New Delhi 2011. Creative and vibrant synergies as possible solutions for urban planning

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![Figure 1. New Delhi's view](image)

New Delhi 2011: the Commonwealth Games are over, waiting for the final results of 2021’s Master Plan, the city is in complete status of transformation. New Delhi was born in the shape that we see today only during the late 30's, pressed to change herself after the partition, with the arrival of migrants from Pakistan: at that time numerous colonies were build to accommodate refugees and the solution of an institutionalized plan, appeared as a necessary answer for shaping the new capital. DDA (Delhi Development Authority) was formed, at that time, as an entity to take care of the future development of the city and as a valid instrument to compose the new Master Plan for the city; since then till now, at least three DMP’s were drawne and composed: the last one is still in charge and will be valid till 2021.

Delhi became also an attractive pole for the global events: for her strategical geographical position and for her importance in the sociopolitical path: the Indian city hosted the Asian Games on 1982 and the Commonwealth Games at the end of 2010. Many changes are happened, during the last years, interconnected with the necessary adjustment of the life standard and with the urban asset of the superficial appearance: the new Indian middle class, the private investors and the builders, of course, saw this occasion as a new plat for gaining money and for increasing their earnings, but these aims are not the same of the commune people. The profound needs of the poor are connected with the simplicity of livelihood as: lack of houses, infrastructural services and the primary benefits as water supply and electricity. All this renewals was not really realized, following the principles exposed in the Master Plan, absolutely not respecting the first necessity of the poor people and passing over the budget that was calculated for the Games; the
result is that now entire parts of the city are blocked in asleep yards to investigate in the corruption: before and after the inauguration of the Games yards were closed for bribery's problems, connected with the hunger of money of the private investors and builders involved in the role of developers. Groups were formed spontaneously to fight against these problems; among all can be quote the collective called ‘The Coalition against Exclusion and Violations caused by the Commonwealth Games’, that is borned looking to the human rights violation under the actions done during the preparation for the big event. The group is outraged against the incredible growth of funds dedicated to the purpose and fought against the appropriation of money subtracted from the amount destined for the scheduled caste cause and against the huge economic deficit caused by the misappropriation of public funds and illegal charges.

In the more large consent, these sportive and massive occurrences, effected in a negative way on the composition and development of the city: inhabitants are forcefully removed from their place causing the destruction of the relations across areas and the ruin of their physical associations with the space; street vendors are pushed away from their usual paths, beggars are violently removed from the center of the town. Contemporary global metropolis are represented by the interactions of all the energy's typologies: these actions against poor reflect the desire of a small group of people that cannot truly represent the complexity caused by the multiple ethnicities and the multiple layers social mixity, that compose the city of Delhi today. During the CWG, happen what happened for the previous Asian Games on the 80’s, the concept is expressed in the phrase written by Union Minister Kapil Sibal, on the Indian Express on January 20, 2007, that referring to the plans for the Asian Games, said that the plan was clearly made without thinking to the totality of the people living in the city. At that time was absolutely neglected the prescription of 1962's DMP and occurred also the same basic lack of respect against poor citizens that happen for the preparation of the CWG of October 2010. As an
MIC: My Ideal City

explanation the phrase written in the report “Housing and and rights Network”: “How can a city - in an attempt to appear “world class” for foreign tourists - discriminate against poor, hard-working citizens in the name of “beautification”?”

Following the words, incised on the metallic road signs spread all around the city, the common expectation was a city "more clean and more green", but contrarily to this many trees were cutted to realizing new flyovers and to build new infrastructures, to reach the global standard level. The unique positive improvement, connected with the urban tidy-up, was the metro lines development, that is one of the best interconnections that works properly in Delhi today.

![Figure 3. Informal barber shop under the flyover](image)

Someone dreams “Delhi 2050”, imagining new connectivity's paths and new measures to settle itself or to move around; groups of international experts combine the data of the present situation in Delhi to understand the future prevision, regarding: transport infrastructure, building regulation, health, water system management, environment, energy, archeological heritage and thoughts on public space. Several discussion and platforms are finalized to come up with realistic previsions for the metropolis of Delhi, following the statistics, nobody wants, on 2052, a new Olympic Games in Delhi, as this typology of events start to became true disaster at least for all those people who are not involved in the economical growth interconnected with the games.2

"The big people decide who is poor, how poor they are and if, when and what they need. They decide which slum can stay and which need to be resettled and when. They decide what constitutes minimum services ..." (Verma, 2002)

Verma3 developed an entire book on slums, describing how unequal, undemocratic and unconstitutional rights characterize the contemporary urban Indian development; the header is addressed to these "big people" as an open slot explaining how these people have in their hands the possibility and the responsibility to write an happy ending. The authentic situation in New Delhi, today, demonstrates the opposite and the warm interrogative is: which is the role of the commune citizen in this change. There is a traditional Indian behavior called Jugaad: a practical attitude generated by the solution’s research through lateral thinking or by a concatenation of free mental images and thoughts. Jugaad means

1 From Housing and land Rights Network, South Asia Regional Program, Habitat International Coalition, The 2010 Commonwealth Games: Whose Wealth? Whose Common?
2 Statics reported from the website: www.delhi2050.com
achieve simple and secret dreams, realizing the daily aim with the only resources that are available at hand: switching on the creativity and the imagination to answer to the urgent needs or to find creative options according to pressing demands or situations. *Jugaad* is the attitude to do rather than to think: a physical energetic approach related to the actions, where the importance lives more in the satisfaction tied to achieving the objectives that in the actions played to gain the result in itself: evaluating the development of the facts as a change necessary, rotate prospective or add new elements to the surface of the reality, setting in motion synergies to trigger transformative mechanisms.

**Figure 4. Solution of everyday planner**

“I don’t have money, but I would like go to the cinema. What should I do?”, or “I would like a shop on wheels for selling my greenery” or “I need a land for growing vegetables”. The possible actions developed in relation to the achievement of these needs and wishes are called *Jugaad* or the art of acting, the art of getting by: a multiple behavior able to trigger social and might economic changes, which probably not will give the money for the cinema tickets but will put in motion situations to transform society and human relations. For not Indian is very difficult, understanding deeply what *Jugaad* is: it seems as an urban legend, but it’s still existing: last year when the taxi driver arrived in front of the train station in New Delhi, I discovered that I had forgotten my wallet at home, located in the opposite side of the city; the taxi man once having realize that it was too late to turn back without taking the risk, for his passenger, to loose the train, he reached in his pocket a few crumpled rupees hiding in the folds of his brown pants. They were a few hundred rupees, just the necessary amount to reach Kolkata and to take another taxi but the example is profoundly connected with the collective spirit of *Jugaad*. This personal history, written through an ethnographic cultural approach is an example of the actual *mixofilia*\(^4\) attractive element in Delhi: the sequence shows the complete acceptation of the Indian way of living, imagining that the life can always give another ace to play the daily game. What is *Jugaad* urbanism and in which way this attitude can have effectiveness on the future urban plan can be read in the application of this theory as informal instrument for

\(^4\) *Mixofilia* as a not-permanent status, of sociological and antropological interactions, across diverse culture. Phenomenon that happen in certain special historical periods: giving the occasion to stay togheter in the same city or in the same geographical areas, mixing experiences, memories and visions for the present of the city. (as Zygmunt Bauman suggest at the conference: *La qualità dell’integrazione scolastica* on Rimini on 16-11-2009).
the micro-planning situations: her source is in the grassroots and appears in the daily urban changes that are implemented by the singular individuals or group of people able to promote the city's evolution. Changes can be successfully implemented, identifying the best potential transformations that are express in a silent manner, starting from the observation of all these actions that are initiated spontaneously or triggered by artistic collectives or bottom-up groups working in this field: across the contemplation of relational dynamics or across the creative answers given to the unacceptable rules imposed from the violent metropolitan situations. In this sense, *Jugaad* urbanism, can be the Indian representation of the Michel De Certeau's theory on the creative use of the space, interpreted by the ordinary citizens: looking at the invisible tracks in the places, shadows that can telling the previous histories played in some spaces, that maybe if will be repeated times and times in the same manner or in the same zone can arrive to define the evolution of the new urban lineage, determining the probable transformation of certain areas of the city.

There are spaces, in the contemporary cities, that exist and breath as entities “in between” valid as potential spaces, rather spaces imagined or depicted for, real spaces or spaces experienced by the inhabitants and by their intentions. These places can become zones where ordinary citizens take the spaces that they need, inventing new ways of dwelling, new occupational logic or reactive presences, interpreting or just adding to the reality another imperceptible level: the imagined and not suddenly perceived dimension of the unconscious realm of the everyday creative planner; realm that can be show trough the trails of the human bodies, the presences of the objects in the space or simply by the semi-permanent structures that represent the liveable ephemeral space constructed by citizens for the necessity to satisfy their primarily needs or the realization of the wishes of the whole community.

This transformative and spontaneous comportment is very deep rooted in some parts of metropolitan India, especially in those areas less subject to control, that means informal or semi-informal settlements, where the Jugaad urbanism is a way of life to survive, that can be interpreted as a resourceful strategy. Following the thoughts of Yona Freedman: the answers for the metropolis of the future are in the poorest place where people use the architecture of survival.

The role of architects, planners, engineers is to predict in these actions, the potential development or the mechanism of changes of urban micro planning or design projects. There are different levels to dream and to live the city: there are people who have voice on it and people who suffer the decisions and the chances imposed from above - simply they

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don't know how powerful can be the desire of change. Appadurai\textsuperscript{7} wrote theories on the role of contemporary imagination as a necessary reaction to the globalization process on the creation of imaginative scenarios or on the displacement of places and situations, their importance and their validity in terms of possibilities, not only for the single individual but contrarily as a collective activity: the imagination can be a necessary tool to develop images for the global cultural change, that affect all the geographical zones of the planet today. He defines different groups of people that are united from the same needs and wishes, that he calls “relational community”; frequently this groups are formed after a big trouble period or during a very difficult urban tension, where the collective aggregation is fundamental to resist against the absences. Appadurai in his book “Modernity in dust”, individualizes five panoramas; imaginary landscapes that help in the reconstruction of the reality: Ethnoscapes, Mediascapes, Technoscapes, Financescapes and Ideoscapes. This imaginary worlds are interpreted as supports to create collective solutions for the contemporary metropolitan existences, in the city of Delhi this can be well represented in the cultural mix generated by all the migrants rather then in the interactions of diverse financial interests, or in the, formal and informal, ways of dwell the city.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{architecture_of_survival}
\caption{Architecture of survival}
\end{figure}

The imagination is an indispensable tool in the “salvation kit” for serious post-disaster situations, as after big earth quake or storm or tsunami where entire mass of people need to find answer to the difficulties that oppress the community, linked to the loosing of their immaterial heritage and to the loosing of the material one; for this purpose it’s necessary to learn how to give to the people the possibility and the right to imagine. In the last few years, for the influences and the reactions caused by the Commonwealth Games, groups of experts on diverse disciplines as architects, sociologists, planners and artists worked together to give new inputs to the contemporary urban resistance, as a way to react to the

injustices and a paths to find more sustainable answers in the contemporary world of planning. Real examples in Delhi today are represented by new collaborations between dwellers and different kinds of experts, actions that can affect on the urban compositional problems: as slum's emergencies, due to the sudden removal or as a gentrification process that influence some zonal transformations or, in the resettlement colonies, where the list of needs is claimed by the local people without that the government listen them.

On the gentrification urban phenomenon, there are several examples in Delhi and Urban Typhoon was an experience created to stop this negative flux on the city's body. The workshop took his name from his organization: a temporary team of people arrives, like a natural typhoon, in a special place to work together and to propose new solutions for the new urban expansion, in Delhi this happened in Khirkee, area that is located in the south part of Delhi. This zone, till some months ago, was a completely agricultural land and today it's one of the new expansion's area of the city. The team is created by people afferent to various disciplines: the aims of the workshop were to find a new views for the neighborhood: combining architectural, sociological, urban and artistic knowledge to solve the problems of the contemporary changes on this areas. Rather the experience can also be interpreted as a necessary dialogue in the contemporary metropolis for understanding where the future of the city still can go, the interactions and the dialogues between local communitarian people living in Khirkee together with the people who have the knowledge and the capability to recognize the local needs and to put them in the organization of the future urban zonal plan.

![Figure 8. Saket City Mall in Khirkee](image)

The experience is based in a personal interactions and in a action-reaction play, between participant at the workshop and Khirkee inhabitants; the final result was a public exposition hosted by the artistic association based in the neighborhood. The problem of this kind of interactions is the duration, that is often to brief, to have a deep effect on the present reality of these areas, that needed more long and influential relations. In Khirkee, there is a strong presence of an ancient Maajid, stimulating investigate in terms of interrelations between her symbolic meaning and her more commune role of religious architecture for Muslim; and also investigate the social relations between the areas, facing

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each other, as Khirkee Village, Hauz Rhani and Saket. Saket is the zone where is positioned one of the biggest shopping mall of the city and where is preview a new district court. The construction of these building changes completely not only the urban destination and use of the road paths, but also the link between people and spaces. There are a profound connections across the opposite banks of the street: from one side there is a shopping mall that represent perfectly the contemporary globalization status and from another side there are the neighborhoods, in completely status of transformation, after the effect caused by these changes. The precedent reality of the zone, was deep rural background, because the area was one of the first inhabited place of the Delhi's urban history; during the workshop's interviews, I collected the history of an old woman: she said that the ancient community is missing of the previous time when all the people working together on the same field. "The land where Khirkee is, was a truly agricultural land and the change of land use from agricultural to residential use, caused many shifts, including the deficiency of food variety; before was possible to found directly from the ground on these place, several kind of lentils, today it's impossible." She said that the organization along the opposite side of the road was completely different: in the past there were many pottery sellers or vegetable vendors, today only some of them are hidden behind the queue of auto-ricksha or cars, that are standing in front of the mall waiting the clients.

The composition of the people who live there is also different: around the Maajid in the past lived mostly Muslim families that now are shifted in the more popular quarter of Hauz Rani, the economical relations between the opposite side of the road are also very subtle. The new urban research challenge is develop new communicative systems: in the mall beautiful and decorated sarees overlooking from the windows, these cloths are frequently produced, stitched and embroidered in the other part of the road, by the informal migrants workers; arrived there from different state spread all around the country. Migrants who came here looking for a work and are settled in these area for the reasonable price of the house rent. Today the situation is still in change because the colony it's not officially recognized as formal one, but the place started to be estimated as a new urban space where living: consequence of this the rent of the houses increased. If the gentrification process will not be stopped, will be fundamental preserve the tracks of tradition: no tourist will be attracted from the mall that can have an exact double in every global world city; in that sense the local voices must be largely improved taking on more weight in the shaping of the urban planning future projects.

Another example is the work developed by a collective based in Delhi composed by a mixture of local artists and foreign practitioners, that use sharing tools of knowledge and process of self mutual learning as a methodology from more then
ten years ago: Sarai Media Collective and CSDS: this two entities working with local Ngo to develop local and grassroots power across artistic and media experimentation. The result is a work that affecting in the city practically: this collective doesn’t really have the power to change the city as it would like but the work is a permanent open interactive platform on the city that can be interpret as a reliefs valves for the needs of the most who live in the poorest neighborhoods. Awakening the consciences of people to create a new sensitiveness on these matters, since the main problem is the lack of listening across different social levels, till the arrival to the ears of the people who can cover an active role in the city's changes. These spontaneous movements are systems to activate synergies and to open cracks in ordinary life: looking how to mix new solutions with the existing super-imposed ones, that were not designed for the total inclusiveness and urban sustainability.

Figure 10. Workers who sew saree

These practices in Delhi, are activated through free discussions, interactions with commune citizens and artistic experimental actions like the long experiences of study and permanent observation on the city: free spaces to prove the ability of the "everyday-planner", rather as micro- interventions or "temporary incursions" on the space. The substantial gap in the urban transformation, is the difference between the desires and the needs of all the citizens and the concrete possibility of realization of the aims dreamed in the practices. Where the meeting between individual and collective happens, the challenge is how these practices can became more effective and less utopian having the real power to change the metropolis?

References

Note: all the images in the article are made by Claudia Roselli