbai to modernity must be a road in which people do not get in each others' way, a road that does not surprise with the inconvenience of political protest, or the private appropriation of an unlicensed marketplace, or the slow passage of pedestrians. A road must promise predictable and continuous movement. Modern roads do not exist in Mumbai. They have to be made by removing uses of the street considered unacceptable and subsequently by inscribing these emptied streets with markers of the world-class.

⁸ In Mumbai, this conception of marked public spaces was taken to its extreme when the High Court banned demonstrations and marches- an essential component of public expression, on roads, terming these a public inconvenience. Following this, city administrators and the police produced a special public place for protest- Azad Maidan- where rallies and demonstrations can now safely be held, after obtaining police permission.

Orders

Mumbai is currently at a critical juncture: It must implement the eight initiatives outlined above, and it must do so now. Otherwise it is in grave danger of collapsing completely.

(Bombay First 2003: 3).

Apocalypse and salvation. Demolition and rehabilitation. Corruption and 'sincerity'. Congestion and connection. The discourses of development that surround Mumbai are framed by mutually constitutive oppositions that are situated on either end of a progress story. Framed by the narratives of impending disaster, development planners and business elites in Mumbai believe that nothing short of a radical transformation can make it into a 'world-class' city. In the case of road constructions, connection and congestion are the oppositions that produce a landscape for bureaucratic activity. Planners and political leaders argue that Mumbai will collapse if they do not immediately treat this congestion.

In their project to 'save Mumbai', planners have worked hard over the last thirty years towards solving the problems of Mumbai's congestion. Around the first problem, they have worked towards relocating the bazaars and businesses of Mumbai outside of the city limits. They have taken some minor steps to increase the frequency of buses and train lines. But for the problem of increased automobile congestion, the city and state government plans to build roads, on a 'war footing'. By building more roads, overpasses and highways, MSRDC officials argue that their projects will not only ease road congestion, but also facilitate "ease in driving with reduced mental tension and overall improvement in the quality of life" (sic, MSRDC 2005). Therefore, where officials seek to solve the problem of crowded bazaars by evicting bazaars outside of the city, they seek to solve the problem of increasing numbers of automobiles crowding the streets by making more space for them in the city - a rather selective accommodation.

Therefore, an urban crisis, in this case, the crisis of a Mumbai that is on the verge of 'collapse,' is necessary to justify language of renewal and the expansion of bureaucratic authority that goes with it. The 'anti-politics' of development deliberately seeks to bypass questions of class and power, and replace them with the technocratic problems

of the bureaucrat (Ferguson 1994: 65). Almost every city agency and political party has used the language of easing ‘congestion’ as the legitimating ground for their projects.⁹ The threat of congestion and the promise of connection serve to create the grounds upon which the *art of governmentality* can be practiced “resulting in the formation of a series of governmental apparatuses and complex set of saviors” (Foucault 1991: 90, 102). Crises give government something to do. For the Government of Maharashtra, this is infrastructure construction.

As is evident in the language of the MSRDC “Sea-Link” project and the Bombay First report show, the beneficiaries of development are both the embodied city (‘Mumbai’ will avert collapse, cf Ferguson 1994: 60), but also its subjects- those that will experience ‘reduced mental tension’. However, the plans do not say *who* will experience reduced mental tension. These developments assume to benefit ‘everyone’ that lives in the city; a matter of public interest. Yet, who the public being imagined here is, is rather exclusive (see Baviskar 2005). In Mumbai, the notion of public interest disconnects millions of people in the city from substantial citizenship (Holston and Appadurai 1996), particularly because of the privileged positions occupied by those who operationalise Mumbai’s projects of world class development.

Riding to work on my bicycle, I arrive at the bottom of Peddar Road. Traffic always moves slowly at the intersection, which for so long has advertised Cadburys chocolates and Kingfisher beer. Navigating through the idling cars, I am stopped by a policeman. Where are you going, he asks. Don’t you know this is a VIP road? Cycles aren’t allowed here. Having lived on this road for most of my life through cars and buses, I tell him I had no idea.

Connection is a selective experience. Despite complaining of traffic, as they block streets with their (our) cars, the wealthy in Mumbai have enjoyed a significantly greater degree of mobility and can largely be unaware of police regulations. Auto rickshaws, trucks

⁹ Unsurprisingly then, the authors of *Vision Mumbai*, see themselves as central to Mumbai’s development. The NGO- state steering committee they propose has Bombay First inscribed on it as a permanent committee member. In addition, two or three NGOs would also be chosen, although they do not describe which kinds of NGOs these should be. Regardless, the mandate and structure of the committee abrogates to itself the task of imagining and administering a global city.

and unlicensed buses are forbidden from entering the island city during the day, and several streets are closed off to non motorized transit including handcarts and bicycles. The traffic police argue that these modes of transit impede the flow of traffic and cause congestion. Traffic planning and policy is classed in the city, where “urban development has traditionally echoed the voices of the rulers” (Bannerjee-Guha 1996: 102). Political representatives, bureaucrats and the business groups that plan Mumbai’s development see its streets not as pedestrians (cf deCerteau 1984), or as shoppers in its streets and markets, but as drivers or car passengers on a road. Congestion is experienced as a motorist, wherein the causes of traffic are not the other cars on the street, but those bicyclists, pedestrians and vendors who move at the margins of the street. Even public transport is seen as a nuisance. *Slowing down* Mumbai’s automobile-enabled movement towards becoming a world class city, alternative means of transportation are seen as part of the problem and not the solution.

Situated and skewed perceptions of ‘nuisance’ and traffic are manifest in a disjuncture between road use studies and strategies for clearing congestion. A study carried out by the World Bank on urban transportation in India revealed that nearly 30-40 percent of all trips were undertaken on foot. Meanwhile “in Mumbai, buses carry 59 percent of road-based person trips, but use only 5 percent of the road capacity. The remaining 95 percent is used by private vehicles, intermediate public transport (IPT) vehicles, and trucks” (World Bank 2002b: 79). A further break up of these statistics shows that private automobiles, carrying less than ten percent of the population, uses two thirds of all road space in the city (Anand 2001, D’Monte 2001).

The Mumbai Urban Infrastructure Project (MUIP), with a plan allocation of Rs 22,455 crore, envisages 12-lane freeways on the Western Express highway and another eight-lane highway instead of the old Agra Road (LBS Marg). "We even plan to have a separate captive lane for BEST buses so commuters can reach office in half an hour", says [MMRDA Commissioner] Joshi. (Hindustan Times, February 13, 2005).

Ignoring the recommendations of the WS Atkins report, commissioned by the MMRDA in 1994, which has urged an investment in public transportation, the government has approved transportation projects that would favour car users. This is because

administrators and elected political representatives that make transportation policy on the city as they see it through the windscreens of their air-conditioned cars. Notice how even commissioner Joshi, while laying out an ambitious and ostentatious plan for the city, promises 'captive' bus lanes. Generally speaking, the idea of a bus lane is to ensure that private cars do not use this lane, so as to encourage the use of public transport. The idea implicit in Joshi's 'captive' bus lane, however, is to ensure that buses do not 'get in the way', or obstruct cars on the twelve lane freeways he imagines. A reading of planning documents and interviews with planners and the political elite tell of the situated interests of these citizens.

In the words of Maharashtra Chief Minister, Vilasrao Deshmukh, "*My journey was actually quite comfortable but that is because I am the Chief Minister. Being a Chief Minister has its benefits and probably that is why everyone wants to be on my chair*" (NDTV, May 20 2005). Automobiles are markers of class and upward mobility. And these dreams must remain intact and safe from danger. But "Mumbai is in reverse gear" claim the authors of the Bombay First report (Bombay First 2003). They suggest that planners register a 'quick win' for the city and improve the city's morale by revamping the road from the airport to the central CBD- sections of which are exclusive to cars and city buses only.

With the Centre and the state determined to transform Mumbai into an international city, the group said it was imperative to first improve the airport precinct and the access road... Narinder Nayar, chairperson of Bombay First, added that it was very important to improve the airport road and clear the bottleneck as it took almost two hours to reach the airport from the city. "To ensure that the project is completed by the year-end is next on the agenda of the Vision Mumbai committee," he said. (Times of India, January 5, 2005).

If Narinder Nayar really wanted to reach the airport in one hour, he could take the train.

The airport has particular symbolic importance to those who imagine Mumbai should strive to become a global city. Though one of the three main approach roads into the city from the rest of the state, the airport road is particularly important for Mumbai's jet-set. In a line that connects the state's political leaders to its affluent western neighborhoods, and eventually the airport, this road (which in fact is a series of roads passing through a range of neighbourhoods), is popularly known as the VIP road- and is

considerably better maintained than other roads throughout the city. Yet, the airport road is the one most frequently named needing the most roadwork.

Despite this attention, the city's leaders are still unable to ensure that the road is free of traffic. The bottlenecks Nayyar speaks of have become so when the city's historic neighbourhoods and precincts are unable to do any further road widening. As a result, planners have been building and proposing elevated roads to complement the increased demands of an exponentially increasing car population, or planning roads in the Arabian Sea- developments they say will bring Mumbai to World Class standards. In a city where space is a figment of the imagination, road development has taken to the skies and seas. Roads have to be built. Connections have to be made. And when roads connect people in the sky, the people on the streets buried below- the 'under-class'- have a whole new series of networks they can look up to and not reach.

DisConnection

I should have asked that policeman how he got to work. Because it's harder to take the bus these days. For me, the 5 minute walk across the street to the stop just got more complicated when an overpass was built right through it. To improve traffic flow they also built a pedestrian containment fence on either side of and through the middle of the street. A DisConnection. It was for our protection, they said. But I can't get to the other side anymore. I think I missed the bus.

As Mumbai's elite is working hard at producing enough roads to stake a claim to world class citizenship, they are simultaneously working hard to ensure that these roads are used in the correct way. I have already described how some roads are closed to particular forms of traffic deemed not fast or modern enough. Pedestrians and populations on foot are deemed dangerous in their unpredictability. With a population of twelve million people, the city is being reconfigured with a far more ambitious project. It is to keep people, quite literally, off the roads.

The method of choice is pedestrian fencing. Now, a fundamental part of every road 'improvement' project, is that the unimproved sidewalks are fenced off from the carriageway through exclusion fencing. There is also a fence in the median of the road. Always visibly sponsored by a corporate group, vegetation and hedges are sometimes

used- a beautiful manifestation of free market control. Using the discourses of traffic 'safety', dividers (as they are tellingly called) are as much about pedestrian 'safety', as they are to provide automobile owners with unobstructed road space. Traffic dividers are a visible indication of whom the hundreds of kilometers of new road space are intended for. They are also a visible manifestation of the inability of the state to produce self-disciplined subjects.¹⁰

Far from being a mere exercise in connection, the road requires new disconnections. In Mumbai, a road cannot be made without fences, without disconnections. The new MUIP project seeks to provide only an eighth of the road space for buses. Pedestrians are forced to walk long distances to find places where they might be able to cross the road by going under it, and non-motorized transit is marginalized by a combination of policy restrictions and safety regulations. However, these experiences of disconnection are minor when compared to the displacements and expulsions of street vendors and pavement dwellers from the city's street spaces. To make a street of multiple uses a world class road, the state has recently implemented one the most violent evictions in Mumbai's history.

In his essay *Of Garbage Modernity and the Citizen's Gaze*, Dipesh Chakrabarty concludes his article by pointing to the distinctions between the road and the bazaar (2002: 75). Chakrabarty is aware that the road, as a modernist project, requires not only the making of place, but also an erasure of existing uses of urban street space. In a politics which favours users that flow through street spaces faster than those who don't, street users that don't move at all, like squatters and vendors, have the most to lose. Mumbai's street vendors have had to confront renewed cycles of raids and evictions. The newly conceived Station Area Traffic Improvement Projects (SATIS) intend to improve commuter flows between buses and trains by evicting street vendors around Dadar and Andheri stations. Vendors have had to face repeated raids on their businesses. Denied employment guarantees or any form of social security by the state, these evictions also deny them their rights to livelihood in the city.

¹⁰ Nowhere is this clearer than in downtown Mumbai, where policemen physically prevent pedestrians from crossing the street at surface level when they refuse to use the pedestrian underpasses built ostensibly for their safety and convenience.

It was at the end of December. I was talking to Shakeel Ahmed at a reception organised to fete an indefatigable and courageous activist. Shakeel is one of the most inspiring people I know. Part of Nirbhay Bano Andolan, he works on the sorts of issues most everyone else is afraid to touch. It had only been a year since I last saw Shakeel, but he looked more tired. Ab situation bahut kharab hai he said. He was not talking about the tsunami that killed tens of thousands just days before. But he did reference it. The same government that is sending aid for the tsunami is uprooting and demolishing peoples homes in Mumbai. Why do they talk of early warning systems for natural disasters when they are so busy actively making human disasters? By the end of the winter, the Maharashtra State government had evicted one million people from their homes with not even promises of rehabilitation.

Like street vendors, slum dwellers are finding the state development agencies working hard to disconnect them from living in the city. Soon after the prime minister's visit to the would-be global city, the new Congress government in the state embarked on an active and intense effort to evict the citizens that elected them from the city. As icons of successful modernity, global cities are not supposed to have poverty. Instead of working towards eradicating poverty, the government worked towards eradicating the poor from the places that they have made, lived and worked in for years. Because of their visibility, footpath and pavement dwellers were especially targeted. With a telling dose of illiberalism, political leaders and bureaucrats have been talking about restricting entry to the city for those who wish to experience its freedoms- to allow only the right (global) class of person to settle within its borders. Meanwhile for the urban poor who have lived in the city for decades, the only land that they may claim is at the city's periphery.

Some like Deepak Parekh of HDFC bank say slum dwellers need to be rehabilitated on free land like those where salt pans exist. Though salt making has been reduced in the city, hundreds of acres of land continue to be reserved for salt pans. The drive has so far received support from leaders like Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who, on a visit to the city recently, advised slum dwellers to relocate outside city limits. (Indo-Asian News Service, February 17, 2005).

In the "Vision Mumbai" document prepared by the private consultancy firm McKinsey, which is being used as a framework within which the plans for Mumbai's makeover are being formulated

by the State Government, housing is mentioned in the context of mass housing on the salt pan lands outside the city. This area is not just environmentally fragile but is also poorly linked to the city. Poor people are expected to live in this distant area with no thought given to livelihood or other needs. Meanwhile, significantly, the plan envisages developing hundreds of acres of prime land, formerly occupied by textile mills, now available in the heart of Mumbai as "islands of excellence" with high-class housing, clearly for the rich (Kalpana Sharma, The Hindu, February 28 2005).

In her wonderfully provocative essay, Emma Tarlo describes the peripheralization of the poor in the city of Delhi. She argues that slum clearance policy is built on a logic of erasure, through which city planners see slums and the people that live in them as urban dirt, to be wiped out of the metropolis, or at least from some of its more prominent spaces in the name of urban beautification (Tarlo 2000:53). Rather than eradicate the poor completely, planners and politicians seek to remove them to the 'hinterland' - a strategy that simultaneously manifests both the dependence of the wealthy on the services of the poor, and a desire not to be reminded of their dependence through everyday encounters of poverty and abjection.

We are in fact human earthmovers and tractors. We leveled the land first. We have contributed to the city. We carry your shit out of the city. I don't see citizens' groups dredging sewers and digging roads. This city is not for the rich only. We need each other. I don't beg, I wash your clothes. Women can go to work because we are there to look after their children. The staff in Mantralaya, the collectorate, the BMC, even the police live in slums. Because we are there, women can walk safely at night... Groups such as Bombay First talk about making Mumbai a world-class city. How can it be a world-class city without a place for its poor? Its my dream that one day, all slum-dwellers will refuse to go to work. Will Mumbai survive that day? Who will build your grand projects and work in your malls? You want us to be your coolies, you want all our services, but you don't want us to live here. It's the whole serving class that has made Mumbai a world-class city, not the middle class (Jockin Arputham, interviewed by Jyoti Punwani. Times of India, January 18, 2005).

As president of the National Slum Dwellers Federation, Jockin is acutely aware of the contradictions implicit in making Mumbai a world-class city. In the discourses of

moving the poor to the hinterland, he identifies, correctly, the desire to make the unfeted infrastructure of the city- its 'serving class'- invisible. By seeking to keep the populations of these working poor close at hand but far from sight, a range of rehabilitation plans seek to put the poor in their place- at the peripheries of the city- where they can be close enough to build Mumbai's new roads, but be disconnected just enough to not use them.¹¹

Conclusion?

The unabashed, vulgar indulgence in conspicuous consumption by the nouveau-riche has left the underclass seething in frustration. One half of our society guzzles aerated beverages while the other has to make do with palmfuls of muddied water. Our three-way fast-lane of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation must provide safe pedestrian crossings for the unempowered India also so that it too can move towards 'equality of status and opportunity'. 'Beware of the fury of the patient man,' says the old adage. One could say 'beware of the fury of the patient and long-suffering people.'- President KR Narayanan, Frontline, February 5, 2000.

Having begun this paper with a quote from the current Prime Minister of India, it seems only fair to conclude with a tip of the hat to a former President, even more so because of his use of an automobile metaphor. Unlike other metaphors in planning documents, however, his metaphor is classed, and tells of the different Indias that are affected and effected by the imaginaries of global connectivity. With the imaginations of connection and the experiences of congestion, Mumbai's officials and business leaders have renewed their interest in making Mumbai a world-class city. Without saying as much, a

¹¹ Writing about the centrality of disconnection in capitalism and its intended effects, Ferguson writes, "the abjected, redlined spaces of decline and disinvestment in the contemporary global economy are as much a part of the geography of capitalism as the booming zones of enterprise and prosperity. Expulsion and abandonment... refer to processes through which global capitalism constitutes its categories of social and geographical membership and privilege by constructing and maintaining a category of absolute non membership: a holding tank for those turned away at the development' door; a residuum of the economically discarded, disallowed and disconnected- to put it plainly, a global "Second Class" (Ferguson 1999: 242). Situated in a larger history of exclusions, these disconnections were common to the colonial period. Chatterjee describes the disenfranchised of the colonial period as "subjects not citizens" (Chatterjee 2004). Things have changed a little in the postcolonial period, when these subjects having formal political rights (such as the right to vote), but not substantive rights, Appadurai calls them "citizens without a city" (Appadurai 2002).

central feature of these plans is the relocation and active marginalization of the poor to the 'hinterlands'.

It's as though the people of India have been rounded up and loaded on to two convoys of trucks (a huge big one and a tiny little one) that have set off resolutely in opposite directions. The tiny convoy is on its way to a glittering destination somewhere near the top of the world. The other convoy just melts into the darkness and disappears. A cursory survey that tallies the caste, class and religion of who gets to be in which convoy would make a good Lazy Person's Concise Guide to the History of India. For some of us, life in India is like being suspended between two of the trucks, one in each convoy, and being neatly dismembered as they move apart, not bodily, but emotionally and intellectually. (Arundhati Roy, 2002)

However, as Roy goes on to point out, though people 'on the large truck' are being beaten down, they refuse to lie down and die. Instead, hailed by the language of the global they employ its terms to make counter-claims. As Jockin argues, Mumbai is already a world-class city. A gateway to the human and natural resources of India for over two hundred years, Bombay has long been a part of transnational trading networks and global circulations of capital. It has been made so by the formal *and* informal workers and the work of these people since colonial times. When viewed in a historical perspective, the newest round of world-class making is curious. It is a project of modernity that is not new, and also a project that will never be finished. On one hand, the project to make Mumbai is more an attempt to reclaim its place as India's center of global connectivity from other cities in India such as Bangalore and Hyderabad, sections of which are increasingly connected to the global economy through their IT industries. On the other, the project of making Mumbai world-class is a project to make new frontiers of 'spectacular accumulation' (Tsing 2005) for the well to do. The open spaces produced by bulldozing the streets and living places of the poor are the grounds for pioneering new construction projects- roads, highways, shopping malls and high rises, to house, feed, entertain and connect the rich. These are good business, especially in Mumbai. And though these imaginations of modernity might be shared urban subjectivities of a cross section of urban residents, including the poor, it won't be long before their very real experiences of disconnection and expulsion will result in reactions that the city's well-to-do will have to work even harder to hide or ignore.

Epilogue- Anti Politics

Reiterating that the state government is committed to the cause of transforming Mumbai into a world-class city, Mr. Deshmukh [the Chief Minister for the state of Maharashtra] warned against politicising the issue of Mumbai's development. (Economic Times, January 5, 2005)

"It's very unfortunate that the development of Mumbai, which was once India's most westernised city, has fallen prey to politics," says Narinder Nayar, chairman of Bombay First, an NGO. (Indo-Asian News Service, February 27, 2005).

That the city's economic elite have a distaste for 'politics' is not entirely surprising. They constitute a small fraction of the urban and national population, and have little say in choosing legislative candidates and political representatives. A little more surprising is the distaste that political leaders have for politics itself. What does it mean for democratic participation when the elected chief minister of the state warns against politics and 'politicising' issues? Deshmukh's distaste for politics might emerge from his position. Not as leader of the Congress Party, but as the Chief Minister of the State, he sees his task of governing not as a mediation of political interests (and its tainted word, 'compromise'), but as lead missionary for the administrative ordering of development. This is no accident. With urban developments seeking to connect only ten percent of the city, and viciously disconnecting the rest, either via expulsions to the 'hinterland' or submersion by the automobiles of the wealthy, governance must be seen less as a matter of politics and more that of administrative policy (Chatterjee 2004: 35).

But the laments of the Chief minister and the business leader suggest there have been political consequences of Mumbai's restructuring. In February, armed with the 'politics of conscience' (Appadurai 2002) and the claims of formal citizenship, delegations of the displaced approached political leaders in Delhi and Mumbai for redress. Senior party functionaries from Deshmukh's own party flew down to Mumbai to chastise him. The president of the party insisted he take the party's manifesto to protect the poor seriously. Slumdweller won some tenuous reprieves in the month of March before the twin projects of displacement and development began again. It was a small, temporally situated gesture that tells of how the urban poor resist unsettlement and dislocation (Tarlo 2000) - a process that goes side by side with the everyday ways in which they seek to gain incremental access to what might one day be full membership in the imaginations and plans of civil society.

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