

# **Medusa City: A minority run Design Institute in Postcolonial Milieu**

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**Abstract**

**MEDUSA CITY: A MINORITY RUN DESIGN INSTITUTE IN POSTCOLONIAL MILIEU**

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In the face of the tremendous onslaught of global imperialism, it is crucial for the third world city to assert its existence beyond the designation as a mere node in the 'World Wide Web'. This thesis breaks away from the general positivist, reductionist gaze to appropriate Helene Cixous' articulation of the Medusa to represent this misunderstood ethos. The laughing Medusa revels in third world complexity and hybridization, thereby effectively bypassing the smoothening tendencies of the dialectic and allowing for a battlefield of unresolved conflicts. Life here emerges from the equilibrium of death, fertilizing itself with the morbid dregs of decay and energy flows of social, historical and economic gradients. The thesis looks at the post-colonial city as a synthesis of hermeneutic experience at a human scale; the site as a slice of glorious urban complexity and addresses how established knowledge systems can be redefined to include a cacophony of marginalized voices and hence, to better suit this ethos. The proposed design school is a culmination of this process on multiple levels as it seeks to break traditional boundaries and forge new networks, thereby enabling a distinct language of representation and empowerment.

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**For Ahmed Yusuf**  
**my earliest memory of home**

## PREFACE

A life of belonging to a minority community (though perhaps not under-privileged) - as an Indian expatriate in an Arab nation, a Tamilian among Hindi-speaking classmates, a Muslim in a Hindu majority India, a feminist in a culture of “submission”, an architect in a family of engineers- I have found myself posited in the periphery of peripheries with an ability to discern culture from many vantage points. It brought along a persistent feeling of otherness and a despair that one’s milieu does not fall neatly inside prescribed, accepted norms. I now recognize this dilemma manifested in a multitude of postcolonial expressions including but not limited to the built environment. My architectural journey, which is inextricably tied to the city of Chennai, started in a school with a strong bent toward Indian Modernism; and then led me to two architectural firms with markedly different ideology. The first had a traditional, vernacular language while the other was a young and vibrant practice with a contemporary style. Yet, I could not define what was my own.

Meanwhile, my growing interest in a number of issues such as physics, religion, feminism and politics progressed along neatly segregated channels- very far away from my ‘creative’ pursuits. These multiple facets could not be viewed through the same lens within the same field of vision. Back then I was not sure why the multiple worlds I belonged to could not be represented accurately beyond their specific moments of existence. What I call “worlds” are in fact constructs of specific metaphorical languages, translations of which are always reduced to interpretations. An example would be the imprecise denotation of religion through scientific data or signifying the social sciences through arithmetic. These bodies of knowledge are essentially varied with markedly different premises. Yet we live in a world where such dissimilarities engage, negotiate and sometimes explode.

This M-Arch started as an attempt to address a deep frustration of being unable to adhere to set standards and represent myself convincingly. It was a search for coherence...and a voice. The thesis is the culmination of that exploration as I journey into a city I still call home, break down the boundaries of my “Eastern” origins and “Western” education, learn to “see” the urban place and construe that reading via a more suitable, dynamic set of norms. Here, I seek justification that it is possible to traverse through these seemingly irreconcilable realms, addressing these conflicts head

on and emerge from that tumultuous voyage stronger, surer.

The chosen site too has a significant history that ties into this exploratory project. The forty four acres of what was once a part of the Nanmangalam forest holds an existing institute that is named after my great grandfather- Mohamed Ismail. He was a freedom fighter, four times Member of Parliament after India gained independence and the President of the Indian Union Muslim league. He led the Islamic community at a precarious time after the India-Pakistan partition, when all Muslims were held responsible for tearing apart of the motherland. Ismail's life's work was to unite the fragmented regional Muslims under a political banner, garnering them representation at a national level, and setting the stage for a mutually constructive dialogue between this group and their Dravidian counterparts. I was surprised when my research led me to learn that this leadership has been cited often as a reason for the relative lack of communal tension in Tamil Nadu. This personal note translates into my larger world-view of belonging to a place, enrooting into the complexities of the local while overarching to network with the global. Additionally the diploma college that had been mismanaged for a number of years has finally been taken over by a new management in the last decade. After fending of a slew of legal and political attacks the institute is emerging as a platform for community empowerment and is avidly exploring new avenues for growth. Capitalizing on this need, the proposal tries to extend beyond the sphere that is strictly academic to truly exemplify Ismail's ideology of creating an identity that unfolds from constant engagement. Hence, this thesis has served as a metaphorical site where I have drawn upon reasoning and emotion to come together and to blur the confines of objective process and subjective experience.

## Introduction:

*“(T)he term (global culture) is outrageous, the ultimate hubris, impossibly over ambitious in appropriating the largest spatial unit, as adjective, and applying it to everything encompassed by the noun it describes, the most recent example of epistemic violence with which the (Eurocentric) Occident attempts to retain its epistemological control over the representations of the world.”(King 23)*

The term “global city” not only connotes the existence of worldwide networking that the city actively participates in but also the presence of an accepted structure and protocol that enable it’s binding to such universal web. Such constructs also convey an underlying disenfranchisement of the immediate setting and ethos, liberating the city from regionalism and nationalism, while it simultaneously attaches itself to a global economic and cultural hegemony. The urban place functions as a node, part of a larger grid that integrates other global cities around a common economic agenda<sup>1</sup>, thereby diverting limited resources to secure a globally favorable ranking. However, this repositioning of the metropolis affects economic, cultural and political realms in a number of ways and the nation/ region are splintered in a climate of fierce global competition. In such a constructed arena of rivalry, the social issues germane to the postcolonial city are grossly sidetracked and are ultimately rendered invisible amidst global discourse of “progress”.

Furthermore, authors Steven and Malcolm Miles argue that the urban space is a space for con-

<sup>1</sup> D. Mahadevia, *Globalisation, Urban Reforms & Metropolitan Response: India* (Manak Publications, 2003).

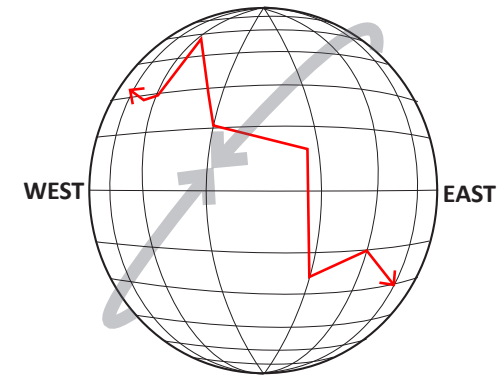


Fig 0.1: East-West dichotomy: Colonial constructs



**Fig 0.2:** Marketing India: National culture is a misleading term denoting a monolithic culture with no place for minority groups

sumption; in fact it can only be envisaged through its consumption, which “has colonized city space to such an extent that the theatre of the city can only apparently operate within the guidelines set by consumerism”<sup>2</sup>. However, this opportunity to consume is not one that stems from equality as consumerist choice favors the elite. Homogeneity, homelessness, marginalization, safety hazards, hidden poverty, subjugation of minority rights are few of the outcomes that shadow over the urban space. Yet the culture of consumption is one of disjunction<sup>3</sup> as it turns its head away from these dark realities to a glossy image of happy consumerism.

The politics of the disjointed city is one of power hierarchies once again spawned by capitalism. The global economic agenda layers upon an already existing network of dichotomies- generated by colonialist “orientalist” agendas, religious/caste chauvinism, political nepotism and post-independence imbalances- to create a highly complex and rapidly morphing landscape of manipulated power gradients and fractured socio-economic hierarchies. Minority rights, which have been sidelined throughout the history of independent India under the subterfuge of “democracy” and “secularism”, are further subject to a callous neglect and misrepresentation.

In this post-colonial context of irreducible complexity, the design culture is a misplaced one as it tries to adopt outdated Western models. In addition, it is grossly fractured by seemingly divergent trends that ultimately cater to elitist sensibilities. The thesis critically examines the Indian city,

<sup>2</sup> S. Miles and M. Miles, *Consuming Cities* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 173.

<sup>3</sup> A. Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,” *Public Culture* 2, no. 2 (1990), 1.

which is subject to the much publicized IT revolution, as not only a link to a global system but also a historical, political and socio-economic *place*<sup>4</sup> that continually informs and is informed by its context. The city manifests itself in splendors of complexity like a Medusa, whose serpents emerge and return to her body as a nexus between identity and connectivity.

The design school – a minority institution-proposed shall seek to embody a wholesome, non-positivist response to the numerous issues that are unique to the postcolonial environment in its philosophy, content and method of instruction. The institute shall endeavor to merge traditionally segregated segments of established academia and hence create a new mode of thought emerging from this ongoing synthesis. The architecture of the built form shall address the question of minorities- within the localized framework of the city and apart from the homogenized national narrative -and shall seek to reflect the approach and ideology of the institution.

This thesis, due to the complexities and simultaneity of disparate issues in the post-colonial setting, locates multiple studies with no apparent hierarchy of application. I would like to clarify that this has been an exercise of numerous narratives, which sometimes collide, conflict or merge to finally reemerge as a Medusa within itself. The design process, as I have elucidated later, is a manipulation of the various “serpents” creating a living, metamorphing built environment.

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<sup>4</sup> Henri Lefebvre, “The Production of Space(Extracts),” in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997), 139-146.

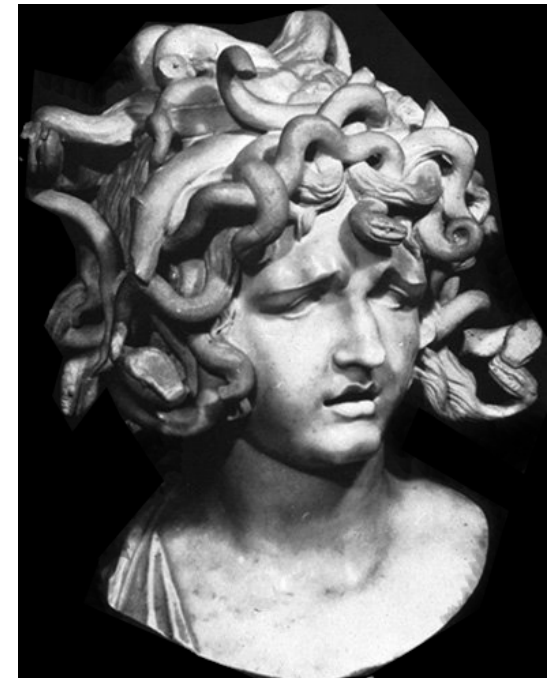


Fig 0.3: Bernini's sculpture of Medusa

# CHAPTER 1

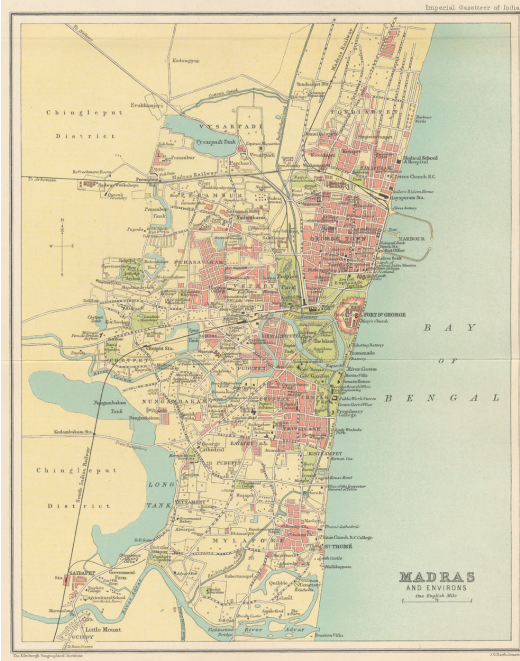
## Unmasking the Medusa City

### 1.1 The Mega-process called City:

In the face of the tremendous onslaught of global imperialism, it is crucial for the third world city to assert its existence as something substantially more than a mere node in the 'World Wide Web'<sup>5</sup>. The myth of the universal city must be dispelled to break away from the homogenizing forces that are in effect seeking an unhindered worldwide market. It is critical to understand that by 'homogenizing forces', I imply dynamisms that tend to normalize human perception, which seems to precipitate a standardized physical environment. It is, however, impossible to create a uniform global place as we shall discuss in the following paragraphs.

**The city:** Scholars like Juarrero, Shnieder and Sagan subscribe to complexity theory, which draws from the open thermodynamic system, to comprehend the universe. Unlike classical thermodynamics where all systems are closed and are progressively dissipating productive energy and moving toward equilibrium, complexity theory looks at the open system where energy is expended yet is compensated by feeding off energy gradients in the external environment. The salient feature

<sup>5</sup> Globalization is increasingly referenced using the metaphor of the internet and its extended influence throughout the world.



Top Fig 1.1: City as an isolated parcel of land

Above Fig 1.2: City as a global node

here is that it firmly establishes the significance of context to any existing object. The entity simultaneously siphons energy from the external world, using it to grow and evolve itself. At the same time the outside cosmos is altered by the loss of constructive energy and also the resulting entropy and discarded mass seeping into its fabric from the thriving entity. Hence, the universal urban node gives way to a concept of a city rooted to its context- simultaneously enabled and constrained by its environment.

The context, when referencing human phenomena, extends beyond the physicality of geography to constructs of history, culture, language and social sensibilities. The metropolis- bound and engendered by these social dynamics- is a structurally determined unit with an internal organization and periphery<sup>6</sup>. The city is a city and not a mere difference in texture of the fabric of the universe because it has an internal structure and hierarchy. The outside world does not “instruct” it; rather external perturbations can trigger reactions within the intangible *walls* of the city.

Another important facet of the argument is summed up by Shneider and Sagan:

*“Metastable processes underlie the selves we mistake for things. Selves are not closed or isolated but arise as metastable open systems in a sea of energy and flows....Even entirely physical swirling systems show a glimmer of selfhood- the beginning of a border between inside and the outside.”* (Shneider and Sagan, Into the cool)

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6 Maturana and Varela, *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding*.

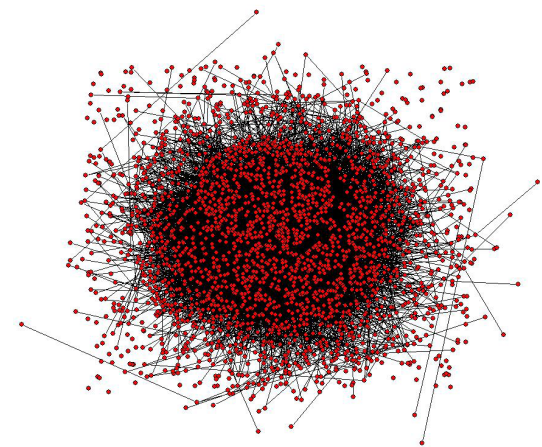


Fig 1.3: Tracing complexity of phenomena

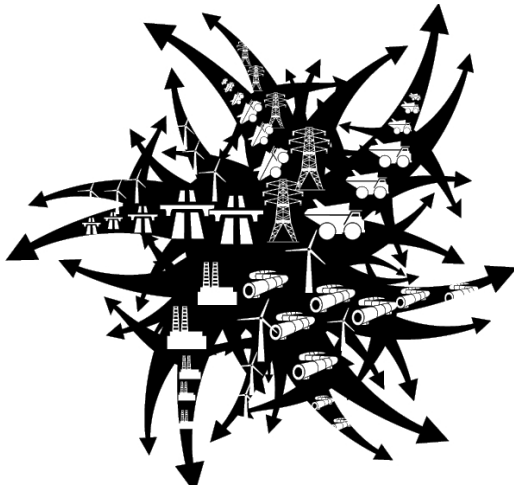


Fig 1.4: Complexity and chaos: a theory

From complexity theory, it is possible to perceive of the city as “an unstable system, a living system, which is in a state of continual decomposition, but which also continually reorganizes and rearranges itself, which expands and shrinks”<sup>7</sup>. The complex metastable process called city ceases to remain a concrete metaphysical object and emerges as a hyper system with multiple sub-systems (with other smaller systems embedded within them), that is in constant “communication” with the universe through the porosity of its own skin. When this idea of an elastic process usurps that of a static dead object, there is a shift in focus from the physical form to the dynamic eddies that generate the form; from symptom to cause. Our obsession with the ‘image’ of things and fetishized preservation of order begins to dissipate. The ‘process’ refuses to adhere to a fixed state of existence- it continually needs to participate in a fluid movement that alters and adjusts itself and its context. The city can be defined as a thriving and resilient historical process, whose internal structure is composed of numerous systems (and sub systems)-governed by a complex interactive intra-extra-network, and feeding off surrounding power gradients within a cosmos accelerating toward entropy.

Another aspect to consider is that the city is not experienced in its entirety through an omnipotent gaze but on a much smaller scale, open to multiple interpretations. Gadamer evokes the concept of horizons to elucidate the hermeneutic process<sup>8</sup>. Each horizon of understanding fuses into many others as ideas unfurl and vision shifts. Similarly, our city is assimilated as progressive frames of

<sup>7</sup> J. Brouwer and A. Mulder, *TransUrbanism* (Rotterdam: Nai Uitgevers Pub, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> J. C. Weinsheimer, *Gadamer’s Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1985).

spatial comprehension that is in turn influenced by the personal subjective.

Furthermore the city, which has remained a spatial construct throughout its positivist history, begins to encompass the temporality within which it is experienced. This argument does not deny that the city is made of spaces. On the other hand, it stresses that these spaces are stitched together temporally. The experience of the city is not that of a set of static images or objects but it is in fact, a moving through of the physicality of the urban fabric.

### 1.2 The nodal metro in a “global village”:

Traditional discourse on globalization treats it as a placeless materialization engaging our social world, where we are rapidly entangled in a decontextualized web of intangible forces. On one hand this theory holds merit as “global connectivity” and the influence it exerts on the biosphere is an uncontested reality of our lives. On the other hand, I propose that the effects of globalization manifest locally and cannot materialize without context. The following section comprises of the elucidation of this argument.

The word globalization conjures myriad images and ideas that can translate into many narratives of theory. In this thesis, the term is used to reference a phenomenon, engendered by technological advances in communication, transport and information systems, that integrates the world around

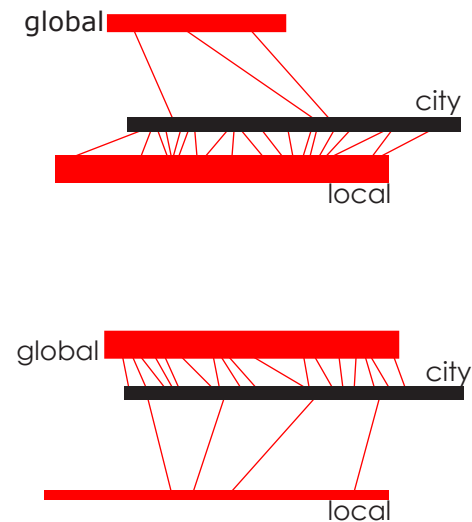


Fig 1.5: Traditional theory of globalization: From local to global

a common economic agenda<sup>9</sup>. Mahadevia argues that this process has implications that are both economic and cultural, which are exerted on all parts of human domain. Economic consequences include integration of production systems and financial markets, promotion of global trade and homogenization of market and goods; the effects manifest as cultural morphing, increased accessibility to information, global consensus on human agenda and an amplified flux of social movement. Transcultural corporations and capital generating banks function as invisible agents of control in a largely amorphous system of production and finance, have dislodged the power structure of the nation state and actively engage in shaping global policy.

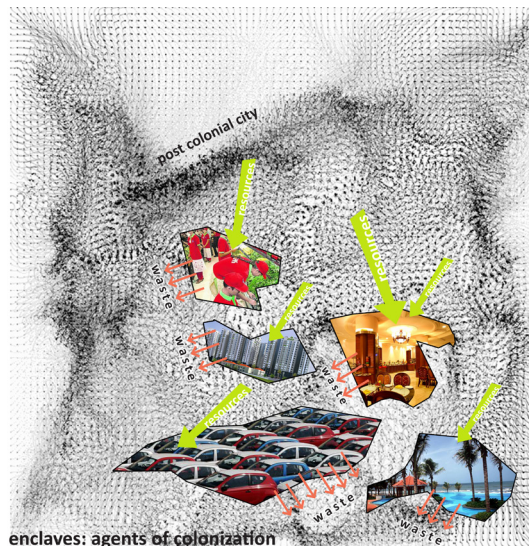


Fig 1.6: Enclaves in the Third World city

The global city emerges when global capital is invested within its geography and a global citizenry follows, creating enclaves of prosperity across the physical landscape. The city then progresses to posit itself in a global grid. The older center –periphery models give way to fluid dynamics of media, information, people, technology and finance<sup>10</sup>. A significant aspect is that only some cities are able to forge this global link, and hence a fierce battle ensues amongst global neighbors to secure these coveted investments. State and city resources are diverted to certain global pockets in the city that are projected and effectively marketed. Thus, the global layer heightens existing socio-economic disparities and creates exclusive whorls of prosperity positioned across urban gradients.

On a social level, globalization has precipitated a new breed of professionals- the transnational business class, who in turn have promulgated a cosmopolitan culture, entrenched in a consumer-

9 Mahadevia, *Globalisation, Urban Reforms & Metropolitan Response: India*

10 Appadurai, *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy*, 1.

ist tradition. The global class belong not only to a specific economic class but also a social strata marked by their connectivity and subscription to a global culture. Accordingly, popular discourse views globalization as a decontextualized phenomenon, an agent that severs a people from their city and the city from its localized geography. Global and local have been, hence, constructed as binaries and terms such as “glocal”<sup>11</sup> imply a construed dialectic between the two.

However, as per our understanding of the city as a complex system cocooned in and informed by its context this capacity of globalization to homogenize the world can be contested. The local cannot be seen as a passive object upon which active flows and forces mold a global space; instead it must be perceived as a “process and a project”<sup>12</sup>.

*“Geographic spaces are constructed over time, and flows do not only erode geography; rather, they may create it, reproduce it, transform it, or undermine it. This is true even for a period of very rapid transportation and communication. As a result, globalization is usefully understood as a definable network of relations among spatially located entities, allowing for some processes that tend toward multilocality or even truly global coverage.”* (Heyman and Campbell)

It is possible to see that placeless, digitized informational forces emerge and react with the physical landscape to manifest in a highly contextualized format. The city is then is a *complex of localities*<sup>13</sup> informing and informed by its environment, where global eddies are automatically hybridized

11 Roland Robertson

12 A. Appadurai and A. Mulder, “The Right to Participate in the Work of the Imagination,” in *Transurbanism*, eds. J. Brouwer, A. Mulder and L. Martz (Rotterdam: NAI publishers, 2002).

13 Ibid.

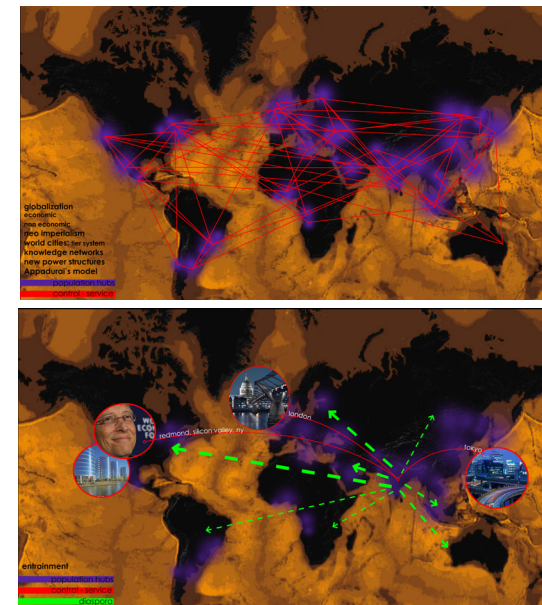
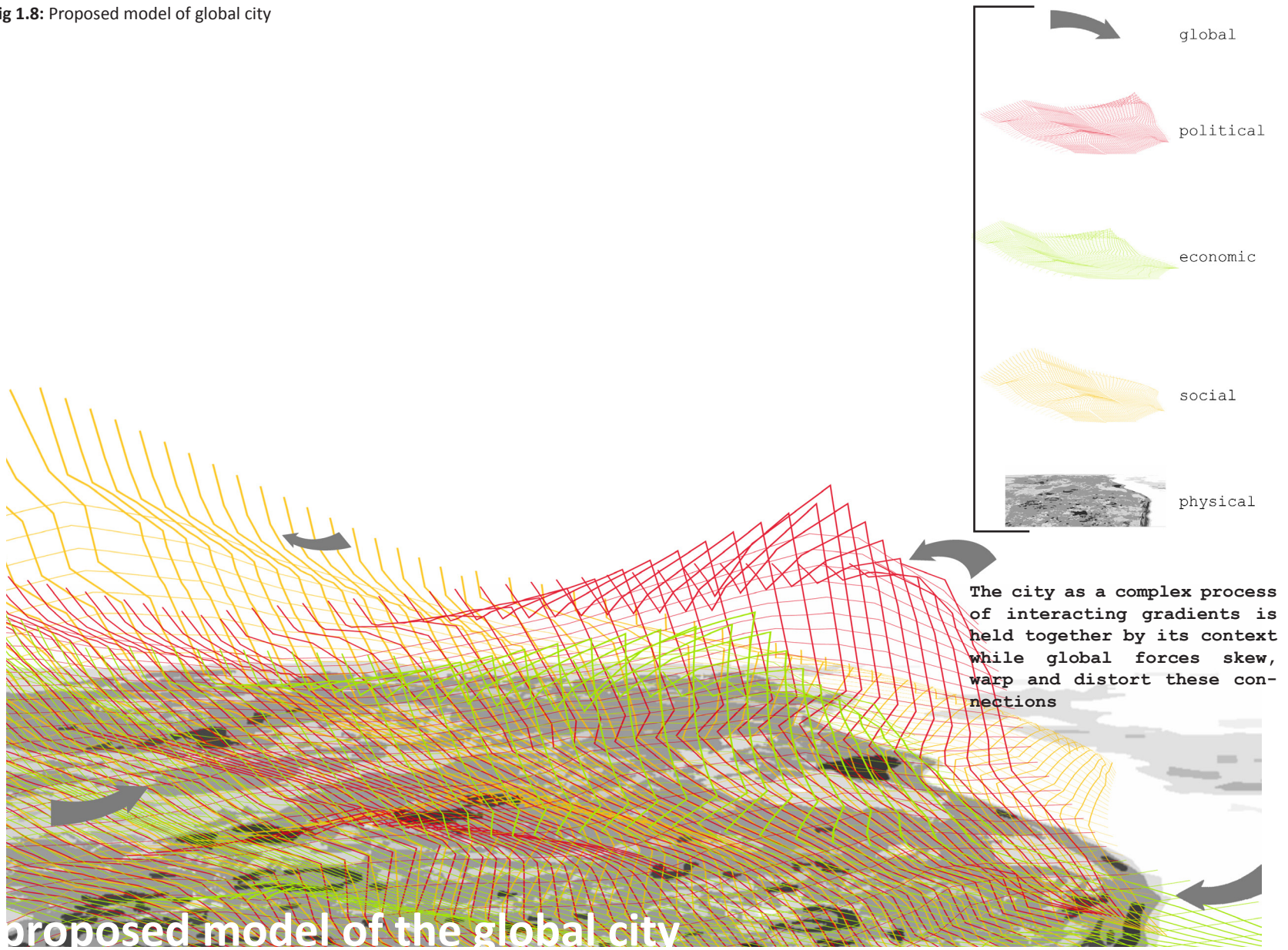


Fig 1.7: Global networks

Fig 1.8: Proposed model of global city



to generate paradigms unique to the site. The hegemonic drivers inevitably spawn multifarious outcomes.

### 1.3 The post-colonial Medusa:

The usage “post-colonial” ties third world discourse securely to its history of imperialist domination. Like all *post* terms it is backward-looking, firmly bound to a past that is safely tangible and fathomable<sup>14</sup>. The colonial project of control, through violent epistemological dominion, created a clear demarcation between ‘us’ and ‘other’ and qualifying both with opposing adjectives. Civilized vs. barbaric; good vs. bad; clean vs. unclean; scientific vs. superstitious. The dialectic arose to smoothen- or rather to bludgeon- these conflicting tendencies into a single metanarrative. This classification and system of unification was an attempt to legitimize colonial rule and they continue to exist in global imaginations, assisting neo-imperialism.

The world emerging from the western biblical-capitalistic traditions has stripped the *other* worlds not merely of resources but of validity of representation, and hence identity. To speak and be heard, the subaltern has to be educated to speak this *specific* syntax of accepted coherence and in doing so the subaltern is metamorphed to take a more acceptable form: a vicious circle that has shorn the colonized of their speech. The marginalized are not *under* represented but rather unable to represent.



Fig 1.9: Medusa- a metaphor for theory of the misrepresented

14 A. Mulder, “Transurbanism,” in *Transurbanism*, eds. J. Brouwer and A. Mulder.



Fig 1.10: Binaries:Orientalism

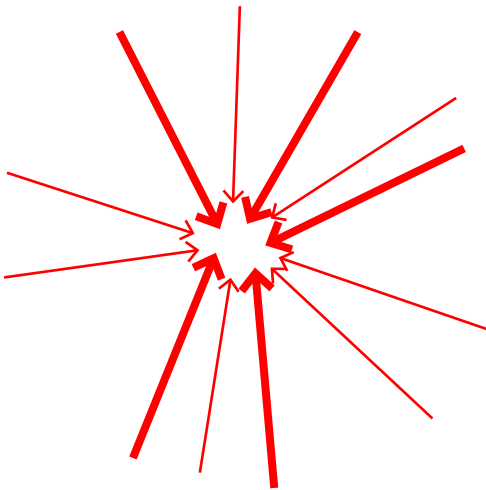


Fig 1.11: Fusion of multiplicity: melting pot culture

To break away from the violence of this positivist, reductionist gaze, I suggest the appropriation of Helene Cixous' articulation of the Medusa who "un-thinks the unifying, regulating history that homogenizes and channels forces, herding contradictions into a single battlefield." Oppositions, hierarchies and other enclosed boundaries have to be evaded and dissolved to create that impartial<sup>15</sup> platform, where the suppressed may be allowed negotiate their way into their cities. The laughing Medusa revels in the reality of third world hybridization, which effectively bypasses the smoothing tendencies of the dialectic and allows unresolved conflicts to flourish. Her serpents extend out linking her beyond the confines of her physicality, yet she remains rooted to her body as her expression is an emergence from within.

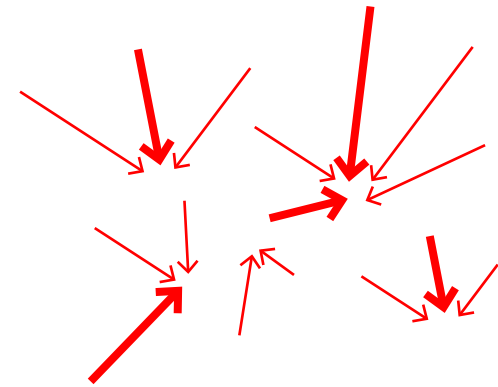
Numerous previous models of the city have failed because of their failure to account for the irreducibility of a city. It is true that fathomable representations enable easy cognition of larger than life phenomena. Nonetheless, oversimplified metaphors often reject the complexities and nuances that are in fact sub processes, which eventually tie back into the larger system of the metro. Medusa city is an attempt to perceive the urbanscape in an as is condition. Like Spivak's Strategic Essentialism<sup>16</sup> it allows for pertinent reductions while maintaining an acute awareness of fallibility and porosity of the city's re-presentation.

Utilizing this understanding of the post-colonial city, I recommend a design strategy that places

<sup>15</sup> H. Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Group, 1993), 51.

<sup>16</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. *In other worlds : essays in cultural politics*. New York: Routledge, 1988. /z-wcorg/. Web.

the proposed campus at a critical nexus between global networks, internal organization of the institution and process of the city. The site shall not serve as an isolated parcel of land but a continuum of the larger surrounding with flows that are both tangible and immaterial; and the built structure – an arena where conflicts thrive and resulting forces negotiate its terrain, creating a simultaneous realization of multiple possibilities. The design method shall encompass consideration of different scales and different narratives of usage, and shall aim to evolve a solution which allows process to entwine with product, creating a live and resilient system.



**Fig 1.12:** Flourishing of conflict: Medusa City

## CHAPTER 2

### Serpents of Medusa: Engaging multiple narratives



**Fig 2.1:** M K Stalin, the ex-mayor of Chennai in discussion about plans for Cooum river front

#### 2.1 Design: Knowing and making a more humane world

*“All doing is knowing, and all doing is knowing”* (Maturana and Varela, Tree of knowledge)

According to Maturana and Varela, the knowing of what we know is a difficult proposition for the Western mind as it remains enmeshed in a tradition of segregating knowing from doing. This compartmentalization of cognition and action has seeped into the postcolonial psyche in multifarious arenas. The Mega city of the third world embodies the effects of this construed dichotomy as planning and execution remain two separate procedures- the former is anchored to “objective” data and reduced, static representations of morphing urban phenomena and the latter- a detached implementation of distorted, imported ideals. Urban authorities persistently undertake development by means of the Master Plan, which culminates as a rigidly top down approach with little concern for the complexity and hybridized contextualization unique to the postcolonial mega city.

*“Urban Planning has come to be closely linked in India with unachievable plans, highly regulatory approach, consequently resulting in rent seeking by the State and hence a section of urban population, whom we would call ‘elite’ capable of subverting the Master Plan itself, ironically with the help of the State, capturing the*

*urban space. The cities develop through subversion of Urban Plans.” (Mahadevia and Joshi)*

Mahadevia continues to elucidate that the poor subvert the master plan through electoral politics and learn to endure hostile urban conditions. Urban Planning, by negligence and neutrality, does little to alleviate widespread poverty or socio-economic imbalances and thoroughly fails to acknowledge and engage with the tremendous potential of grass roots activity. The “Rational Plan” methodology, which has been redefined or replaced in Western societies, is still a reality in Third World cities, where the ill-effects of out dated methodologies such as slum clearance and beautification schemes leave deep scars on the physical and socio-economic landscape as illustrated in the example below.

The Cooum river- one of the three main water systems in Chennai City- has been severely polluted over the years with sewage, industrial waste and garbage. Large informal settlements, which house a considerable chunk of the city’s poorest populace, have accrued along the river bed. These illegal slums, comprised of primarily of temporary structures have little or no sanitary or health infrastructure, are flooded during the annual monsoons and are highly prone to epidemics and fires. The State, usually blind to these dark spots in the city, has finally addressed development of the Cooum waterfront in the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (henceforth CMDA) Master Plan 2026. Unfortunately, the project, which is part of a larger agenda to elevate Chennai to global standards, is little more than a beautification scheme. The river and its banks are to be



**Fig 2.2:** A newspaper article on the flooding of low income tenements



**Fig 2.3:** Beautification of the river front: Planning as a tool for profiteering

“cleansed” of sewage and slums, paving the way for a torrent of construction along the prime water-facing corridor.

Apart from the glaring lack of empathy for the city’s poorest, the State has no strategy to engage with and learn from the experience of living in a slum. How are the tenements organized? What facilities are crucial for this kind of community living? How are work-life spaces, permanent-ephemeral structures modeled and managed? There is a strong need to identify socio-economic and cultural phenomena and their spatial manifestations if we are to actively progress beyond the “vertical slums” and concrete boxes that are periodically churned out in the name of low income housing. Hermeneutic spatiality, largely ignored in contemporary Indian Planning and architecture, needs to be absorbed and comprehended to reestablish a more humane scale of perception and active engagement with the built environment.

The rigid top down model- fraught with deficiencies due to its narrow scope, undemocratic methodology and inflexible formulaic approach- needs to be revamped and revised in order to incorporate strategies of participatory design, bottom-up empowerment and public intervention. Returning to the idea of enmeshing the boundaries of cognition and action, it becomes imperative to radically redefine the tools of cartography and modes of Re-presenting the city- tools and modes that actively depict unorthodox data and processes unique to postcolonial urbanity.

Since the development of these new systems and tools of design is tied inextricably to the specific context and is unprecedented as it engages with global forces and local eddies simultaneously in a rapidly transforming urban space, there is a strong necessity for pedagogy to provide a platform for devising and experimentation of the same. This is a crucial opportunity for Postcolonial Academia, by adopting a critical and unfaltering stance, to leverage and assert itself as a nexus between an outdated practice, global demands, contextual complexity and hybridization.

## 2.2 Reinventing Education: Integrating the intellectual virtues.

Education has been subject to one form of politicization to another. Colonization, westernization, and globalization- they all speak of different forces that have surmounted third world knowledge systems to engage in a singular epistemological narrative. The “white man’s burden” sanctioned a colonial pursuit of educating the natives and disseminating “universal” knowledge through systematic apodictic machinery. The emphasis of modern education shifted markedly from the domain of subject oriented practicality to a realm of abstraction and generalization<sup>17</sup>, thereby discrediting vernacular models of knowing that failed to comply with the established stringent code.

17 D. W. Orr, “Education for Globalisation,” *Ecologist* 29, no. 3 (1999), 166-168.



Fig 2.4: Children walking to school

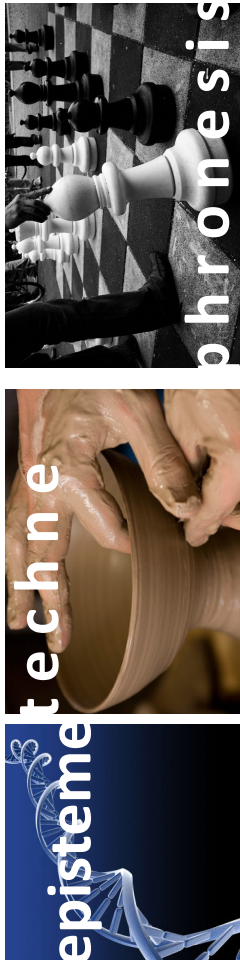


Fig 2.5: The intellectual virtues

By constructing *knowing* and *doing* as opposites<sup>18</sup>, this positivist approach underlying modern science and technology was able to displace pragmatic wisdom or Aristotelian *phronesis*<sup>19</sup>.

Aristotle prescribes three intellectual virtues: episteme (scientific knowledge), techné (craft) and phronesis (ethics). Phronesis- the oft neglected aspect- is context-dependent and provides a platform for deliberation with reference to praxis. This intellectual activity embodies itself in action, requires consideration, judgment, choice and above all, experience<sup>20</sup>. Hence, phronesis, in conjunction with concrete episteme and production oriented techné, facilitates a much needed site for unfolding and accommodating of practical and humane pedagogy.

Unfortunately, the modern education system works on the premise that episteme alone constitutes for valid and quantifiable knowledge and that with sufficient amounts of this legitimized knowledge all of humanity's and the earth's problems can be solved<sup>21</sup>. This attitude propagates frantic efforts to produce relevant information while scant attention is paid to what is inevitably lost from human consciousness. Furthermore, the various disciplines and sub-disciplines are hermetically sealed, cutting off other points of views and structuring themselves within confined

18 H. R. Maturana and F. J. Varela, *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding*. New Science Library/Shambhala Publications, 1987), 24.

19 B. Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and how it can Succeed again*Cambridge Univ Pr, 2001), 54.

20 Ibid., 57

21 Orr, *Education for Globalisation*, 166-168.

specialization and narrow horizons<sup>22</sup>. Finally, western episteme thoroughly displaces the human factor and scale from pertinent discussion as an omnipotent top down perspective is preferred. This aerial eye's view is not an accurate representative of the human cognition as the latter operates at a much smaller scale and any overall attempt at synthesis is not complete. Consequently, developed applications and solutions do not function as prescribed, aren't wholesome in their method or are poorly adapted to unique scenarios and rapidly changing settings.

Third world awareness is often a mangled one, catering to a global capitalism and producing a populace manufactured "almost exclusively for an urban existence, and dependence on fossil fuel and global trade"(Orr 166-168). In India, on one hand engineers, doctors and other professional degree holders are produced at a phenomenal rate to participate in global competition while, on the other hand there is a back lash (with lesser impact) of purist, traditional forms of knowledge such as Ayurveda (medicine), Vaastu Shastra (building science) among others. Yet these are sealed in glass boxes isolated from the "corruptions" of current transformations that are altering the ethos of the context.

Geetha Narayanan explains that Indian pedagogy is subject to a national "state of schizophrenia, split between its global and neoliberal identity on one hand and its historically constructed socialistic identity on the other" (Narayanan 373-375). While neo liberal groups call for privatization and commercialization of educational institutions to cater to the post-Fordist economy, the

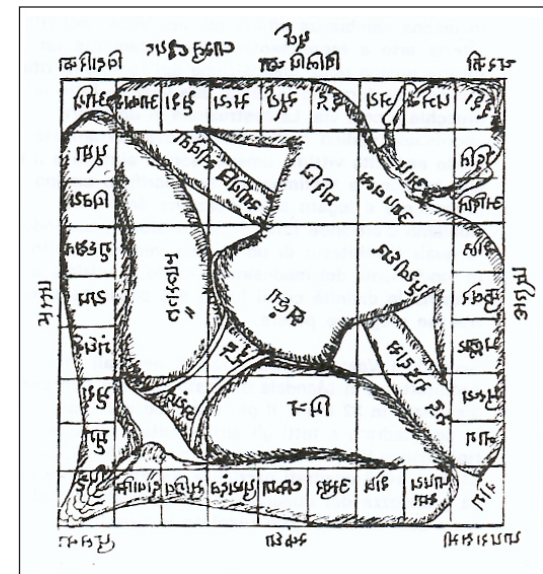


Fig 2.6: The traditional grid prescribed by the ancient science of building: The Vaastu Mandala

22 Ibid.

NGO-driven socialist set works for empowering marginalized sections along the lines of thinkers like Ambedkar, Gandhi<sup>23</sup>. Unfortunately the former is vested with more power and the latter is confined only to issues of equitable access to infrastructure and educational resources. The Arts have been largely marginalized due to their meager value in global markets and the local community's estrangement with it at a grass roots level. Furthermore, at this critical time "*when multidisciplinary goodwill is at an all-time low, technology is no longer new and markets are volatile and unstable*"<sup>24</sup>, it becomes essential to think of a non-positivist, non-conformist pedagogical stance that does not subscribe to purist notions of a romantic past. The design pedagogy has to reinvent itself by dismantling the potent metaphysical binary of knowledge and action and by incorporating a value driven comprehension of phronesis. Then it will be possible to unravel a relevant approach, which acknowledges that content and method constantly interact and inform each other; *how* we know, becomes as important as *what* we know. Cognition is embedded within action. With dissolution of such a pre-constructed dialectical formula, the arena opens out to the incorporation of an embodied know how, political awareness and value based comprehension into the exclusive format of traditional knowledge.

### **2.3 Muslim minority in global networks:**

Hasegawa defines minorities as "a group of people who are in a disadvantaged position compared

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23 G. Narayanan, "Crafting Change: Envisioning New-Media Arts as Critical Pedagogy," *Leonardo* 39, no. 4 (2006), 373-375.

24 Ibid.

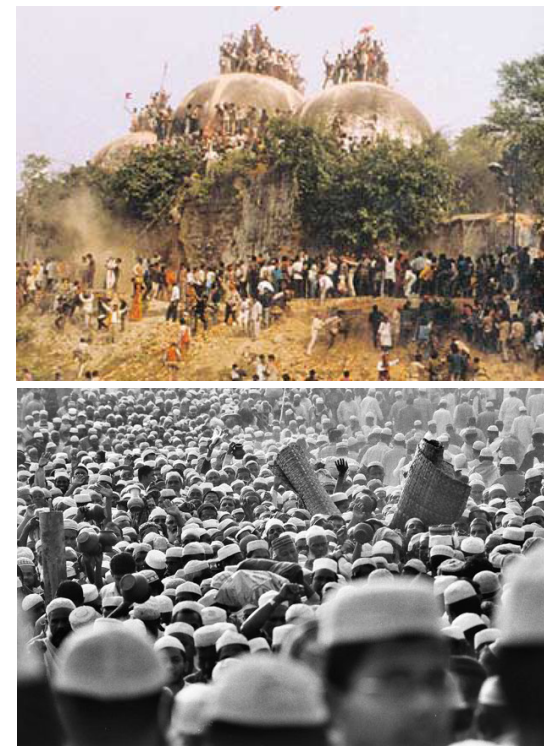
to the dominant group in terms of social legal status, education, employment, income and political power”<sup>25</sup>. According to the Sachar Committee Report<sup>26</sup>, the Indian Muslim community is lagging behind in terms of literacy rate, representation in the professional and managerial cadre, government employment, access to viable credit. A large proportion of urban Muslim households fall under the low income group and a substantial fraction is self-employed due to limited access to formal employment opportunities. These low skilled-workers and minor entrepreneurs lack social security nets that are available to other segments.

In such a climate of disengagement from and antipathy towards the government the role of pan Islamic movements such as Tablighi Jamaat, Jamaat-e-Islami, Wahabist Jamaat and the Ahmadiyya Jamaat, which had taken root in India in the 1930s, increasingly sought to bring together this dispersed society. These revivalist social organizations promoted a unified Islamic brotherhood and an exclusive religious community in direct response to the growth of Hindu fundamentalism in the subcontinent<sup>27</sup>. Though there have been different reactions to these Islamic movements within the Muslim community, these responses were ideology based rather than linguistically or region driven. Thus, it seems the boundaries of the Muslim linguistic groups in Tamil Nadu have weakened yet many ideology based fragments within the community have emerged. These beliefs

25 K. Hasegawa and N. Yoshihara, “Globalization, Minorities and Civil Society,” in *Globalization, Minorities and Civil Society: Perspectives from Asian and Western Cities*, Vol. 8 (Trans Pacific Pr, 2008), 12.

26 The Rajinder Sachar Committee, appointed by the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, was a high level committee for preparation of a report on the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community of India. The report was published in 2006.

27 S. M. A. K. Fakhri, *Dravidian Sahibs and Brahmin Maulanas: The Politics of the Muslims of Tamil Nadu, 1930-1967* (Manohar Publishers, 2008), 137.



top Fig 2.7: The destruction of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya by Hindu fundamentalists

above Fig 2.8: At a Tablighi Ijtema or gathering



top Fig 2.9: Burning Gujarat

above Fig 2.10: A demonstration for minority rights

tied to global Islamic networks appear to contribute to a “segmentalization of society”<sup>28</sup> under a premise of international solidarity. Furthermore, the politicization of knowledge, a globalized contemporary culture and the atheistic premise of scientific episteme has positioned the ‘global’ Islamic community on the defensive, which in turn fans the embers of Pan Islam.

The worldwide scrutiny of universal Islam that followed 9/11 attacks have further added to the self-consciousness of this minority group as it brought to the forefront arguments like those of Samuel Huntington in his book “The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order”. Huntington in 1996 had argued that nations will continue to play a large part in shaping world affairs and that their strategies will be greatly informed by their cultural allegiances<sup>29</sup>. He identified “Islamic civilization” and its confrontation across physical fault lines as a looming issue in coming decades. Conversely, critics have elaborated the multiplicities within and overlapping tendencies of each “civilization”. In addition, the roles of global economics, the fuel crisis, localized poverty, internal power struggles (like those between Shias and Sunnis in Iran) and after effects of a colonial legacy create a complex weave of factors that contribute to world politics.

These trends have posited the Muslim minority in Tamil Nadu at a precarious edge. Conflicting images of a unified Islamic front and the reality of a fractured ideology based community collide and spew a barrage of uncertainties. The threat of Hindu revivalist movements, the genocide in Guja-  
28 Hasegawa and Yoshihara, *Globalization, Minorities and Civil Society*, 10.

29 S. J. Frantzman, “The Borders of Islam: Exploring Samuel Huntington’s Faultlines, from Al-Andalus to the Virtual Ummah—Edited by Stig Jarle Hansen, Atle Mesoy, and Tuncay Kardas,” *Digest of Middle East Studies* 20, no. 1 (2011), 84-87.

rat, “ethnic cleansing”<sup>30</sup> in Mumbai engender disturbing memories that haunt the politics of this group. Evidently the question of the Muslim minority is a pressing one. There is an urgent need for this community to situate themselves as national and regional citizens as well as leverage their international capital to secure a better situation. An assertion of local identity is paramount for this group to claim what can be termed as their “constitutional rights” and apportioned resources, and to further their empowerment in their immediate context.

Investment in education is a key initiative that can springboard this community into mainstream professions, ensure better access to infrastructure and generate healthy representation in the larger society. The constitution of India empowers the minority communities to start, own and manage educational institutions, henceforth known as minority institutions, to safeguard their interests amidst the majority rule of democracy. Marginalized sections may promote their linguistic and cultural inclination and furthermore, can reserve portion of their admittance for students of their community. These institutions do not have to comply with the national norm of reservation for other communities<sup>31</sup>.

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30 Appadurai, *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy*, 1.

31 T. M. Siddiqui, “Status of Govt. Funded Minority Educational Institutions in India,” [http://twocircles.net/2009nov22/status\\_govt\\_funded\\_minority\\_educational\\_institutions\\_india.html](http://twocircles.net/2009nov22/status_govt_funded_minority_educational_institutions_india.html) (accessed 19 May, 2011).



**Fig 2.11:** The veil: A global image

## 2.4 Islam: A reading of social fluences

The worldwide of view of Islam remains securely tied to a set of clichéd set of imagery such as the veil, calligraphy and architectural elements like arches, perforated screens and domes. Going beyond these fixed visual gestalts that depict a narrow realm associated with the religion becomes a crucial step in order to evolve a progressive understanding of the same.

Islam is the youngest of the three largest, monotheist religions which trace their tradition back to a common ancestor, Abraham. The religion essentially signifies the peaceful submission to the divine or *Allah*, which translates to God in Arabic. Islamic ideology supposes that all human beings in their basic ontology, regardless of their relative status in worldly terms, are born to serve God. Islam tries to delineate and maintain the two different realms of existence – the human or temporal realm and the divine or timeless realm- though both of these are always seen in close interaction. The connection of this dual existence operates in practical terms through the five tenets -Faith, Prayer, Fasting, Charity and Pilgrimage.

The most crucial idea of the religion is embodied in the first *Kalimah* or attestation of faith- ‘There is no God but God’. Hence, the highly abstract definition of a formless divine presence-of which any visual or physical representation is vehemently prohibited- forms the base of Islamic theology. Fetishization of objects and mausoleum-ization are effected blasphemous in orthodox Islamic tradition. In fact the belief system sits on a precarious edge balancing between the unchanging,

stout proclamation of one God and the active acquiescence to any form of outward change. All of Islamic ideology is wound around this central tautness between stasis and change- the former paradoxically concerned with the most ephemeral concepts and rhythms of ritual while the latter associated any tangible physicality.

As matter of fact, this crucial concept of monotheistic omnipresence and willful submission to the same is at the root of the conflict between Islamic knowledge and science. I suggest that this “battle of civilizations” is primarily one of epistemological origins. Tracing the history of Muslim societies and their relation with scientific inquiry, it becomes evident that the former had excelled in technological fronts until science came to be insistently secularized and narrowly defined solely in terms of episteme. Religion and science were construed as binaries, with neatly segregated world-views and realms of comprehension. This has thoroughly displaced theological knowing from mainstream epistemology due to the former’s inclination to the subjective and acknowledgment of dynamic universe beyond absolute human control. In order to assert their presence in this arena, the Islamic community needs to look past the purview of strictly religious knowledge and translate basic theological concepts into a receptacle that draws in larger body knowledge. The confines of scientific episteme need to be expanded to include a comprehension of the complexity and changeability of the numerous phenomena that comprise the universe. The focus must shift from fixed gestalt to mutable process; and the goal of any intervention should move away from establishing total control to a manipulation of these processes to foster well-being.



**Fig 2.12:** Contemporary Islamic form: A visual study

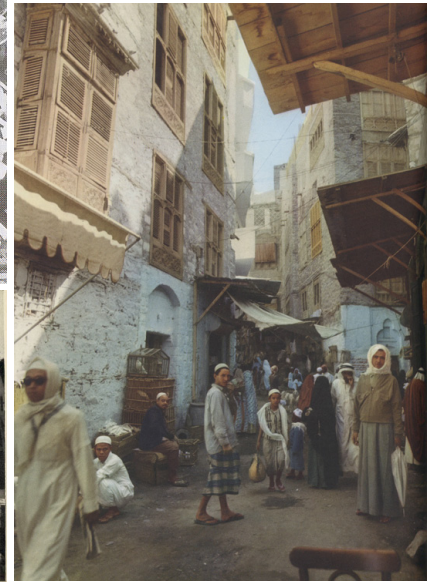
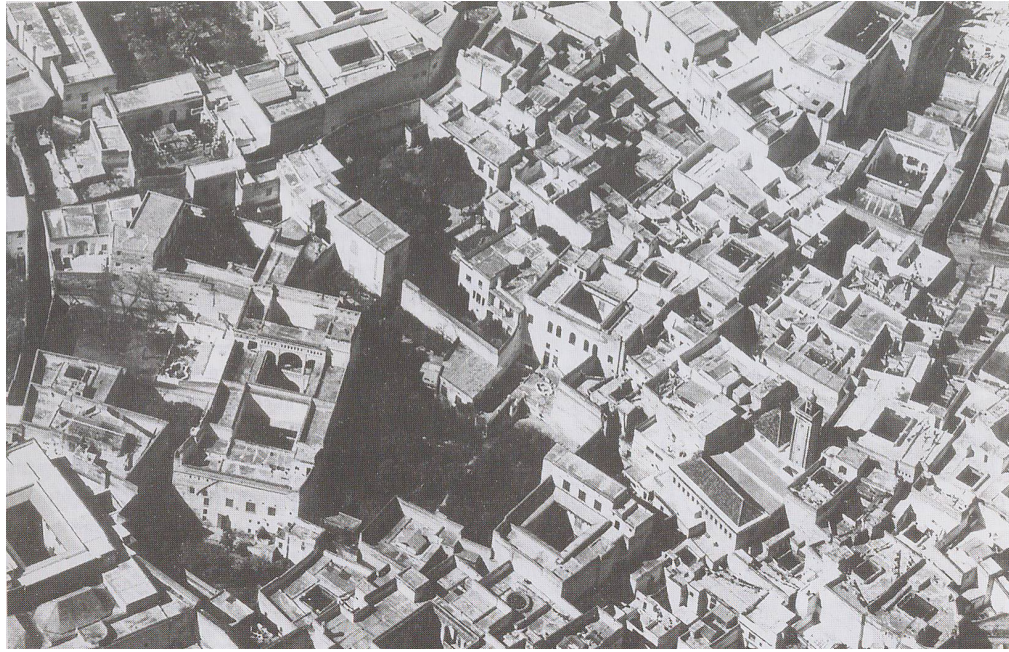
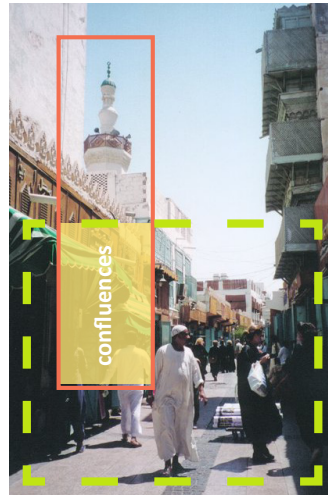
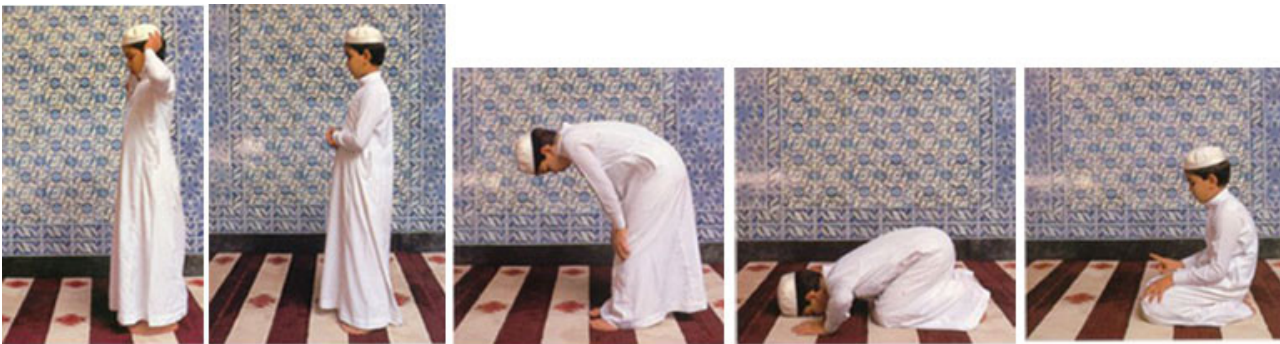


Fig 2.13: City-mosque relation: forms and fluxes



Returning to the basic tenets of Islam, Faith is established as temporal constant while the other four namely, prayer, fasting, charity and pilgrimage are folded into daily or yearly cycles. Prayer, as discussed in detail below, follows sun positions while the rest are organized around the lunar calendar, which unlike the solar year, promises a greater degree of resilience. The Islamic months do not synchronize with the seasons as the year, comprised of 354 to 355 days, has an annual drift of 11 to 12 days and the seasonal relation repeats every 33 Islamic years<sup>32</sup>.



**Fig 2.14:** The Islamic prayer

*“The physical act of prayer itself, with its prescribed bodily movements and its orientation to Mecca, has distinct spatial implications.”* (Bianca)

*Salah* or the daily prayer, as one of the five pillars of Islam signifies submission to the will of God and a seeking of his guidance through the postures and accompanying recitation of Quranic verses. The Islamic prayer, which is preceded by ritual ablutions, is seen as an act that can be carried

<sup>32</sup> Islamic calendar, 28 Nov 2011 2011, 8 Dec 2011 2011 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic\\_calendar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_calendar)>.



Fig 2.15: A reading of Islamic ideology and design consideration for the Mosque



top Fig 2.16: Anywhere is a mosque  
 above Fig 2.17: Discursive traditions

out in any place though collective prayer is sometimes recommended. In the case of collective prayer in a mosque, the gathering follows the recitation of the *Imam*<sup>33</sup> and follows his queue to assume the various postures, which thereby results in a uniform and synchronized series of movements. There are five obligatory prayers that are offered daily - before dawn, afternoon, late afternoon, after dusk and late evening. On Friday afternoon, the immediate community gathers at the *Jummah* congregation which incorporates a sermon by the *Imam* and then prayer. The *Jummah* is necessarily a form of collective worship and is obligatory for all male members of the community; the women, however, have the choice to offer it individually, apart from the congregation. The two Islamic festivals Eid –Al Adha and Eid-Al Fitr are marked by gathering of the entire community in common venue for special prayers that are recommended though not compulsory.

As noted by Bianca, the spatial element of prayer- its orientation toward Makkah- establishes the strong universal bond of Islamic brotherhood that ties this global community to one point of focus. This aspect is often construed as a strategic “pulling away” of Muslims from their immediate setting toward smoothening tendencies of universal pan-Islam. In addition, the nomadic quality of the mosque, which “is not seen as a sacred space per se but simply as a polyvalent assembly space which can be enhanced for the religious purposes by the virtue of the *qibla*<sup>34</sup> orientation and the ritual act of prayer”<sup>35</sup>, contributes to this perception of a Muslims as a detached community. How-

33 Imam refers to one who leads prayer. Islam does not allow for priesthood in the Western sense as someone who can intercede or mediate between another and God.

34 The Arabic term signifying orientation toward Makkah

35 Stefano Bianca. *Urban form in the Arab World: past and present*. New York & London: Thames and Hudson, 2000. Print.

ever the temporality of the prayer corresponding to quotidian sun positions binds the ceremony firmly to the geographic place, thereby enhancing definitive belonging to specific spatiality and temporality.

Another key element of Islamic convention is its affiliation to script. Barbara Metcalf argues that traditional Islam identified itself not through visual or architectural stereotypes but by “ritual and sanctioned practice” and that Muslim space is one that is appropriated and adapted to suit the needs of such a religious practice. More than architectural elements, a key element in most Muslim spaces is the presence of Arabic script and the idea of adhering ritual and life to Quranic verse. *“Muslims are Muslims precisely in the sense that they are people who, across time and place, engage with what Talal Asad calls a “discursive tradition” created by interaction with sacred texts and with a history of that tradition.”*<sup>36</sup>

Unlike the compartmentalization adhered to in Western societies, the sacred and profane are not articulated as dichotomies in traditional Islamic society. Instead the boundaries of public and private spheres are sharply delineated with paramount importance given to privacy of the residential unit. The mosque-usually not structured as an isolated, formal spatial entity- is “fully integrated

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36 Barbara Metcalf, ed. *Making Muslim space in North America and Europe*. Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996. Print.

into the social life and the architectural fabric of town and fulfills comprehensive civic functions”<sup>37</sup>. The public space lacks rigid hierarchy and fosters an active cross-pollination between various social, economic, political and religious activity. The “sacred” space -only marked by the demand for a higher degree of cleanliness- is embraced by the *souk* or market, political nodes and gathering spots for the community. These elements are knit together informally, creating a larger complex of social fluences or network of fluid zones. The mosque often serves multiple functions, which are inserted into the residual time slots between prayer times, and is a prime site for a confluence of people, ideas and phenomena. This convergence reflects back into society, thereby influencing multiple facets of everyday life in substantial and intangible fronts. The sacred realm quietly seeps

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37 Bianca.

into the social fabric and seamlessly entwines with and informs the larger urbanity.

## CHAPTER 3

### Comprehending the collage: A reading of urban context

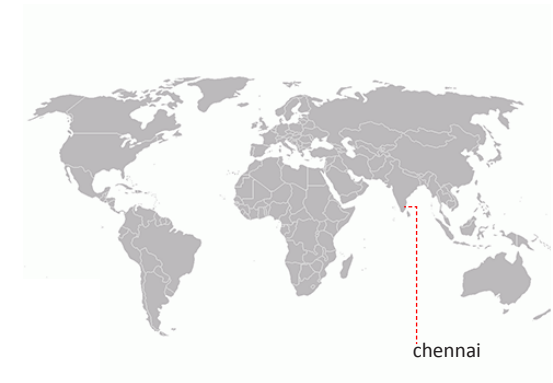
#### 3.1 Chennai and Madras: the story of two names

Chennai, or Madras as it was officially known until 1996, was one of the four post-independence metros and the capital of the southernmost state of India. Nehru<sup>38</sup> identified in this city a cosmopolitan population and culture, which like Bombay's, could not just belong to a single state, but due to political and administrative pressures conceded its inclusion in what was previously Madras State<sup>39</sup>. Owing to its large conservative middle class base, it has been known as the *sleepy* metro until a decade ago. However, today it is the largest automobile manufacturing city in India, the capital of the country's third most industrialized state and has woken up to the IT revolution and rapid globalization. To better understand the complex phenomena sweeping across the urban-scape and multifarious outcomes it generates on reacting with the context, a historical purview is essential.

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38 Jawaharlal Nehru was India's first Prime Minister and the visionary of a modern, industrial and urban India.

39 Ā. I. Vēṅkaṭācalapati and R. Aravindan, *Chennai Not Madras: Perspectives on the City*, Vol. 54 (Marg Publications, 2006).



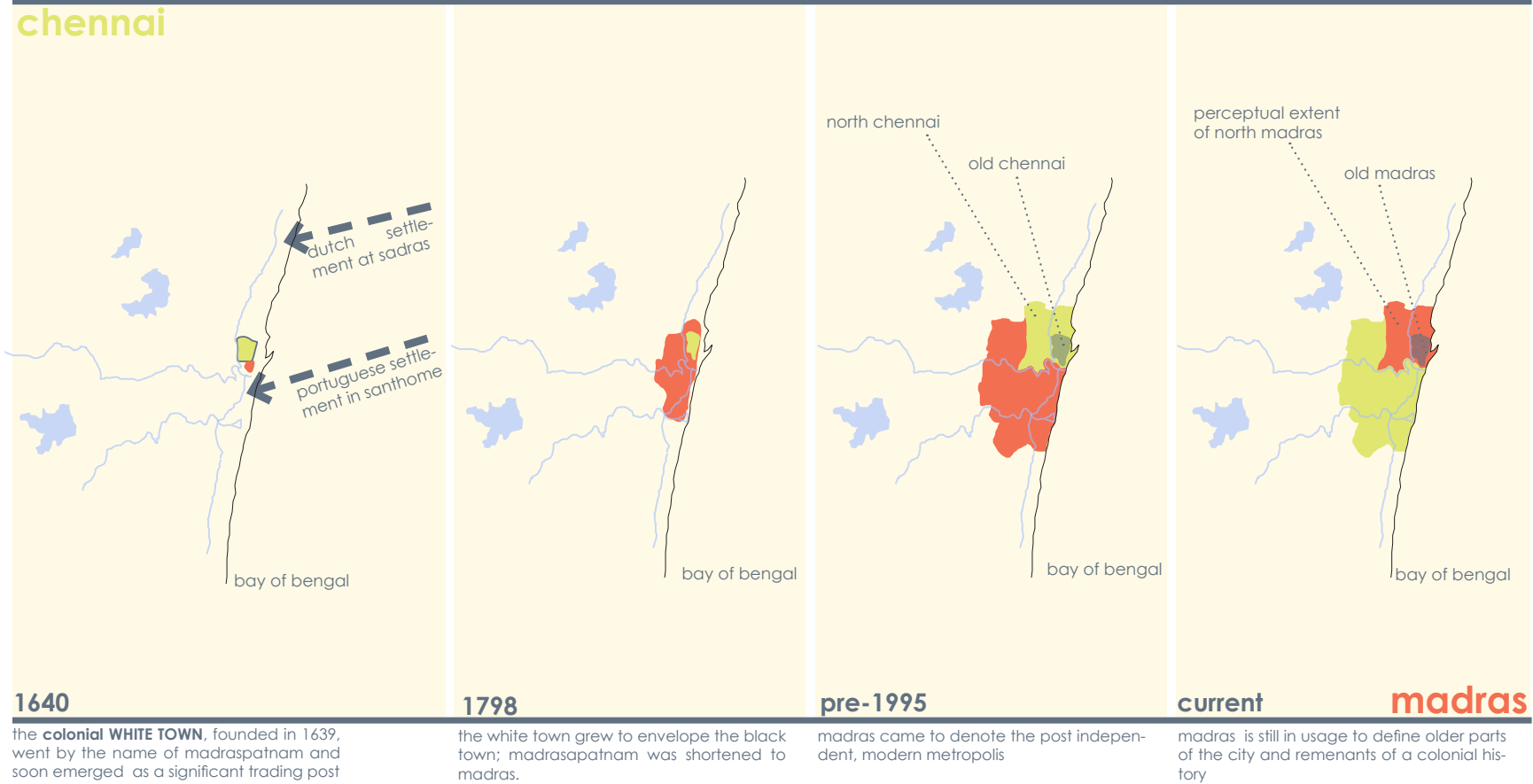
above Fig 3.1: Locating Chennai

the **BLACK TOWN** or chennapatnam was the native settlement, that came into being along with the white town.

chennapatnam- better known as chennai- remained the native settlement

chennai became a regional, colloqial representation and old chennai was a residue of the past

the city renamed as chennai- projected as an "uncorrupt", dravidian nomenclature- is packaged and marketed as a global city



**Fig 3.2: Two names of the city**

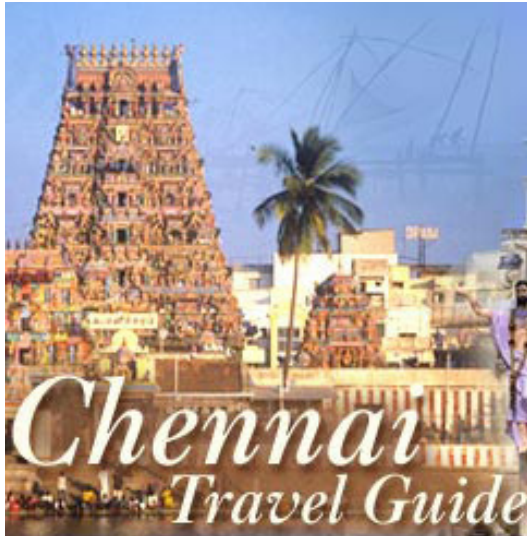
The city of Chennai was founded in 1639, when Francis Day and Andrew Cogan of the East India Company were granted a strip of land by local governors, representing the Raja of Chandagiri, to develop into a “factory”. Although records indicate the presence of fishing villages, temple hamlets and a Portuguese settlement in Santhome, the impetus for the transformation of this barren land to a swelling metro is credited to the British “invasion” of the territory. The colonial White town was fashioned as a segregated enclave south of the existing indigenous Black town. The former was known as Madrasapatnam shortened to Madras; the latter went by the name of Chennapatnam.

As trade flourished, the Company’s influence extended and Madras grew to envelop the native Chennapatnam. In 1684 the Madras Presidency was established and comprised of what is now categorized as South India. Madras, the winter capital of the presidency, served as a colonial stronghold and port city throughout the reign. This city- older than Calcutta- was central to the company’s operations till the latter was declared the capital of British India.

The settlement in Madras continued to sprawl ambiguously; hence, in 1798 the outer limits of the city were arbitrarily defined, encompassing key town centers, suburban villages and agrarian settlements<sup>40</sup>. After independence, the Presidency was divided into the four states of South India based on linguistic boundaries and the city of Madras was contested between Andhra Pradesh and the then Madras state. Owing to the Tamil speaking majority, Madras was finally conceded to the

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<sup>40</sup> P. Arabindoo, “Geography of a Lingua Franca, History of a Linguistic Fracas,” *Marg* 57, no. 4 (2006), 19-38.



**Fig 3.3: Dravidian inconsistency: Atheist appropriation of religious artifacts.**

latter, which was soon renamed as Tamil Nadu<sup>41</sup>.

The Dravidian movement sweeping through the state engendered a cultural and linguistic revivalism, which in turn brought to light multiple narratives apart from the colonial and national discourse. This trend manifested itself in the revivalist architecture, numerous monuments to regional personas and finally the official change in name from Madras to Chennai in 1996. The state government insisted that 'Madras' was a relic of a sullied past and Chennai "was to be endorsed as the authentic identity of a globalizing present"<sup>42</sup>. Arabindoo argues that the renaming of the city in a native tongue was a strategic move that transported the city from national territory into bounds of the region. Additionally, it delineates a repackaging and rebranding of what was once seen as a colonial construct to embrace a distinct post-colonial identity – an identity loudly projected and amplified in the global arena.

This renaming and marketing was accompanied by well publicized slogans of *Singara Chennai* or Beautiful Chennai, beautification schemes and city cleansing. These sanitizing efforts have been restricted to certain parts of the city that were promoted to the global audience, while the older colonial pockets are repeatedly neglected. The city, hence, can be seen as a divided place with the

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41 Madras Mannade

42 Ibid.

old and decaying colonial Madras (as it is still known informally) in the north and the reimagined, post-colonial Chennai in the south.

### 3.2 Two threads of local politics

**Dravidianism in Chennai:** The politics of Chennai has a strong regionalist and linguistic flavor due to its cultural conditioning and certain pre-independence political developments. In 1920 a diarchy was created in the Presidency, where democratically elected candidates along with the appointed governor would participate in the governance. A significant development was the formation of Justice Party in 1916. The party championed the cause of the non-Brah-

**Muslim narrative of political history:** The earliest recorded interactions with the Islamic world occurred around 700-800 AD, when Arab traders frequented the southern shores of the sub-continent. By 1500s, history indicates that a full-fledged Muslim community was based in certain coastal provinces of Tamil Nadu. The community, which comprised of descendants of Arab seafarers and local converts<sup>1</sup>, developed a distinct culture, language and literature, which can be uniquely described as Tamil-Islamic. The emergence of Arabi-Tamil (spoken Tamil written in Arabic script), the emergence of Tamil prose and poetry on Islamic themes, cultural manifestations like marriage ceremonies and festivals spoke of an inherent hybridization of Islam.

<sup>1</sup> Sufi saints preached Islam and converted locals into “half-hindus”, suggesting that the converts though adopting the new religion did not give up their language, dress and other localized traditions. (More, 1997)

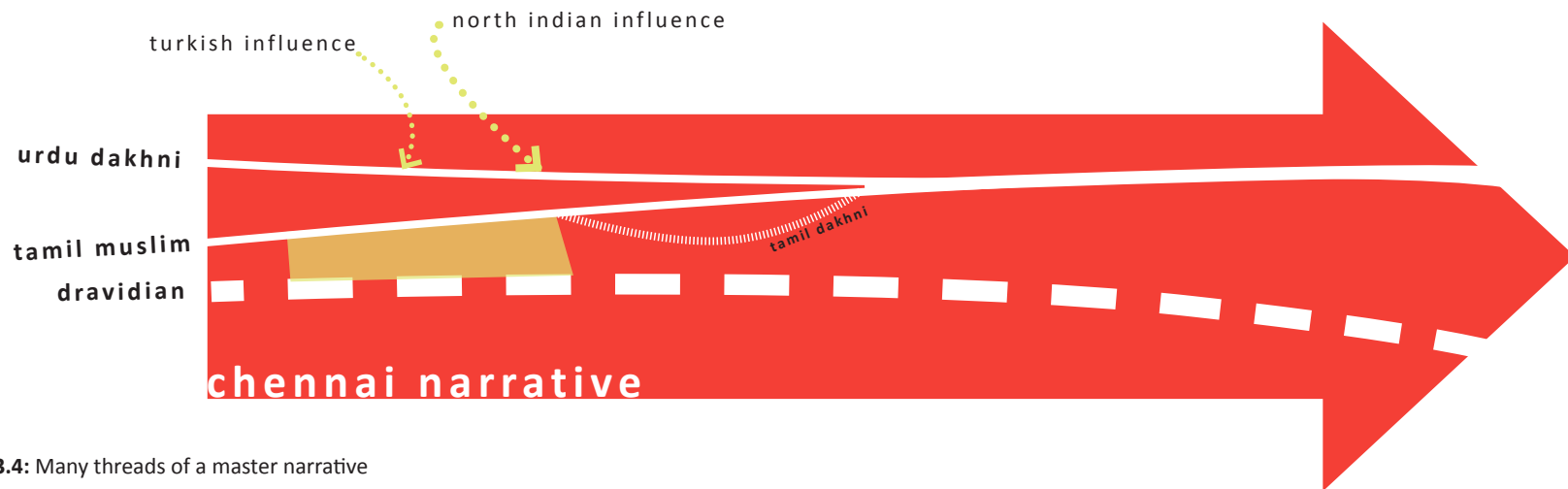


Fig 3.4: Many threads of a master narrative

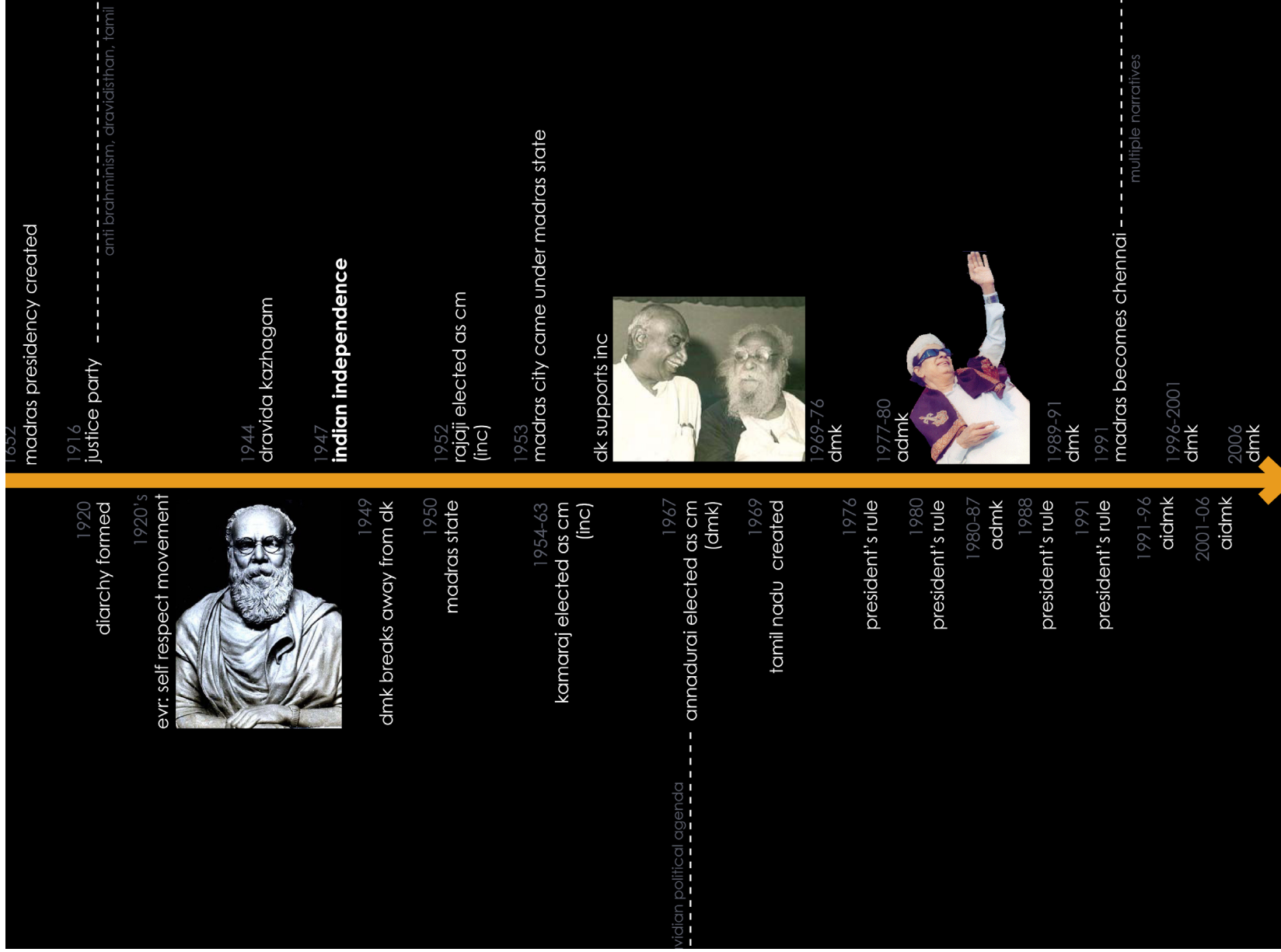


Fig 3.5: A Dravidian timeline

min<sup>43</sup>, pushed for their representation in state administration and in the period of the diarchy (1920-36) had more influence in South India than did the nationalist and Swarajya Parties.<sup>44</sup> The Justice party – loyalists to the British- took a restrained stance, which differed from the aggressive approaches of the Dravidian parties that evolved soon after.

*“This liberal moderation (of the Justice party) was a product of the “English” education and associations of the party’s middle- class leaders and followers, as well as a product of the greater cosmopolitanism and involvement in the British-derived constitutional outlook which resulted from them.”* (Rudolph, 1961)

E V Ramaswamy Naicker (better known as Periyar) broke away to launch the Self-Respect movement and later the Dravida Kazhagam (DK). Naicker formulated a Dravidian narrative of populist radicalism, condemning the hegemony of the Brahmanical class, the superstition ridden Aryan hierarchical society and the Con-

43 J P More defines Brahminism as a domination of the crucial power structures by the priestly class which constitutes of about 2% of the population.

44 L. I. Rudolph, “Urban Life and Populist Radicalism: Dravidian Politics in Madras,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 20, no. 3 (1961), 283-297.

lamic and Dravidian content. The *Allah Pandigai*<sup>2</sup> or God’s festival is one such practice, where the Islamic festival of Eid has been appropriated by locals-both Hindus and Muslims- to take new forms.

The Nawayats<sup>3</sup> of Arcot were succeeded by Nawabs from the Deccan plateau in 1742. The Deccani Nawabs- who were governors of the Mughal regime- created an enclave of autonomy and brought with them a significantly different Islamic culture and linguistic tradition of Arabic, Persian and Urdu. Furthermore, they struck an alliance with the colonial rulers and shifted base to Madras in an attempt to ensure their independence and authority. However, they were dealt with a blow when the British first abolished Persian in 1830 and then the Nawabship in 1855. The rulers were left with an honorary title, an allowance and minimal power.

By this time, the Muslim community comprised broadly of three linguistic groups: the Tamil speaking majority, Dakhni Urdu Muslims and Tamil Dakhni Muslims<sup>4</sup>. The Tamil speaking Muslims were mostly involved with

2 The phrase is symbolic of the occurring hybridization as *Allah* is the Arabic word for god and *Pandigai* is a Tamil word meaning festival.

3 The Nawayats were minor rulers with direct Arab lineage and were based in Arcot, north of modern day Chennai.

4 S. M. A. K. Fakhri, *Dravidian Sahibs and Brahmin Maulanas: The Politics of the Muslims of Tamil Nadu, 1930-1967* (Manohar Publishers, 2008).

gress agenda of furthering Hindi in what was “Tamil” country<sup>45</sup>. The Dravidian discourse envisioned a society where history, language and the role of women manifested differently from that in Congress ideology<sup>46</sup>.

*“Dravidian populist radicalism conjures up a demonology of those threatening its interests, a demonology reminiscent of American populism. If the American populists saw the Eastern corporate financial and industrial interests identified with Wall Street, the Jews, and the British, as demons conspiring to crush them, in Tamilnad the demons are Northern interests, in the form of the Congress Government in Delhi, Brahmans, and Marwari businessmen. Dravidian populism emulates Enlightenment “rationalism” in following its leveling democratic impulses.”*(Rudolph, 1961)

Congress began to lose favor in the south in the 1940s as it pushed for the introduction of Hindustani in primary education, used iconic Hindu (read as Aryan) imagery and continued to pursue a narrative that was predominantly North Indian and Hindu to represent the entirety of the nation. In such a climate of anti-nationalist sentiment, the DK demanded for the formation of Dravida Nadu or *Dravidistan* (as opposed to Hindustan<sup>47</sup>), comprising of what are now the four

states of South India. However, this did not materialize as the non-Tamil majority  
45 Tamil Nadu literally means Tamil country. Madras State changed into Tamil Nadu in response to the popular demand for Tamil representation and the creation of a separate nation state.

46 (Srivathsan, 2006)

47 India

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mercantile activities and remained in the trading and commercial centers of the south. The Dakhni Muslims, who had migrated from North India, Persia and Arabia, were concentrated in the northern parts of the Presidency and constituted an *“influential political elite from the 1500s to the 1700s”*<sup>5</sup>. The Tamil Dakhni Muslims were a group of Tamil speakers, who had migrated from southern districts to the Arcot and Vellore regions in the early twentieth century and had adopted Urdu in their new home. The first two groups had different cultural, linguistic backgrounds and yet were tied together by the principles of Islamic brotherhood.

*“Tamil and Dakhni Muslim groups did not encourage intermarriage, and differed in their kinship patterns and their respective social structure. However, both shared common ritual spaces and a Sufi tradition.”*(Fakhri, 2008)

Though some scholars<sup>6</sup> view the Muslim political scene as

5 Ibid.

6 Kenneth McPherson argues that the cultural divide among the Muslim groups was the chief characteristic of their politics in Tamil Nadu. Ibid.

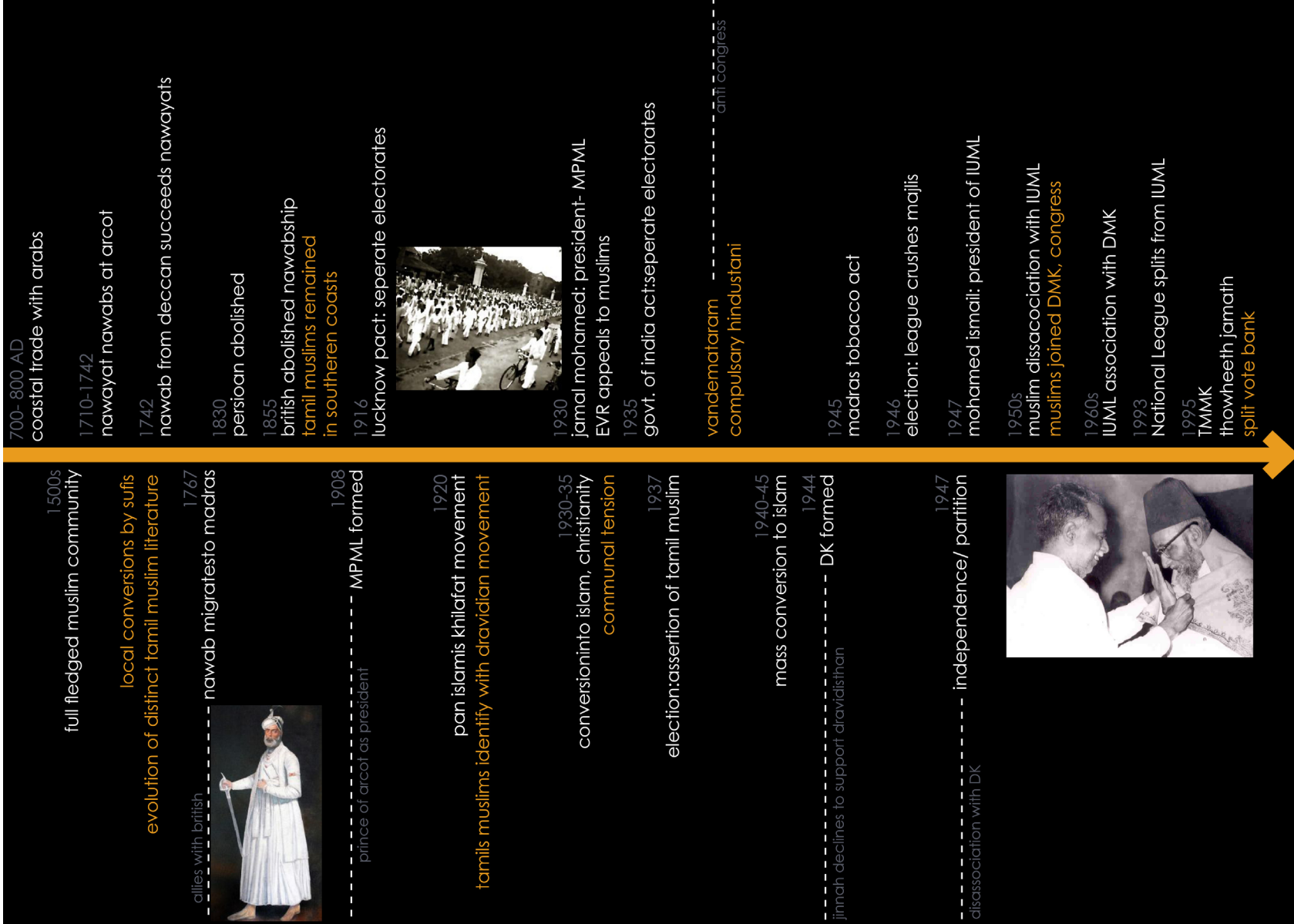


Fig 3.6: Regional Muslims: A timeline

regions opted for linguistically divided states to better suit their aspirations.

In 1947 the colonial powers relinquished control over the subcontinent as it partitioned to form two nation states- India and Pakistan. Though both countries were torn with communal riots and strife, South India remained relatively free of violence. The DK saw Indian Independence as a shift of control from one colonizing agent to another and encouraged the masses to refrain from the nationalist celebrations. This was seen as anti-nationalist by many even within the Tamil community.

Naicker preferred DK to function as a predominantly social organization whereas his protégé, C N Annadurai, wanted to participate politically. Annadurai and his followers walked out to form the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in 1949. In spite of Naicker's vehemence for the Congress pre-independence, DK formed an alliance with the national party after Kamaraj (a non-brahmin) succeeded Rajagopalachari (a Brahmin) as party head and chief minister in Madras state. Congress altered its politics within the state to suit Dravidian sensibilities.

The DMK, though it had views divergent from the DK's, was essentially a Dravidian movement seeking to contest the homogenization propagated by national discourse. Both organizations actively engaged with innovating and furthering

a play of conflict between these groups, it is simplistic to attribute the emergence of this distinct brand of Islamic identity and space to a mere clash of cultures. It can be argued that the multiple facets of the community created various networks across the regional and national political realm. The Tamil group was drawn by its linguistic loyalties to the Dravidian movement while the Dakhnis provided a link to Pan Islamic phenomena. In 1908, the Madras Presidency Muslim League (MPML) was formed as a regional chapter to the national Indian Union Muslim League with an entirely Dakhni membership and the Prince of Arcot serving as president. One of the earliest concerns of the organization was the demand of separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims- an issue brought to the forefront in the Lucknow Pact of 1916.

The freedom struggle was sweeping across the country and Muslims associated with the Congress party participated in organizing rallies and other anti-colonial demonstrations. The Khilafath movement- spurred by the abolition of the Caliphate in Turkey- was a vehicle for Muslim

Tamil and had a strong relation with writers, theatre professionals and the film industry. These diverse mediums were used to propagate Dravidian agenda to the masses and in turn, politics was informed by these art forms<sup>48</sup>. However the DMK, adopting a moderate stance put forth through parliamentary means, was able to garner local allies and emerge as the ruling power in 1967.

*“Annadurai is more consciously left than Naiker; his ideological tone is less racist and more nationalist; he talks more, and more radically, about economic policy; he appeals to lower castes and social classes; and he is more concerned with legality and constitutional procedure.”*(Rudolph, 1961)

Congress lost its stronghold in the state and has not returned to power till date. The DMK and its offshoot AIADMK alternate at the helm of Tamil Nadu politics. It is unfortunate that the last two decades have witnessed incessant and accelerating corruption in state governance and have hence called for President’s rule in the state a number of times. Rise of revivalist religious groups such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), globalization and rapid urbanization have irrevocably altered the Dravidian discourse

48 (Srivathsan, 2006)

nationalist agitation throughout the country. Both Tamil and Urdu speaking Muslims partook in these campaigns, as an outcome of Muslim nationalist sentiment.

At the same time, E V R Naicker was spearheading the Dravidian movement- pushing for a new non- Brahmanical social order. His Self-Respect movement and later, the DK championed the revival of Tamil culture, which had been buried under the superstition-ridden Aryan caste system. The original Dravidian culture, according to Naicker, was based on atheist rationality. It must be noted that the Tamil Muslims had strong bonds with the non- Brahmin Hindus, shared festivals with non-Muslims and contributed sizably to local commerce were seen as yet another caste subject to Brahmanical domination. The Tamil Muslims, threatened by the politics of the Congress and Hindu revivalist organizations such Hindu Mahasabha and AryaSamaj, needed to assert themselves as Muslims, identify with Pan-Islam and yet retain their identity as Tamilians. The Dravidian movement provided support for this unique stance and placed itself in a key position in relation with the Muslims in Tamil Nadu.

The Dravidian effort made concessions in order to avoid offending Muslim sensibilities and the latter were “required neither to set aside nor to



top Fig 3.7: Kannagi: A Tamil literary hero

above Fig 3.8: Dravidian manifestations: Valluvar Kottam

discredit their allegiance to Islam”<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, Naicker saw Islam as a solution to escape the miserable predicament of the Dalits and lower castes. Naicker highlighted the “rationalist” strands of Islamic theology and attributed the superstitious practices of the faithful to the absorption of an alien Brahmanical tradition into a “pure” religion.

He wrote: *“In Dravida Nadu, if we adopt Islam (ie. If we become Muslims) it would be an Islam according to our wish and not according to that of some sahib or mulla. I am familiar with the Islam practiced by Muslims of ten countries.”*(Fakhri, 2008)

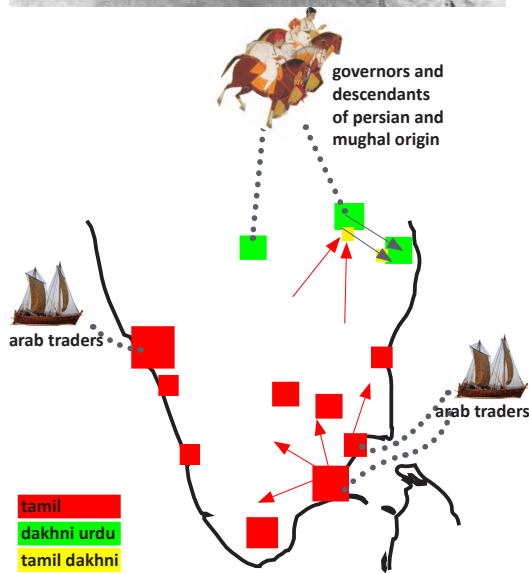
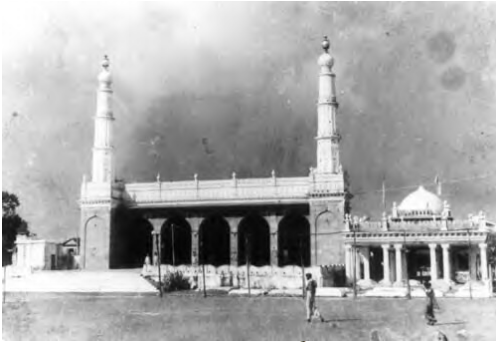
Following this assertion, there was mass conversion of low caste Hindus to Islam in the early 1930’s that led to communal tensions within the Presidency. Jamal Mohamed- a wealthy industrialist based in Chennai and the then elected president of the MPML- advocated awareness and education as a means toward communal peace. Nonetheless, Jamal Mohamed did not ally himself with the politics of the DK, choosing instead to represent the Tamil and Dakhni Muslim population as a unified whole.

The anti-Congress sentiment reached a peak in the Presidency after it decided to push for compulsory Hindustani<sup>8</sup> in primary education and its insistence on the singing of Vande-mataram<sup>9</sup>.

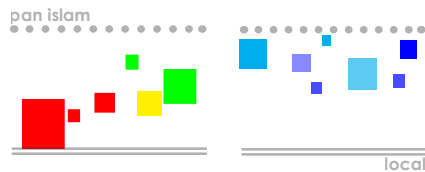
<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> The congress cleverly used “Hindusatni”- another name for Hindi- in Tamil majority regions to conceal its sanskritic origins and stress on its Persian and Urdu influence.

<sup>9</sup> The Vande-mataram was a patriotic anthem, which posed a conflict with Islamic sensibilities as it proposed a “bowing down” before the mother-land. Islam prohibits any form of bowing before any entity



top **Fig 3.9:** Wallajah Mosque at Chennai  
 above **Fig 3.10:** Origins of three Muslim groups  
 below **Fig 3.11:** linguistic groups giving way to ideology based groups



The boycotting of foreign goods, the tobacco act of 1945 adversely affected Muslim merchants. Hence, the MPML crushed the Congress run Majlis in the Muslim populated regions in what is now Tamil Nadu and Kerala. After Indian independence and the partition in 1947, the Muslim League faced a crisis. Mohamed Ali Jinnah- the Indian Union Muslim League president- migrated to Pakistan and the place of Islam in the newly independent India was questioned. The All India Muslim league- was then reconfigured and based in the south under the leadership of Mohamed Ismail (Quaid e Millath).

The period following partition was a difficult time for the Muslim community as they constituted what was termed the “political untouchables”<sup>10</sup>. Under the banner of secularism, the Congress regime denounced any religious representation; any political aspiration to define a religious sentiment was labeled as anti-national. Additionally, this minority was identified with the splitting of the nation and hence, the IUML had to clearly disassociate itself from any separatist demand like Naicker’s Dravidistan. The 1950s saw an active disengagement of the Muslim community from the IUML and their association with different secular fronts.

With the emergence of the DMK in the 1960’s, Ismail found a suitable platform in Tamil Nadu politics to articulate the post-colonial Muslim identity.

other than god.

10 Ibid.

and have made it a vehicle for jingoism, profiteering and power mongering. Addressing the exploitation of DMK rule Ammal Prakash Karat writes *"The people of Tamil Nadu associate high-level corruption with nepotistic family rule. The spectacle of various members of the family of chief minister Karunani-dhi monopolizing different spheres of business — film industry, television, print media, cable distribution, real estate, airlines and hotels — are seen by the people as an affront to the democratic system."*<sup>49</sup> The earlier ideology centric Dravidian movement has lost its momentum as DMK and AIADMK not only ally with All- India parties of contradicting manifestos but also exchange confederates and beliefs from one election to another.

<sup>49</sup> G. C. Shekhar, "DMK 'Family' Gun on Karats," *The Telegraph*, sec. Front Page, 2011.

*"The Congress often claimed that there was no place in the new nation for a regional party like the DMK. Every 'loyal' Indian had to be committed solely to the 'national' agenda, which, happily, it had itself defined.... Under these political circumstances at both the national and provincial levels, Muslims in Tamil Nadu forged alliances with the DMK."*(Fakhri, 2008)

This alliance created unique opportunities for social reform in Tamil Nadu and proved to be strategic in the state's electoral politics. Once more the Muslims asserted their Tamil-ness and were able to delineate their interests similar to their alliance with the Self Respect movement three decades ago. The stability of Muslim leadership, creation of strong regional ties has been often cited as the reasons for communal peace within the Tamil state.

Nonetheless, with the demise of Ismail in 1972, there has been a marked decline in the solidity of IUML politics. The party splintered to form the Indian National League and many other factions formed in flurry of power struggle within the community. Today a few minor parties have sprouted within the political arena like the Tamil Muslim Munetra Kazhagam while the IUML has been reduced to a defunct organization subject to legal wars within. N SathyaMoorthy attributes this divided leadership and disengagement with grassroots of the community as the factors that led to communal violence in Tamil Nadu in the 1990s.

### 3.3 Unraveling complexity: From city to site

Chennai has transitioned from Colonial port city to post-independence metro, then to regional stronghold and now, global city. The city bears imprints of all these transitions as each change folds into the landscape, morphing physical form, informing existing processes and spawning new phenomena. Some patterns and trends of urban growth are traced to develop a *partial* comprehension of a city that ceaselessly mutates, escaping absolute representation.

The city has followed a semi-star shaped pattern of ribbon-type development along its main arteries that emanate from the port and Central Business District (CBD). The CBD- a remnant of colonial city planning- still exists within what was the old “White” city. Now it serves primarily as a historic and administrative center and wholesale district. The new legislative building- a LEED approved “green”<sup>50</sup> structure stands in close proximity to densely packed mercantile streets and numerous edifices belonging to the Indo-Saracenic genre of construction. North Chennai- initially zoned to house the city’s industry- has transformed to hold warehouses, light industry and lower income residential areas as the nature and scale of production has changed in the last few decades. West and South Chennai with prime suburbs such as Anna Nagar and Besant Nagar were primarily conceived as elite residential areas that catered to the business oriented center. Now these segments

have been engulfed in intense commercialization, thereby pushing suburbia further away and into

50 The complex with a built-up area of 1700,000 sft and costing about INR 10,920 million, has been awarded the LEED gold certification. It was inaugurated in March 2010 and now has been abandoned as the new elected government opted to move back to the old establishment in Fort St. George. (Tamil Nadu legislative assembly-secretariat complex, 13 Dec 2011 2011, Dec 15 2011 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil\\_Nadu\\_legislative\\_assembly-secretariat\\_complex](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil_Nadu_legislative_assembly-secretariat_complex)>.

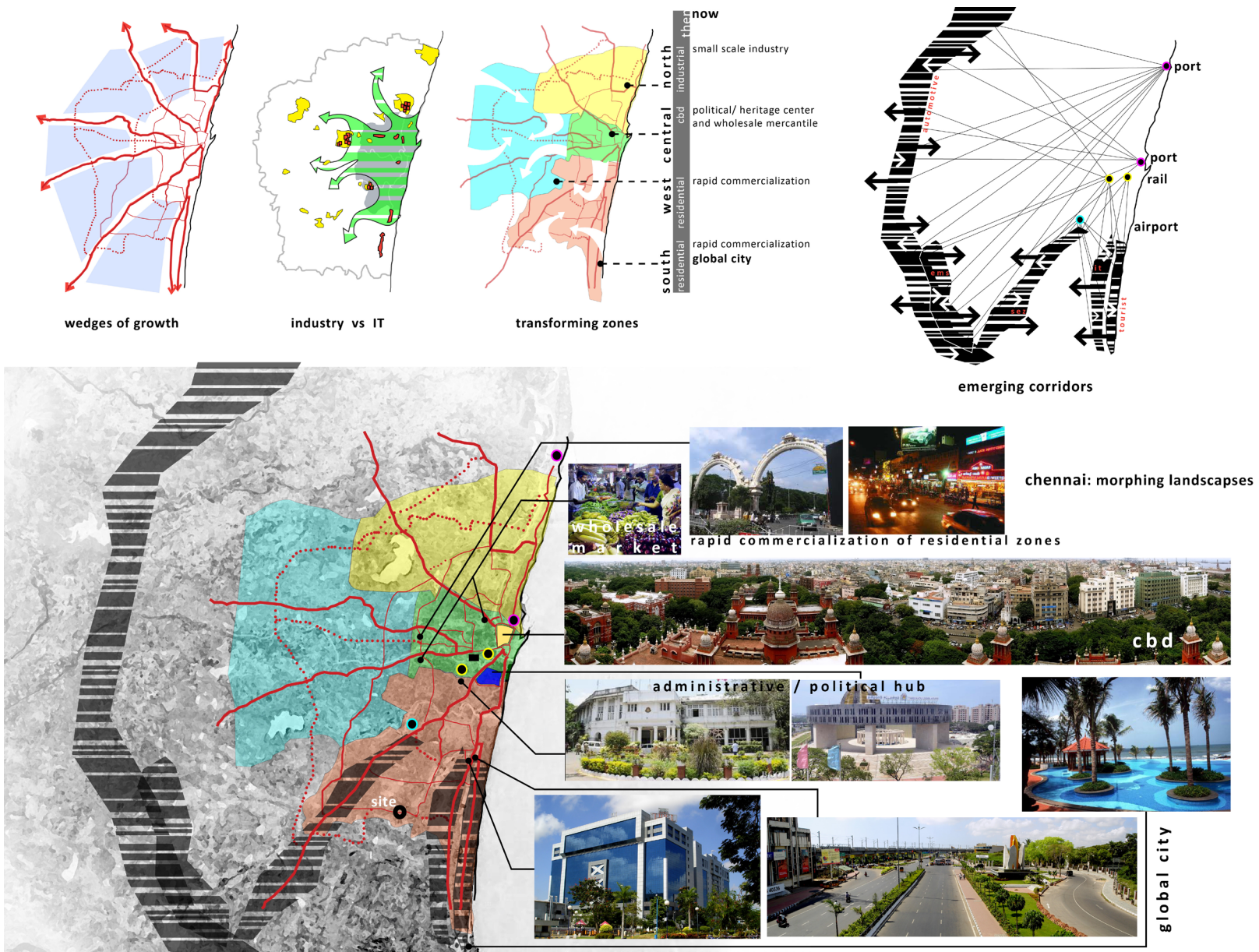


Fig 3.12: Chennai: Transformations and growth

the under-developed wedges.

Surprisingly, the boundaries of Chennai Metropolitan Area have not expanded in the last 40 years. One of the reasons is that the metro was sparsely populated in the wedge-like areas between its extending roadways owing to poor connectivity. Most of this land was reserved for agricultural practices, farming or left vacant. Propelled by rising land prices and influx of migrants, the construction of ring roads and smaller connectors brought about the rapid densification of these wedges. Conceived as primarily residential zones, these wedges are sites of tremendous transformation as they witness a flux of new construction, typologies and opportunities for commercialization.

Furthermore, a shift in the development authority's stance has actively allowed for an IT-centric growth within city limits. Industrial hubs and estates are being increasingly primed for a thorough coup by the software industry by laws that selectively allow the latter a range of advantages. Apart from the IT designated corridor, this sector and allied industries have been awarded the right to override numerous zoning regulations with special permission from the CMDA. Structures housing these "non-polluting"<sup>51</sup> activities are allowed a larger Floor Space Index Ratio and thus coupled with sky-rocketing real estate speculation these regulations have induced large and small scale industry to be effectively pushed out of city limits.

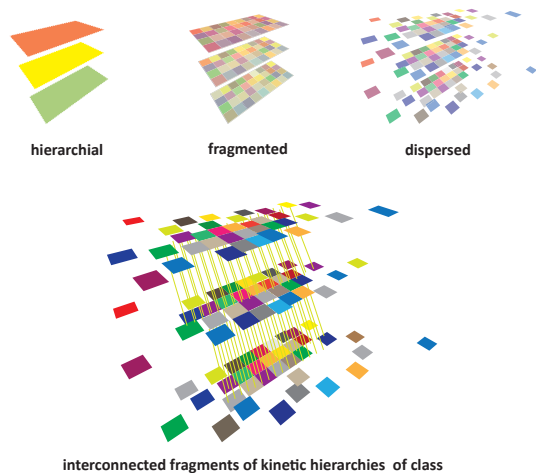
There is a notable change in the development authority's planning vocabulary over the last few decades. The 1996 Master plan employs a strong usage of satellite towns to decentralize the City. This has been currently replaced by a theme of amorphous corridors designated to specific indus-

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51 The CMDA Master Plan 2026 classifies IT related construction as non-polluting and makes allowances for the same on Coastal Regulation Zones and other special regions.

try such as automobile, electronic manufacturing sector (EMS), information technology, special economic zone (SEZ) and tourist. These corridors are stretches of land, flanking crucial roadways outside or extending beyond city limits, with provision for relevant infrastructure and subsidies. Although arbitrarily defined, these bands are not hermeneutically sealed. They exert their influence on the greater city and their immediate surrounding as labor and local resources are engaged, debris is deposited and a myriad of flows (such as diaspora and global citizenry) converge at these sites.

This kind of top-down disjunctive planning and “progress”, has led to large scale acquisition of rural and semi-rural lands and simultaneously planted global industry in a rustic setting, crushing a local culture ill-equipped to cope with such an invasion. Though land owners are compensated monetarily, the poorest of the poor- the renters and others surviving along the fringes of this margin- are displaced from their ecosystem and thrown into a new genre of evolving peripheral urbanism. This phenomenon of rural-urbanization or rurbanization<sup>52</sup> has brought with it a host of social and economic problems such as homelessness, diminishing social nets for this segment, and the creation of slums and squatter settlements. The juxtaposing of urban developments in previously rural area has generated rurban households, whose members- unskilled to cope in an urban environment- are further marginalized in the new and alienating milieu. The enclave-like development programs show a callous disregard for the poorer sections of the society although there has always been a symbiotic exchange between these classes. The lower income group provides a system of informal economy and service that is indispensable to the middle and higher economic



**Fig 3.13:** Perception of class

<sup>52</sup> GS Sastry and Institute for Social and Economic Change. *Emerging Development Issues of Greater Bangalore*. Institute for Social and Economic Change, 2008. Web.

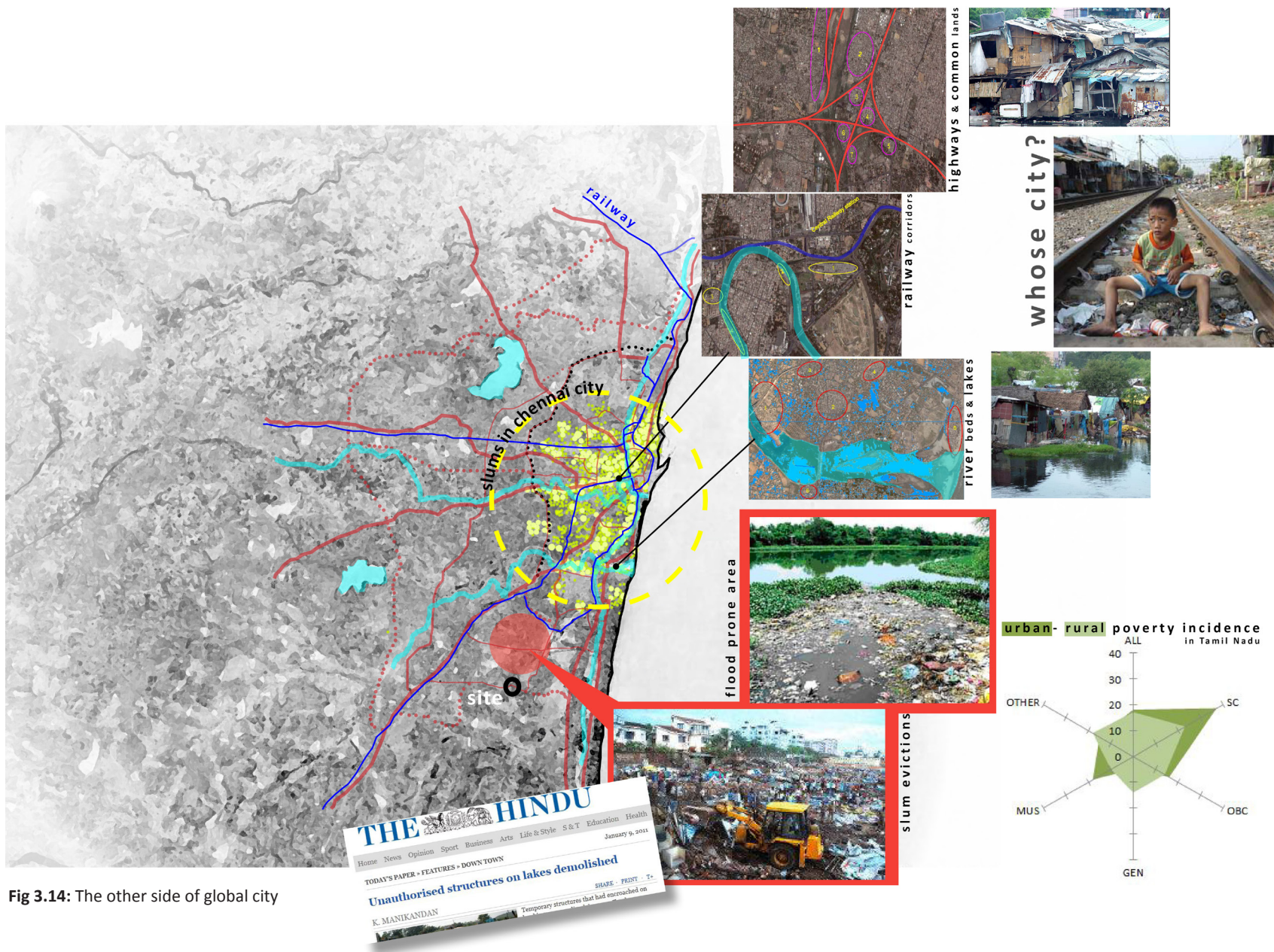


Fig 3.14: The other side of global city

groups and the former rely on the latter for their employment. Hence, the aforementioned stratified, exclusive development projects disengage these mechanisms of social inter-dependence and accelerate slum formation in surrounding areas.

Slums in Chennai are of three main types- those occurring along main arterial highways and under flyovers, others accruing beside railway corridors and finally the settlements along river beds and water bodies. The underlying pattern is that these shantytowns occur in vacant or government land that is generally declared unlivable by accepted standards. Hence, slum dwellers lead their lives with little or no infrastructure in unfit circumstances such as poor sanitation facilities. Due to their illegal status, the government refuses to acknowledge these informal settlements and furthermore, proceeds to periodically demolish these establishments and evict their inhabitants. In case of the third typology of slums beside water bodies, the poor are subjected to annual flooding during the monsoons that bring along other set of issues such as pest infestation, widespread epidemics and water pollution. At a time when the urban poverty incidence has overtaken the rural value, it is critical for the state and society to rethink the rapidly deteriorating condition of the have-nots.

Projecting these phenomena, their areas of influence and resultant effects unto a single sketch of the city, the urban map becomes a collage of forces and force-fields with molten process criss-crossing, overlapping and evolving new forms and new courses. Chennai transcends beyond the reductive representation as agglomerate of static spaces into a realm of constant movement. Returning to the idea of determining new methods delineation as discussed in section 3.1 of this



Fig 3.15: City as collage

document, this project addresses this issue by inserting germane imagery, hermeneutic cognizance and an element of uncertainty into the hard data of maps. The collage has been adopted at numerous levels- analysis, design development and final presentation- to establish the underlying resilience.

**Medavakkam:** Amongst the wedges of urbanization discussed earlier, the southernmost sector is part of what is touted as Global city. This sliver of urban terrain falls under the influence of three significant corridors- National Highway 4 or the SEZ corridor, Old Mahabalipuram road or IT corridor and the East Coast road or tourist/recreation corridor. Crucial connectors that link these three main south bound arteries of Chennai, cut across this “global” wedge, linking these roadways to one another and major transportation hub. Furthermore, the National highway 4 functions as the main route to southern districts and the industrial hub at Maraimalar Nagar. The OMR, whose road infrastructure and maintenance have been privatized, ECR and NH4 have created ripples of densification upon surrounding land, owing to the pull of diverse economic opportunity and influx of a wealthy global citizenry. The industries that have spilled unto this wedge haphazardly, band together in a digital and social network. The interstitial spaces serve as sites of a hybridized and evolving culture that engages global, regional and rural populace. Informally new hierarchies emerge; socio-economic patterns form and interdependencies evolve. However, the top-down design strategy shows no sensitivity to these paradigms as sealed campuses and residential enclaves are planned as secluded havens to gratify the sensibilities of the global professional, ensur-

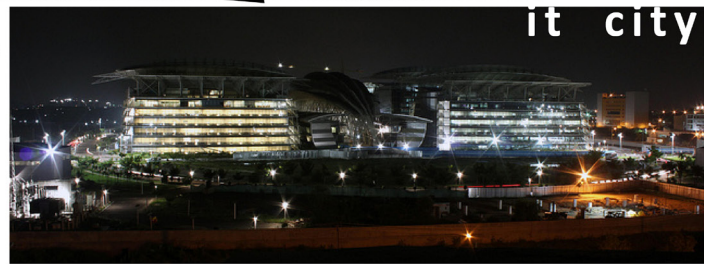
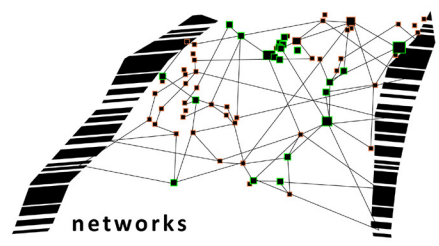
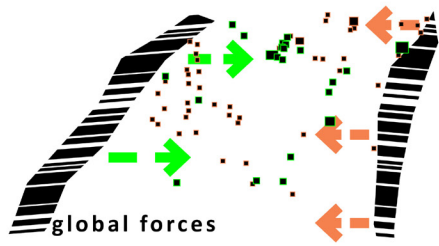
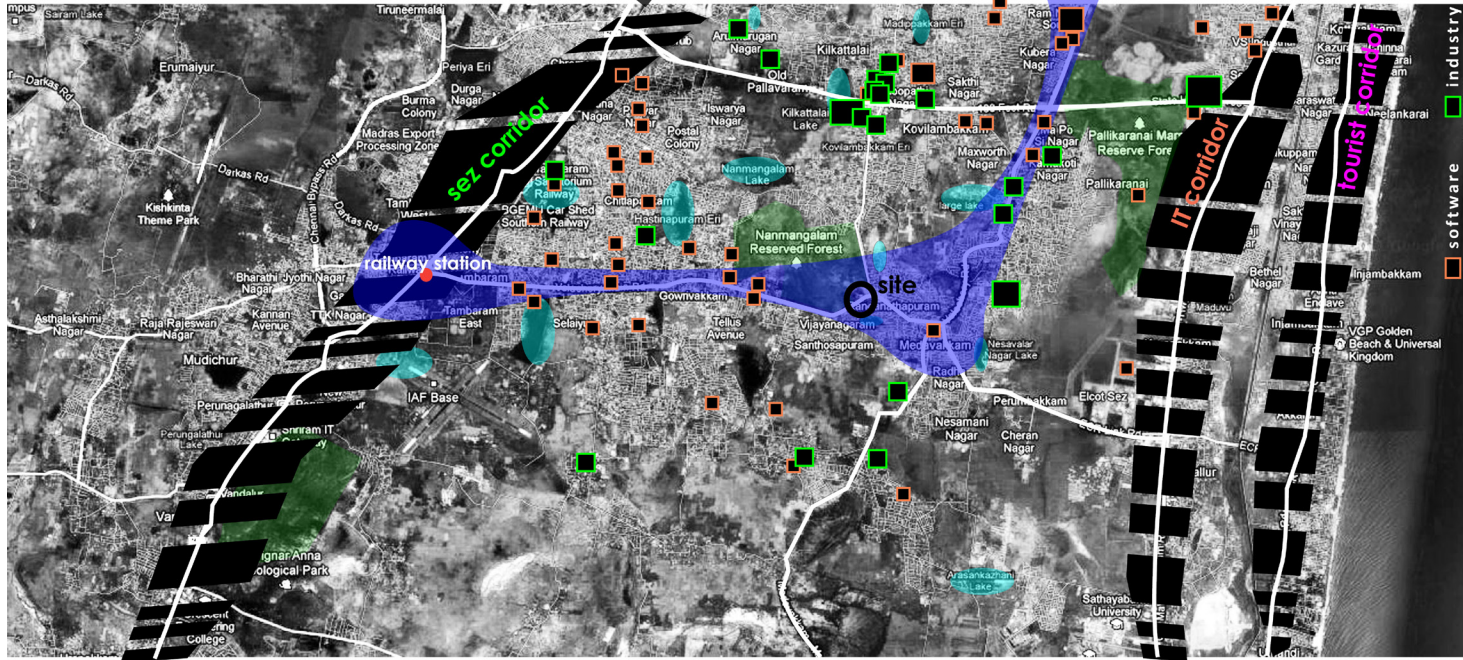


Fig 3.16: Wedge of transformation

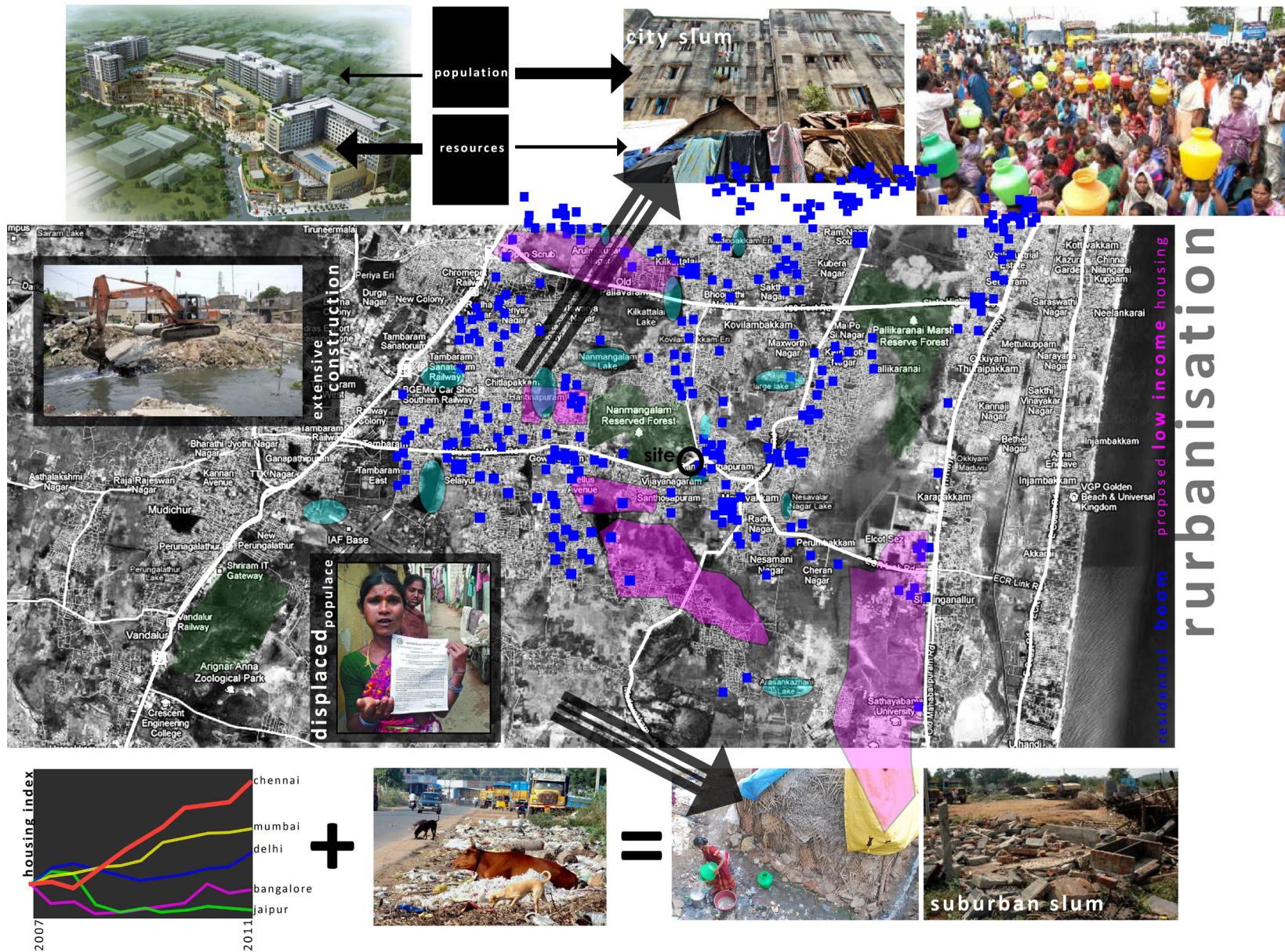


Fig 3.17: Mapping the housing boom and its effects

ing minimal contact with the grittiness of the post-colonial city. The residential boom- with the exception of areas earmarked for low income housing- caters to a predominantly middle class populace and a large number of apartment complexes engage the investment of this economic stratum. These closely controlled gated communities reflect the aspirations of their marketed audience in their European themes, disjunctive architecture and images of pastoral tranquility.

The displaced rural community flows into urban slums closer to the center or the suburban settlements at the periphery. Informality here materializes in the form of temporary structures, flimsy dwelling units, and an assortment of petty commercial modules that fill in between the creases of “legitimized” urbanization. These middle spaces usually are pedestrian pathways, banks of water aquifers and unoccupied stretches of public land. In Medavakkam, the locality of the project’s site, commercial informality can be spotted along roadways, at street corners and in “shadow areas” behind large scale developments. Residential slums have been identified around the Sembakkam and Medavakkam lakes, which are periodically razed to the ground before monsoons or during sporadic implementation of new schemes.

The development authority adopts a stance of negligence and neutrality so that profiteering establishments can capitalize on these lapses. The unplanned nature of suburban urbanization eliminates allotment of lung spaces, does not provide for efficient systems of waste management, rain water drainage systems etc. and allows for unchecked speculation and sky-rocketing land prices. The quality of urban space is below par while the real estate costs and rents are excessively high.

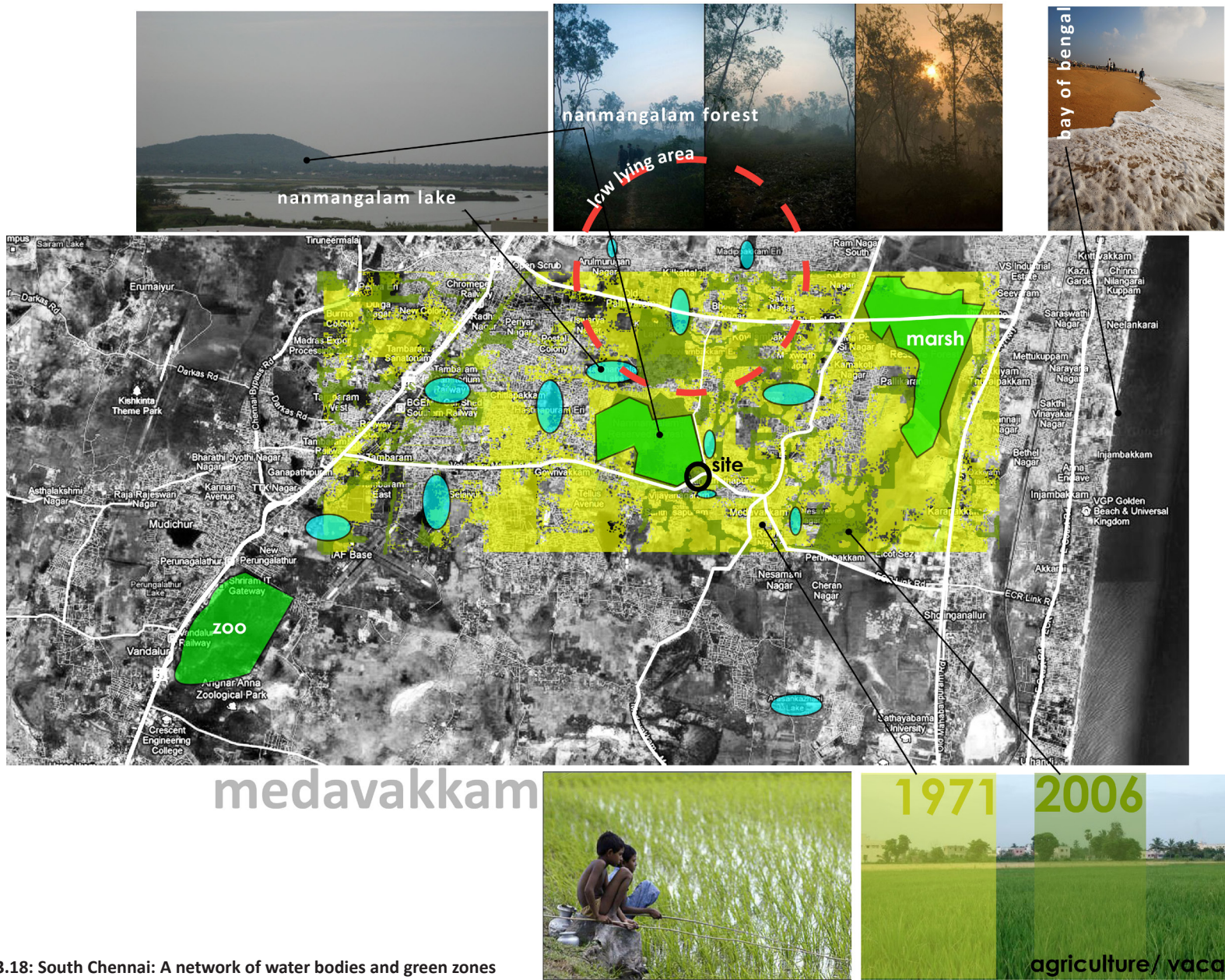


Fig 3.18: South Chennai: A network of water bodies and green zones

Multi-storied glass structures, privatized road infrastructure and pseudo-Greek architecture camouflage a complex ecosystem nested here. The region comprises of a network of water bodies and green patches, creating a tapestry of ecologies woven into the physical terrain. The Chennai habitat complex, classified as a central coastal plain, includes three main subdivisions-wetlands, cultivated lands and scrub jungle. In the southern part of the city, the major biomes are the Pal-likarnai marsh and the Nanmangalam National Reserve Forest<sup>53</sup>. The latter, lying within the Medavakkam jurisdiction, supports low lying scrub, eucalyptus trees and a host of fauna including the threatened Great horned owl.

Due to rapid densification, these networks are being disturbed- lakes and water reservoirs are filled, agricultural and green covers are cleared to make way for extensive construction. Apart from the destruction of native habitat this mindless developments also destroys the city's natural water catchment system, leading to acute water shortage in summer and flooding during the annual monsoons.

Zooming in further, the immediate context of the site-the forest, intersecting roads and surrounding lakes- come into focus as influential elements framing the project. The hydrology of the site indicates that water drains away from a hillock toward three water bodies. Though there are no open channels on site, the terrain slopes southward causing surface run-off into a small water reservoir. The Reserve forest has been encroached upon by natives for years and has been used

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<sup>53</sup> J. Vencatesan. *Chennai-Ecological considerations for an evolving mega city*. Care Earth Trust, 2011. Web.

lakes  
agriculture  
forest  
site

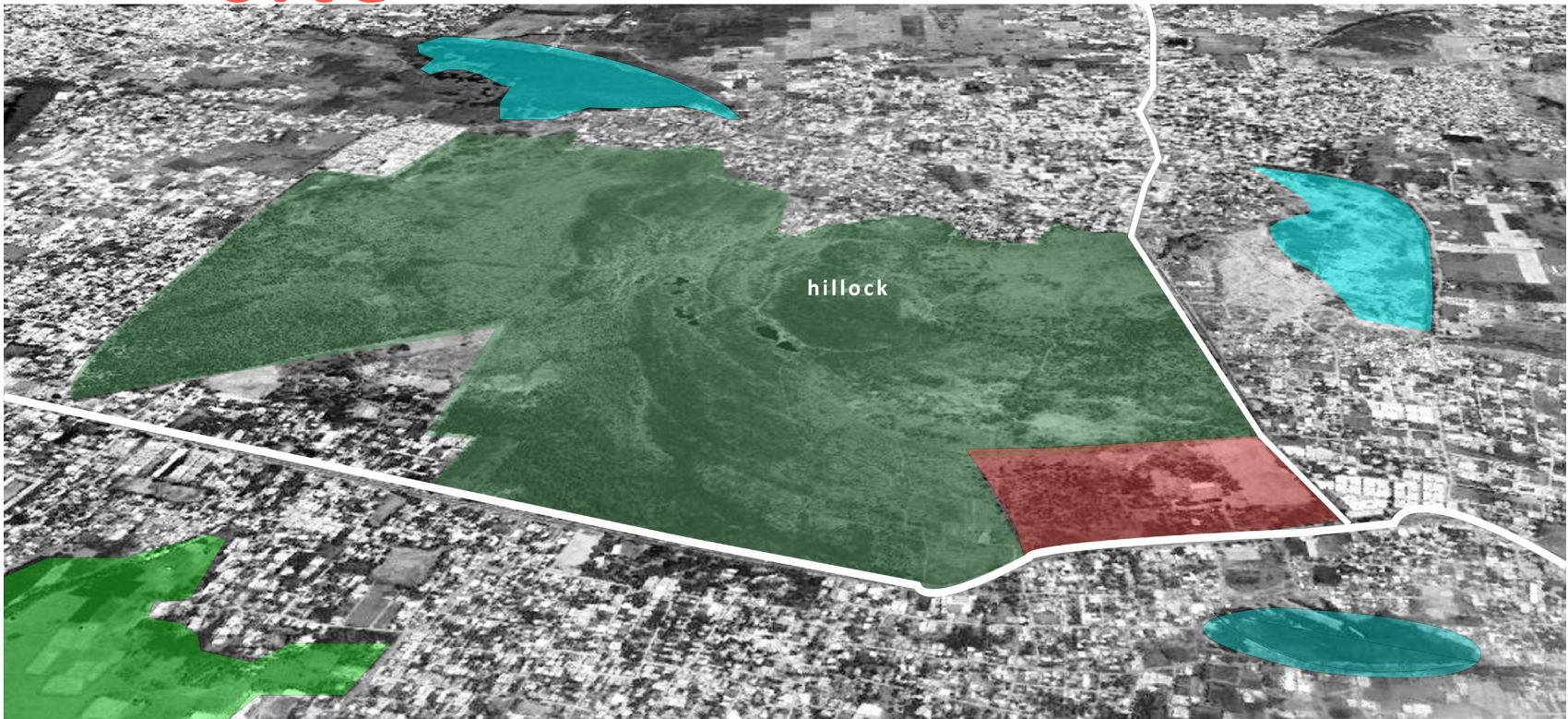


Fig 3.19: Mapping local geography

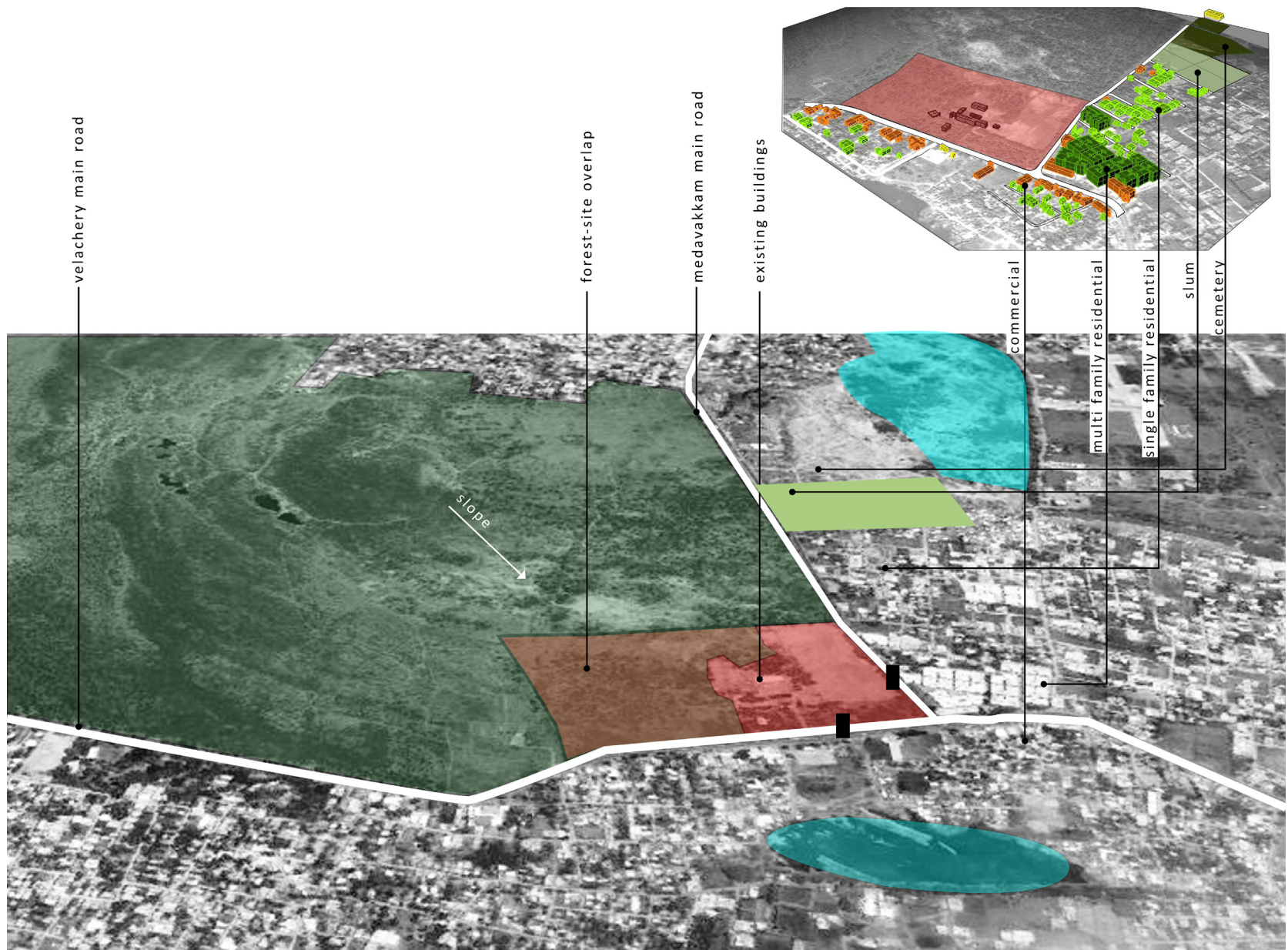
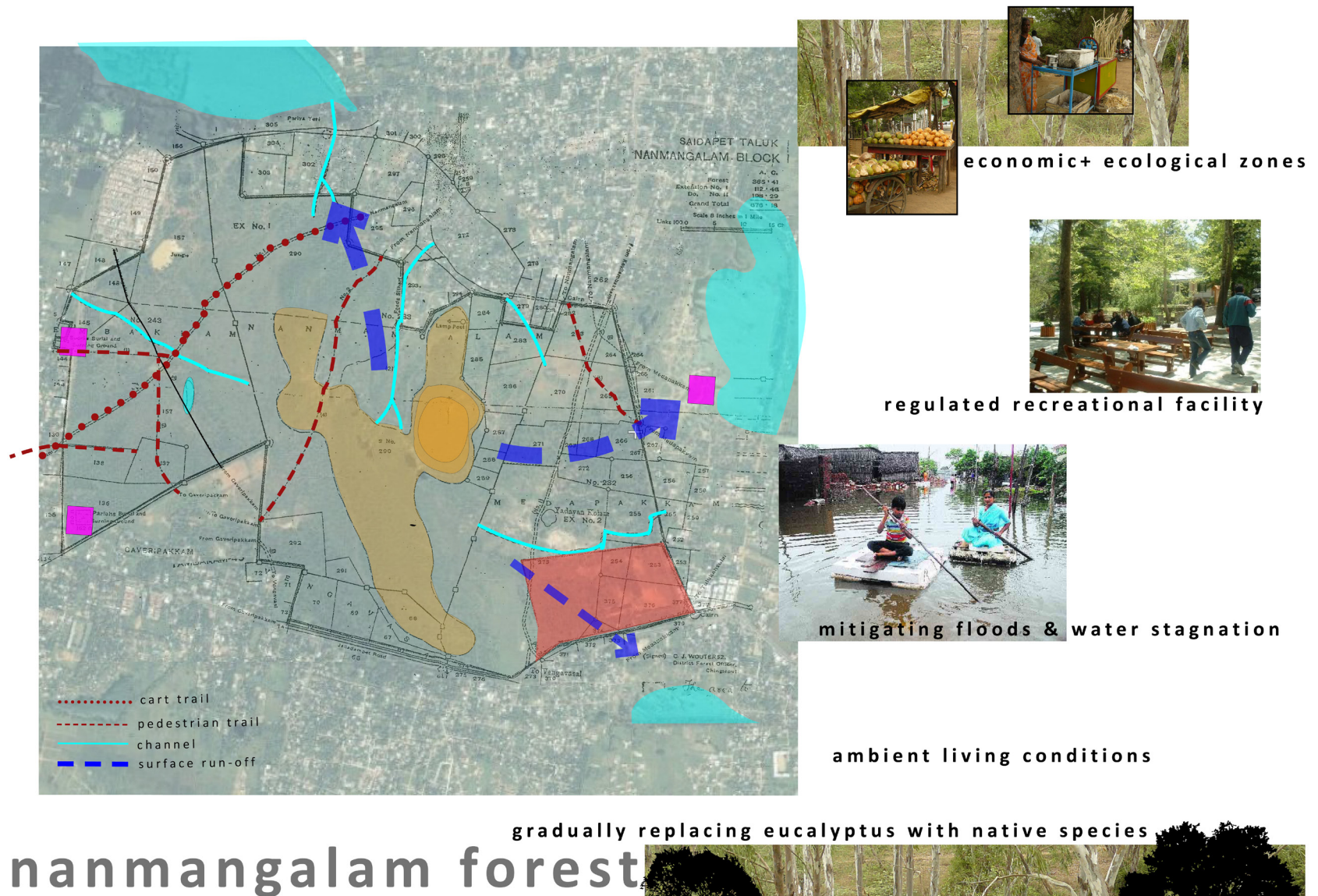


Fig 3.20: Site and its context



# nanmangalam forest

gradually replacing eucalyptus with native species

Fig 3.21: Nanmangalam forest: Hydrology, terrain and recommendations for development

as open defecation ground<sup>54</sup>, endangering community health and quality of recreation space. Recently the government removed forty illegal structures, with further plans of walling in the entire 350 acres<sup>55</sup>(Madhavan).

The Care Earth Report, engaged by the government to study this landscape, concluded with some recommendations for further action- that economic and ecological zones be interspersed, certain areas of the forest be developed as a regulated recreational facility, flood mitigation become a priority, the forest be utilized to enhance ambient living conditions in the region and finally, that the eucalyptus be gradually be replaced with native species. This species was introduced a few decades earlier as it was used to make wood pulp. Now it has become parasitical as it has lost its use and depletes ground water.

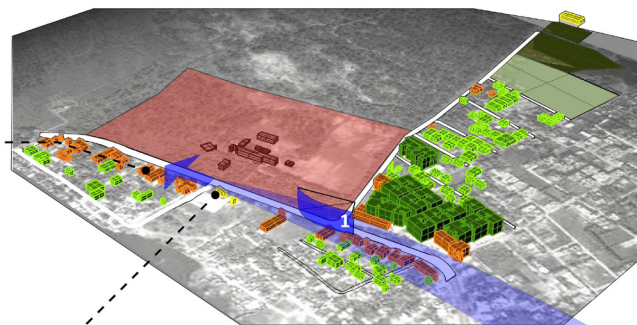
The roads adjoining the site are markedly different in character. The east-west connector- the Velachery main road- is a larger thoroughfare handling a higher volume of traffic. The street is flanked with low rise commercial establishments that spill over onto the pedestrian space and supports many scales of commercial activity from the “legal” shop-fronts to the informal vendors and finally the economy of beggars. The roadway also serves myriad activities such as crafting, scavenging, dining, loitering, cattle-grazing and childrens’ play. The Medavakkam main road is quieter with predominantly residential usage. Single family residences are fast being converted to

54 B. D. Ravi, “Reserve forest hides a public toilet,” The times of India Oct 19 2010 2010, , sec. Chennai: .

55 D. Madhavan, “Reserve Forests on outskirts to be walled in,” The Times of India Mar 22 2011 2011, , sec. Chennai: .



small scale commercial establishments line the road front



roadways dept. center



street life



# Velachery main road

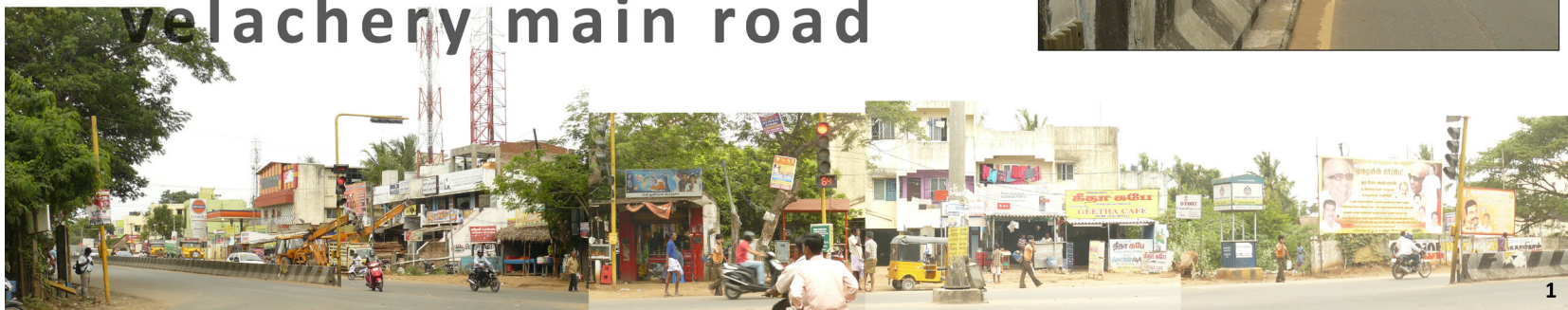


Fig 3.22: Street Analysis: Velachery main road

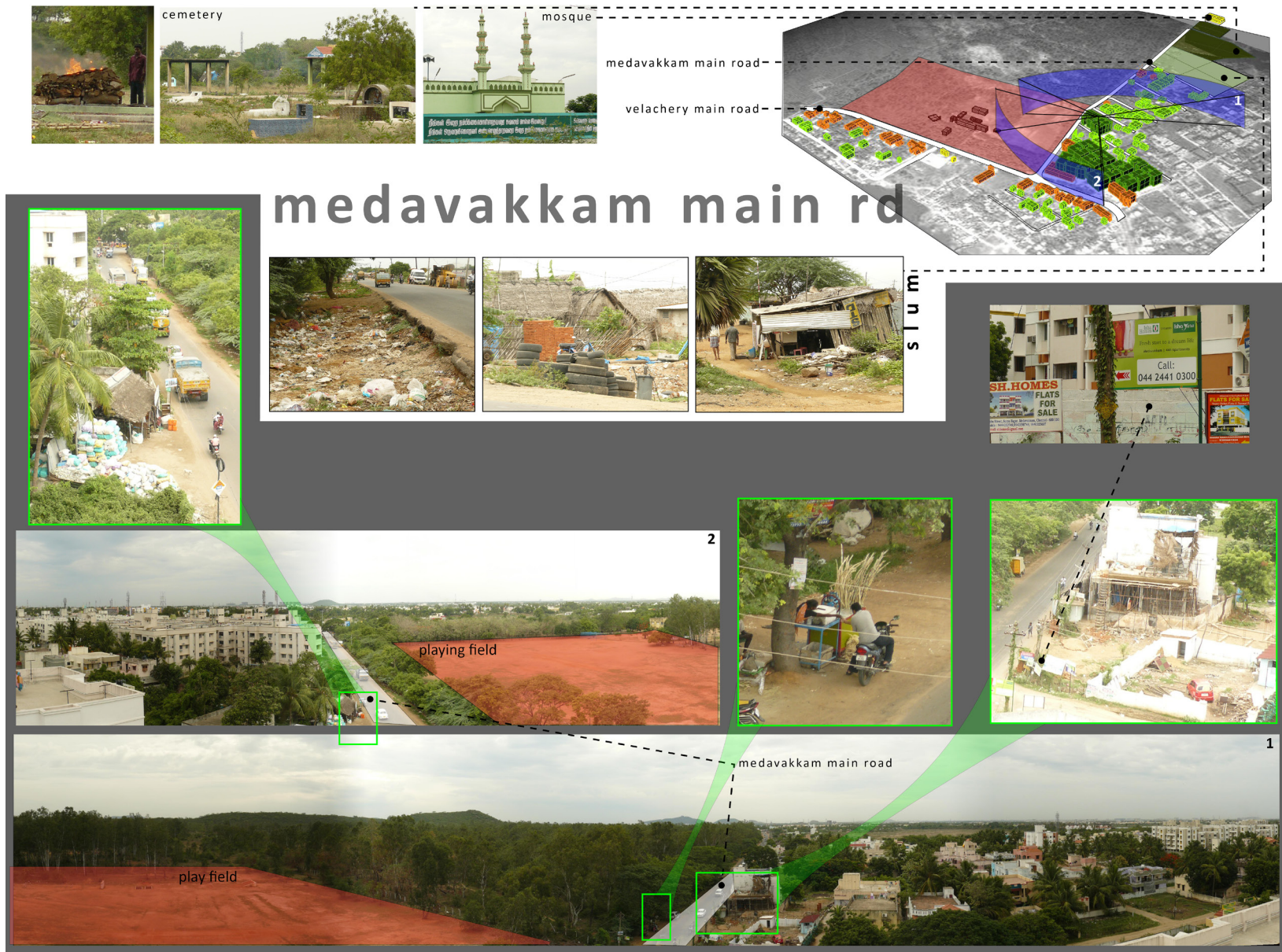


Fig 3.23: Street Analysis: Medavakkam main road

apartment clusters and a large number of signs and billboards attest to this phenomena of densification, which can lead to straining an already stretched infrastructure. Occasional vendors take advantage of the slower pace of traffic to sell their wares.

The roads, enduring high volumes of traffic and lacking proper forms of pedestrian mediation, form chasms between the ribbons of development on either side. There is a gaping absence of planned pedestrian crossings and tall concrete medians that run for long stretches inhibit jay walking. These medians do work toward safety of motorcyclists and foot travelers but do not offer reprise to pedestrians by unreasonably lengthening the walking route.

**The site:** The chosen site is the corner parcel of Nanmangalam forest land abutting Medavakkam main road and the Velachery road. The land was granted by the state government to a local trust in 1974 to establish a Muslim minority institute in memory of the IUML president and community leader, Mohamed Ismail- better known as Quaid e Millath. A semi government-funded Arts and Science college developed here and offered three year diplomas to the predominantly rural populace then. Unfortunately, it was managed by two consecutive managements whose corruption and callous neglect had crippled the institute's development toward community empowerment. In 2000, the trust and college were taken over by a new management, which sought to redeem this fractured enterprise and equip it to suit the current milieu. There have been several proposals for adding on additional colleges to the existing framework to expand the focus of local Muslim academia.



Fig 3.24: Piecing together the site



forest-site relation

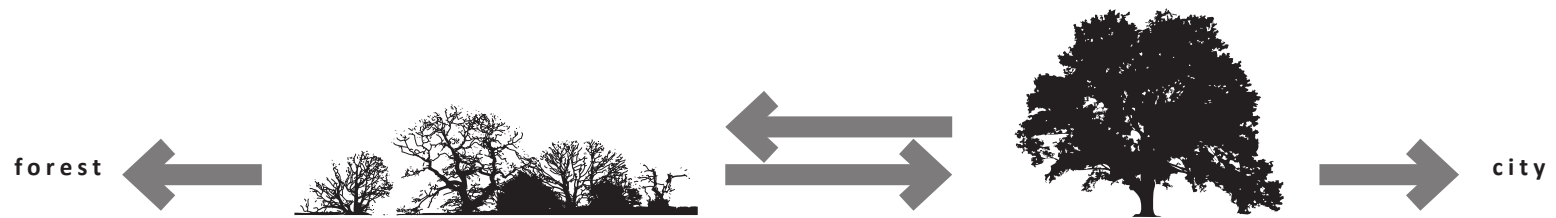


Fig 3.25: Locating an eucalyptus only zone for construction

The main building built during regimes of earlier managements still stands and occupies the central place while a few other provisional structures have been demolished to make way for newer construction. A new administrative block has been added and the ceased construction of a mosque, which remains at plinth level, speaks of a shortage of funds. The existing playing field, which stretches along the eastern fence, is the largest in the locality and is often rented to other organizations.

The site unlike its surrounding is largely devoid of activity and color- the main cause being a strict fencing off of the transgression apparent in the contiguous natural and cultural terrain.

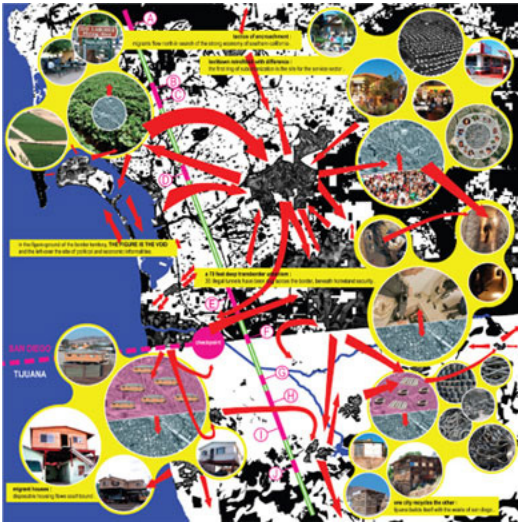
# CHAPTER 4

## Precedent studies

### 4.1 Representation

#### Teddy Cruz: New modes of cognition

Teddy Cruz extensively uses the aid of collages to map and represent readings of city. This has altered perception and influenced action. Cruz's methodology of intervention can be described as collage-like as it often pieces together variant elements and generates multiple configurations of outcome.



top **Fig 4.1:** Mapping borderland  
above **Fig 4.2:** Graphic collage  
across **Fig 4.3:** Architecture as collage  
88

## 4.2 Institutes and ideologies

### Srishti school of art, design and technology, Bangalore

Srishti, founded in 1996 by the Ujjwal trust, is an institute offering liberal arts-based higher education in art, design and technology. The school comprises of a “community of learners” with a mission statement that claims that “learning must be embedded in real-world problems and situations” and that education must be permeable, extending “beyond the gated and preserved”<sup>56</sup>.

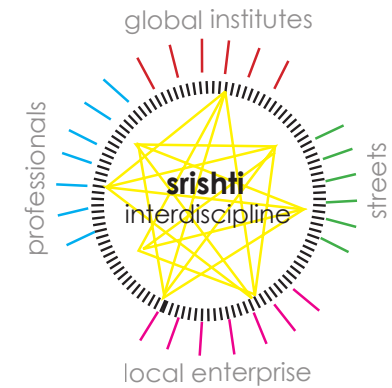
#### COURSES

 <p>Foundation studies program basic art and design studies</p>	<p>Professional diploma program</p> <p>design for business design for humanity design as experimentation</p> 	<p>Advanced diploma program</p>  <p>offers range of specializations and awards</p>
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This concept is manifested in the school’s structure of networks within and extending beyond its body.

Programs that foster interaction with design studios, production centers, industries and other establishments expand the institute’s purview and bridge the gap between pedagogy and the outside world. The curriculum absorbs native culture as well as utilizes cutting edge technology and has leveraged itself associating with a world wide network of reputable institutes. An interim semester where participants shed their garb as students, teacher and other hierarchial roles and

56 Srishti school of Art, Design and Technology, <http://srishti.ac.in/> (accessed 05/27, 2011).



top Fig 4.4: Srishti as nexus  
above Fig 4.5: Branching out  
across Fig 4.6: Programs and courses

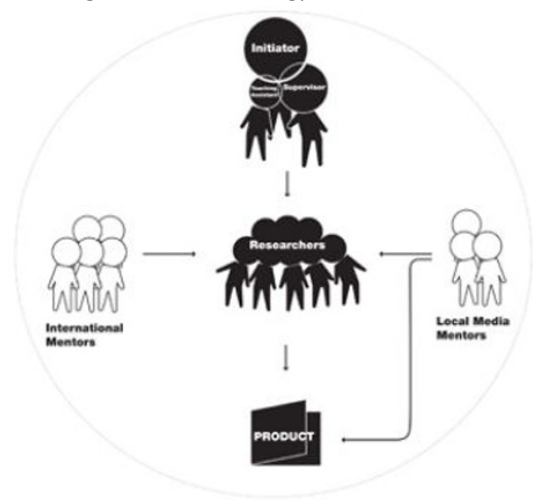


top Fig 4.7: Inside Strelka

above Fig 4.8: Strelka at the old Red October Chocolate factory, Moscow

across Fig 4.9: Process and Progression

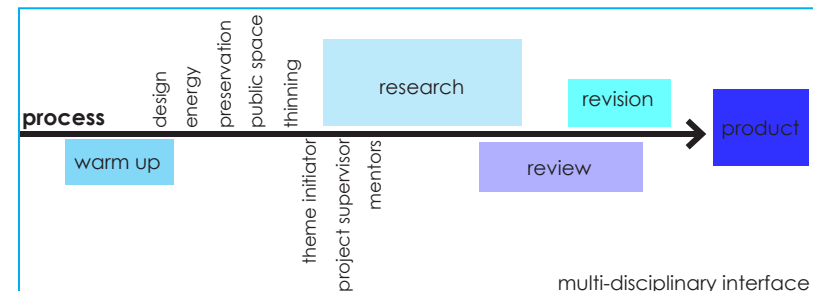
below Fig 4.10: Overall strategy



collaborate in real live problems, using a wide range of approaches. Criticism of existing models and generalizations are formulated using context driven specifics (such as poetry, music and mysticism in the case of the annual festival-Kabir Panth) as entry points to discourse.

### Strelka, Moscow

The Strelka institute, premised in Moscow's former Red October Chocolate Factory, is a non-profit, tuition free institute that engages interdisciplinary creativity. AMO has interfaced with Strelka to evolve an educational program that investigates into the five pressing paradoxes identified by AMO: design, energy, preservation, public space and "thinning"<sup>57</sup>. The post graduate research establishment is founded on a principle of "thinking and doing"<sup>58</sup> and instead of working toward an academic degree; researchers put their efforts together to generate fully realized products. Research is structured in six month cycles from January to July, which is preceded by an intense



57 AMO describes this phenomenon as "the low inhabitation rate of many new developments in burgeoning cities, the gradual disappearance of other cities, and the simultaneous emptying out of rural areas". Strelka, Moscow, , May 22 2011 <[http://www.oma.eu/index.php?option=com\\_projects&view=project&id=1250&Itemid=10](http://www.oma.eu/index.php?option=com_projects&view=project&id=1250&Itemid=10)>.

58 Strelka Institute for Media, Architecture and Design, <http://www.strelkainstitute.com/> (accessed May 28, 2011).

two month warm up session for new researchers.

During the main research period, specific topics are explored through “academic and field investigations, interviews, consultations and analysis”<sup>59</sup>, under the guidance of a theme initiator. A project supervisor oversees the overall structure of the process and mentors facilitate conversion of research into a finished product.

### **4.3 Design Schools in Indian context**

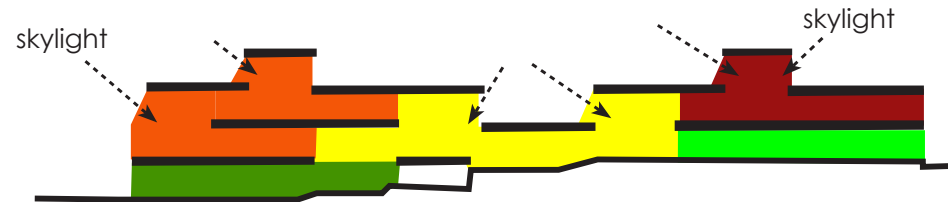
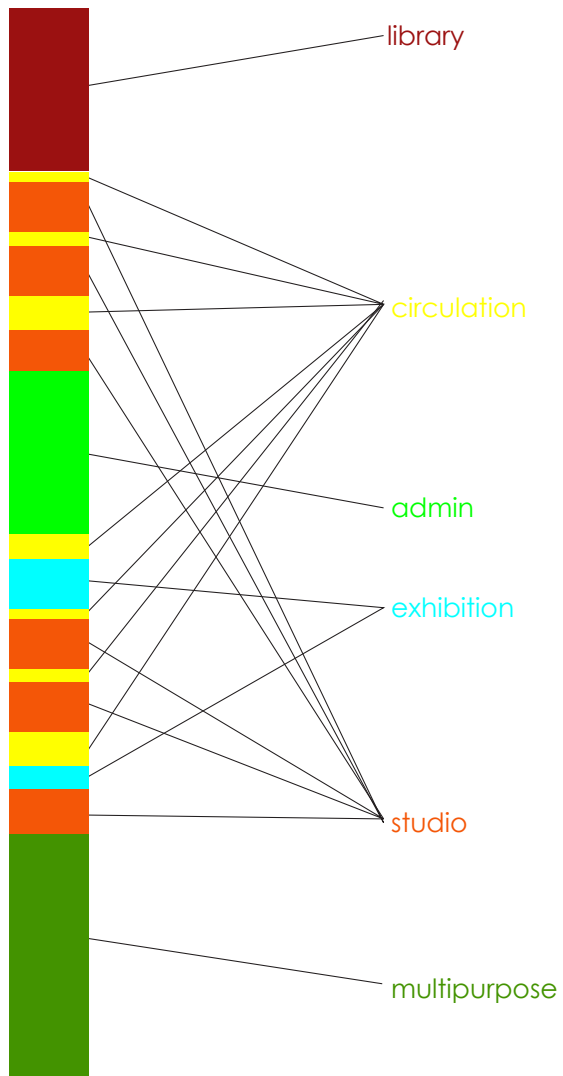
The School of Architecture and the National Institute of Design- both situated in Ahmedabad- are two prominent Indian institutes that have imparted quality design education for decades. The spatiality of these establishments speaks a great deal about the character of design education within the nation and it is a concreted manifestation of the conceptual core of the education program. The following study incorporates a brief exploration of this interrelation between ideology and form and an understanding of architectural program.

#### **School of Architecture, Ahmedabad**

The School of Architecture is a part of the larger Center for Planning and Technology (henceforth known as CEPT) and was first established in 1962. The school of planning, school of building science and technology and school of interior design have been added in the following decades. This

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59      Ibid.



study looks at the first phase construction designed by architect B V Doshi.

Doshi envisioned an environment with “hardly any doors”<sup>60</sup>, where the flowing spaces could facilitate different types of teaching and learning anywhere on campus. The first level is an L-shaped string of studios, discussion rooms and administrative offices while the mezzanine carries additional studios and the library. The entire structure is raised off the ground- reminiscent of Le

above **Fig 4.11:** Spatial Program at School of Architecture, Ahmedabad

top across **Fig 4.12:** First floor plan

across **Fig 4.13:** Spaces in section

60

W. J. R. Curtis, *Balkrishna Doshi: An Architecture for India* (Rizzoli, 1988), 62.



Fig 4.14: Double height studio spaces lit by skylights

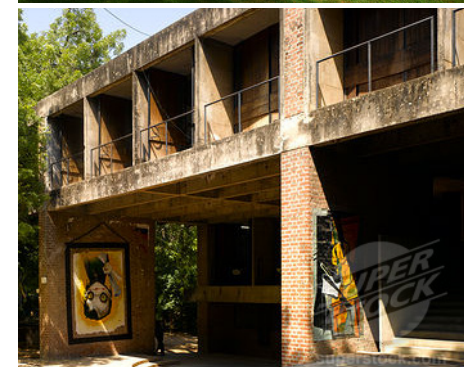
Corbusier's pilotis<sup>61</sup>- and the space beneath serves as a well-shaded and ventilated multipurpose space. The north-south orientation, large openings aiding cross ventilation and a strategy of shading ensure a climatologically responsive structure.

### National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad

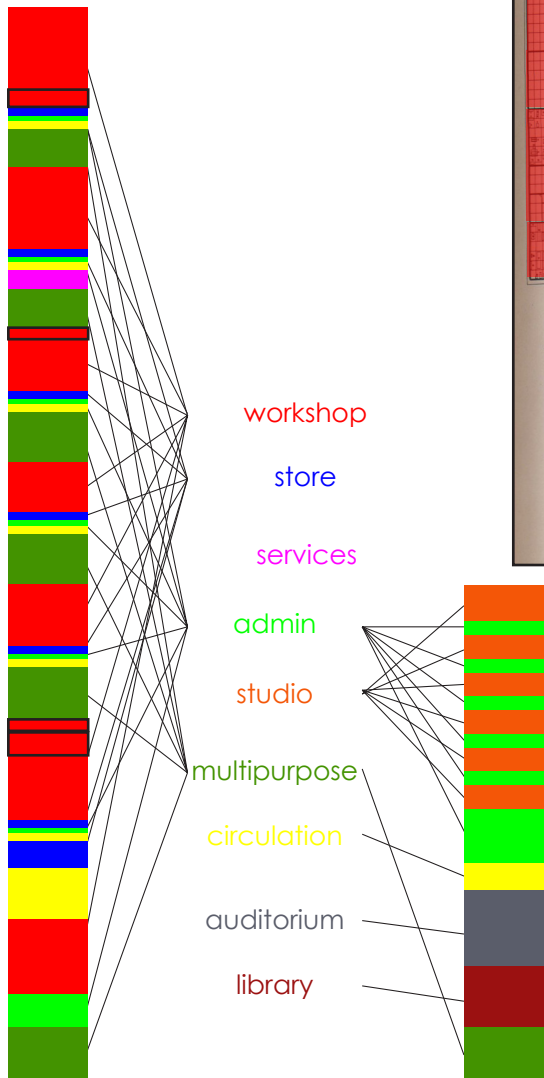
The National Institute of Design- better known as NID- was established in 1961 by the government of India as an autonomous design academy<sup>62</sup>. It has three centers- the main undergrad campus

61 Ibid., 62

62 SHoP Architects, "Tulane University," <http://www.shoparc.com/#/projects/all> (accessed May 20, 2011).



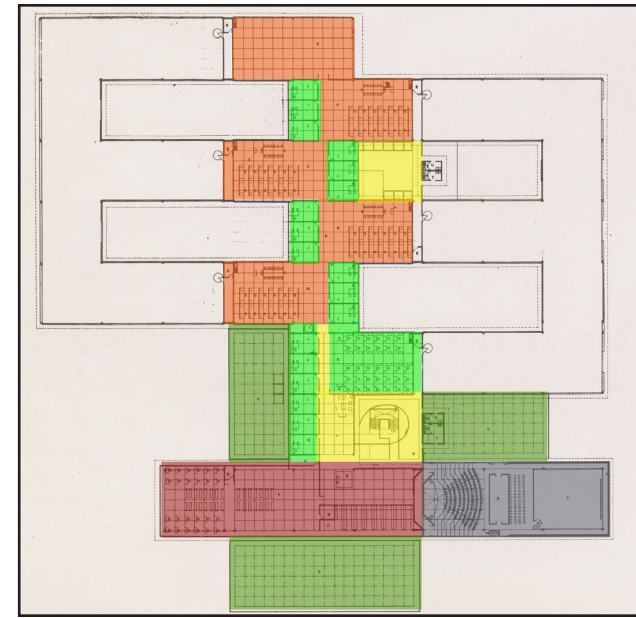
top Fig 4.15: Multi purpose basement  
middle Fig 4.16: External view  
above Fig 4.17: Exposed brick work and recessed openings



**Fig 4.18:** Spatial Program at National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad



**Fig 4.19:** First floor plan



**Fig 4.20:** Second floor plan

at Ahmedabad, Post graduate campus at Gandhi Nagar and a research center at Bangalore. This study focuses on the former, which offers three main branches of design education: industrial, communication and textile.

On the first level a central linear corridor, which can alternate into a product assembly line, stitches together a series of alternating workshops and courtyards. These workshops serve each specialization with an addendum of ancillary spaces and the courts are multi-functional spill over zones. The second level houses studio spaces, seminar rooms and the library. Each workshop is visually connected to a corresponding studio and furthermore, is linked to the latter through an internal spiral staircase. The core of the building is separated structurally from the workshops, which house



<p>industrial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>product design</li> <li>furniture &amp; interior design</li> <li>ceramic &amp; glass design</li> </ul> <p>communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>graphic design</li> <li>animation &amp; film design</li> <li>film &amp; video communication</li> <li>exhibition design</li> </ul> <p>textile &amp; apparel design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>textile design</li> </ul>
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heavy machinery, to ensure that vibration and noise are not carried into other spaces.

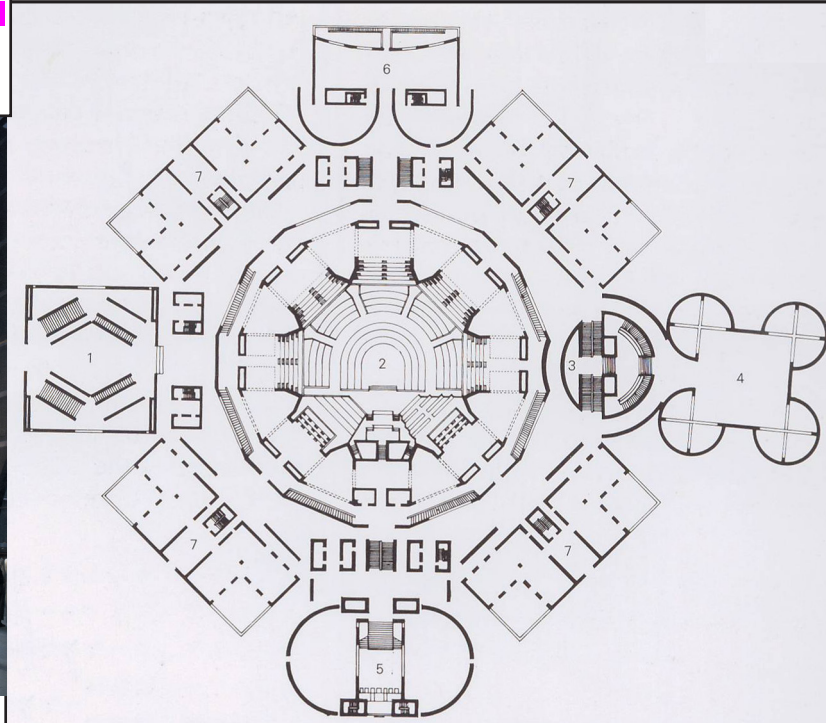
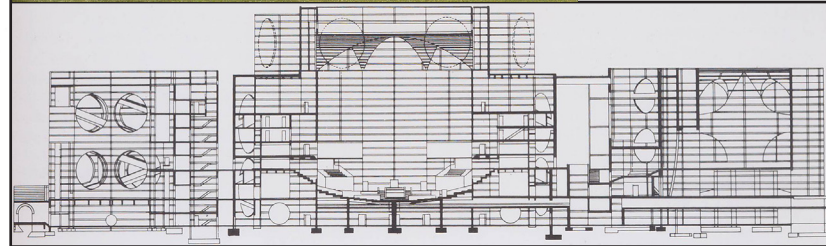
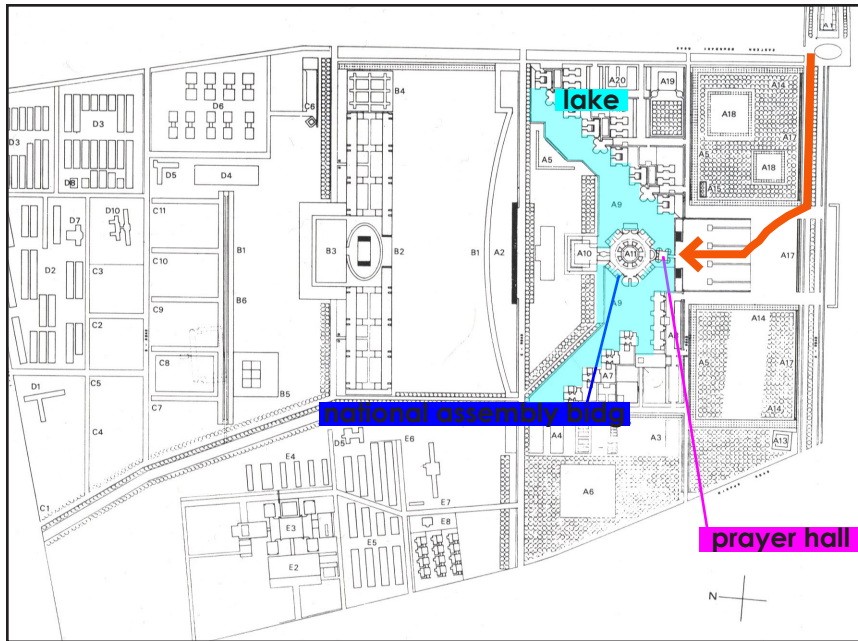
#### 4.4 Campuses with mosques

The mosque represents a spatial domain that belongs to all of humanity and hence, those who wish to “properly” make use of its space cannot be turned away. It is then inevitable that the presence of this patch of universal turf alters and affects the quality of the larger campus. This section deals with two campuses with Islamic prayer halls- both open to public use. The National Assembly Building in Dhaka strategically locates its mosque as the central motif in the elevation allowing the masses to enter for prayer especially during the Friday afternoon prayer. Charles Correa- in his design for the Ismaili Center for the Aga Khan Foundation in Toronto- conceives of the mosque as a climax to the continuum of linked volumes<sup>63</sup>. The prayer hall, additionally, is highlighted by its cir-

top left **Fig 4.21** External View  
 bottom left **Fig 4.22** Exhibition space  
 center **Fig 4.23** At the rear entrance  
 above **Table 4.1** List of Programs  
 below **Fig 4.24** Main entrance



63 A. Juarrero, *Dynamics in Action: Intentional Behavior as a Complex System* (The MIT Press, 2002).



**National Assembly, Dhaka**  
architect: Louis Kahn



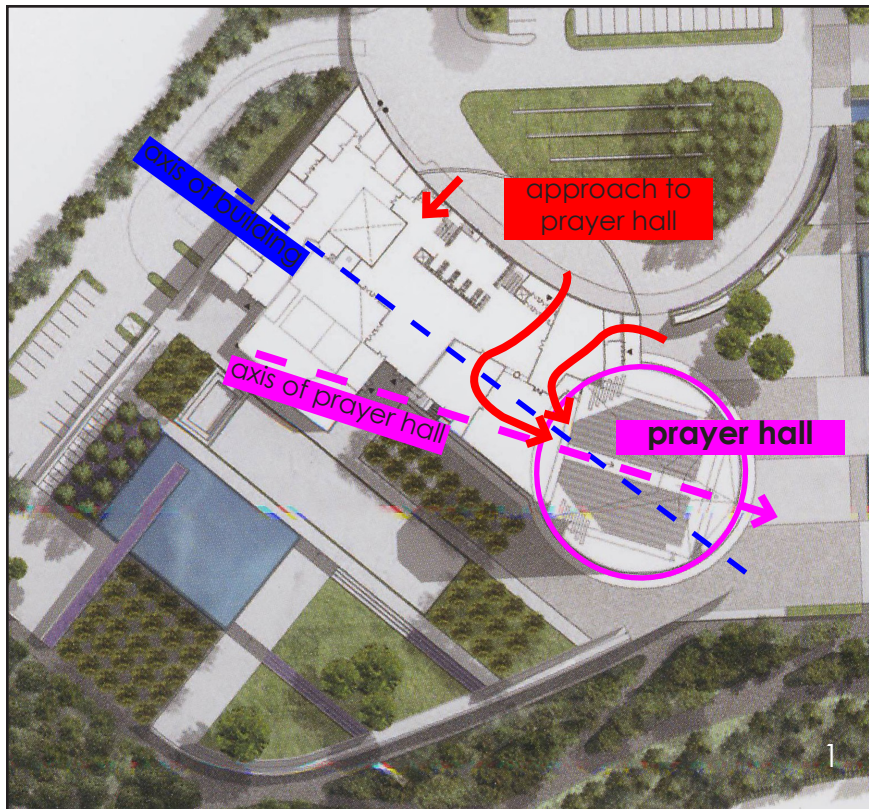
above Fig 4.25 Campus Plan

top right Fig 4.26 Steps leading to the front entrance and mosque

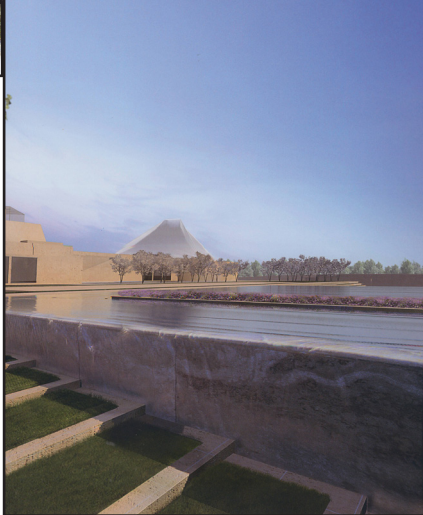
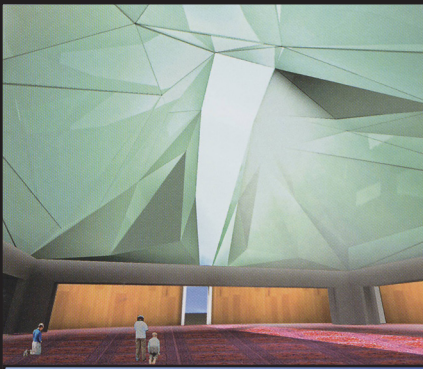
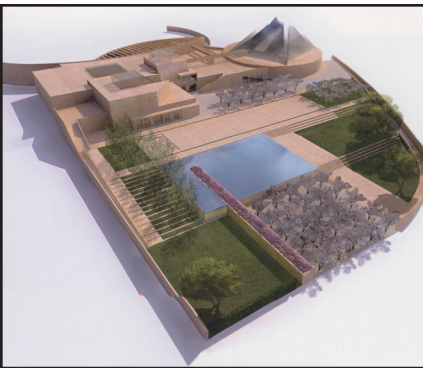
center right Fig 4.27 Elevation

bottom right Fig 4.28 Plan

bottom left Fig 4.29 Inside the mosque



**Ismaili Center, Toronto**  
architect: charles correa



cular circumference and canopied roof rising above the structure. The rounded plan facilitates the shift of axis of the built form from the city's grid to the mosque's orientation to Mecca.

#### 4.5 Transformative and layered spaces: a visual study

This section explores the concept of metamorphing volumes that accommodate numerous uses and generate myriad nuances. Yona Friedman's Spatial City operates on the idea that a city grows through a coalescence of spatial units that can be layered, added, stacked or woven into an existing

top left Fig 4.30 Campus Plan

top right Fig 4.31 Rendering of the complex

center right Fig 4.32 Mosque as climax

bottom right Fig 4.33 The canopied mosque from the water body

bottom left Fig 4.34 The larger complex

settlement or an uninhabited geography<sup>64</sup>. The operations alter density, scale, usage and perception and it can be appropriated to understand public space design as an ephemeral collage of functional operators. Stephen Holl’s School of Architecture is a demonstration of meshing layered functions. The overlapping zones subtract or push into others, creating visible paradigms of built form. The Tulane University building by SHoP architects exemplifies that “the life of a building

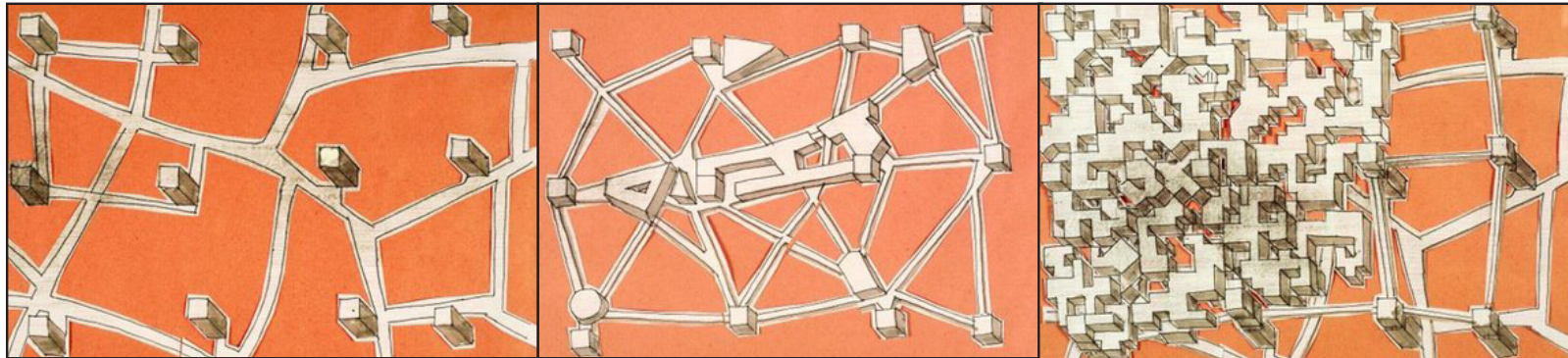


Fig 4.35 The Spatial city as network

**Spatial City** by Yona Friedman

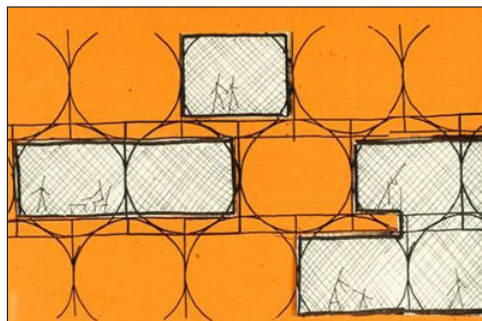


Fig 4.36 Densification

does not begin and end at its façade”<sup>65</sup>. The façade unfurls to reveal social spaces that enmesh the interactive and the performative; different scales of collaboration are strategically interspersed throughout the building.

## CHAPTER 5

64 2A+P, Id Lab and L. Parola, “Yona Friedman- Utopies Realisables,” 2A+P; Id Lab; Parola,L, <http://yonafriedman.blogspot.com/> (accessed Apr 23, 2011).

65 Tulane University, , May 20 2011 <<http://www.shoparc.com/#/projects/all>>.



**College of Architecture,  
University of Minnesota**

architect: Steven Holl



Fig 4.37 College of Arch: A visual study



**Tulane University**

architect: SHoP



Fig 4.38 Tulane University: A visual study

## Programming education and space

### 5.1 Academic Program

Addressing the different threads or ‘serpents’ of the Medusa, the idea of a Graduate school of Design arose in order to serve as a critical link- literal and metaphorical- between forest city and pedagogy. Though Chennai has numerous departments of architecture, fashion and interior design they cater to an undergraduate fraternity. There is a gaping hole in the arena of Graduate Design programs that simulate critical thinking and reflect upon the postcolonial milieu. The various academic and design fields, compartmentalized and sanitized, are cut off from each other and their ethos. The proposed educational program has evolved in response to this void and includes courses across three broad fields of study: spatial, industrial and communication design. Seven degrees and diplomas are incorporated as shown in the list; six of these are application centric while the advanced diploma in Aesthetics and critical studies is a theory based program which resonates with the need for aesthetic reflection and grounding practice into political and social awareness.

The two year courses are broken down to two academic semesters annually, where discipline driven curriculum is imparted, and an interim semester when the branches of study coalesce together and explore various themes interwoven into the “real” world. During this intermediate session, participants shed their traditional roles as teachers, students, professionals and team up on application oriented projects, which are formulated based on three varying themes every year. The chosen themes shall respond to issues germane to the city and shall seek to extend the purview of design into the larger post-colonial context.

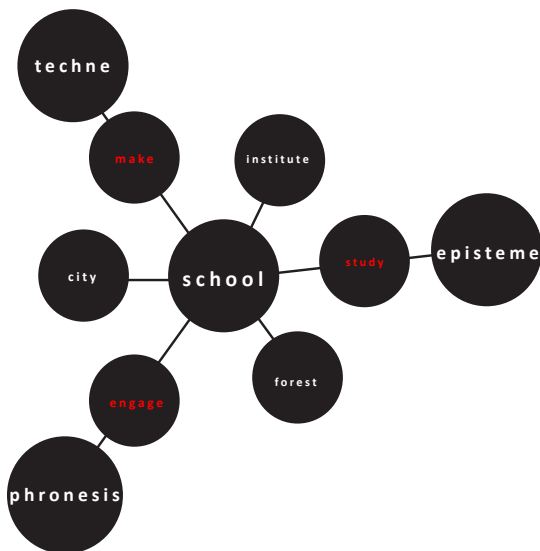


Fig 5.1 Programming education

The central idea behind this format of pedagogy is engender a non-positivist approach that evolves from the specificity of its circumstance while maintaining a link with mainstream academia. The coursework shall require an active engagement with context as the latter transforms from a mere setting or objectified entity to spatialized and subjective phenomena from within which the framework of academic consciousness emerges. The flow of networks between city, natural environment and pedagogy are capitalized as each informs the other, evolving and emanating simultaneously. The physical environment of the campus, hence, requires the manifestation of these fluidities as dealt with in the next section.

## 5.2 Spatial Program

The spatial program resonates with the underlying academic theme of symbiosis between city, environment and campus. The traditional boundaries of inside and outside are deconstructed and the associated binaries dissolved; the site is not perceived as an isolated parcel of land but a continuum of local geography warped and formed by social forces. The fulcrum of the design rests in the entwining of traditionally disparate entities by drawing and interlacing key processes from each; city, forest, existing institute and the design school enmesh to give rise to the final design.

The academic requirements have been formulated from a study of the campus case studies and a consideration of the management's aspirations as elucidated in the table below.

The articulation of the city-campus interface posed a difficult question: why was the street so alive and the campus mostly socially dead? Analyzing surrounding phenomena, tracing their origins

DEGREES	
SPATIAL	Master of Architecture Master of Interior Architecture Adv. Diploma in Aesthetics and critical studies
INDUSTRIAL	Adv. Diploma in Product Design Adv. Diploma in Furniture Design
COMMUNICATION	Adv. Diploma in Experimental Media arts Adv. Diploma in Visual communication

Table 5.1 Programs offered

	sft per unit	no. of unit	total sft
<b>ACADEMIC SPACES</b>			
<b>Studio</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5600</b>
Well lit, flexible spaces with work areas allotted to students. Flexible modules which can accommodate rearrangement and can be combined to form larger spaces for use during interim semester.			
<b>Digital studios</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2880</b>
Design studios catering to the two communication disciplines. To be equipped with computer workstations and faculty workstations.			
<b>Classrooms</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3500</b>
These should enable teacher presentation and student participation with provision for digital media.			
<b>Workshops</b>	<b>2500</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5000</b>
Wood work, metallurgy and digital fabrication workshops especially catering to the industrial design discipline. Two faculty workstation and storage included. Easily accessible from respective studios.			
<b>Digital Lab</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2000</b>
Common space with computer workstations, printing and copying facilities.			
<b>Library</b>	<b>1700</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1700</b>
Stack and reading areas with a separate audio visual section			
<b>Display/ presentation space</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>700</b>

Table 5.2 Spatial program: A breakdown

	sft per unit	no. of unit	total sft
Visible, prominent spaces for presentation, jury discussions and general exhibitions.			
<b>Outdoor work areas</b>			
Spill over zones where multi-disciplinary activities and interaction can be fostered.			
<b>ANCILLARY SPACES</b>			
<b>Administration</b>			<b>1700</b>
Comprises of reception area, cabins, open work space, waiting areas and toilets.			
<b>Informal meeting areas</b>			
Meeting areas at different scales programmed into key nodes of the building.			
<b>Cafeteria</b>	<b>1500</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1500</b>
Centrally located with access to service corridor. To be supplemented with informal vendors.			
<b>Multipurpose hall</b>	<b>1500</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1500</b>
To be easily accessed from the main road and from within the campus with the option of cordoning of an entry temporarily. To be leased out for events.			
<b>Mosque</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2000</b>
Includes men's and women's praying, washing facility with activity rooms .			

(Table 5.2 cont.)

<b>Public space</b>			
To be the interface between road and mosque. Connected to cafeteria and auditorium.			
<b>Toilets</b>			<b>300 sft</b>
<b>Parking</b>			
Two wheeler and four wheeler parking for main campus, mosque and auditorium.			40 two wheeler 35 four wheeler
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29880 sft</b>

(Table 5.2 cont.)

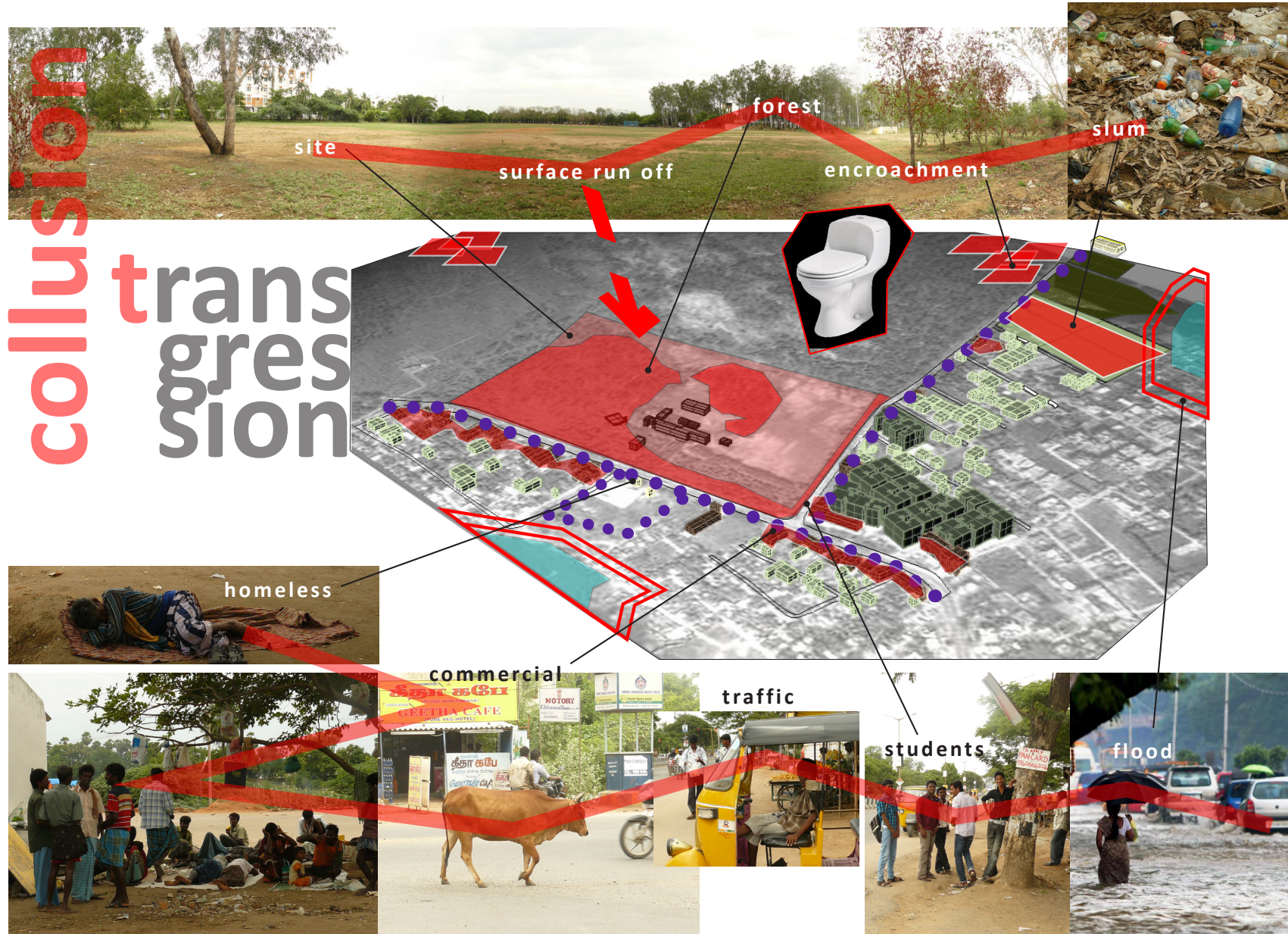


Fig 5.2 Mapping transgression



Fig 5.3 Programming the campus-city interface

and adopting a strategy to manipulate these fluxes to create “place”, led to the realization that repeated collusion between various fragments inevitably resulted in a rich and vibrant space. The existing campus is a transgression of the forest; nature meanders into the social world through the seasonal flooding; grazing cattle represent another community with different needs as wanders by the roadside; loitering students, mobile vendors and passing traffic share mutually beneficent relations. Mapping these transgressions, I was able to understand the needs of the community and define spatial “plug-ins” to enhance or decelerate certain activities.

Infrastructure for vendors would provide incentive for informal commercialization of the street front, while toilets would reduce defecation in forest grounds. These requirements would enhance existing networks and forge new ones. An example of the same is the proposed mosque, which can potentially connect all segments of the social spectrum. Additionally, it can propagate a symbiosis between the rich and the poor through the mandatory tenet of charity. The Friday prayer represents a critical time when the believers throng to the mosque and commercial activity resumes a frenzied pitch. The public multi-purpose space that stretches into the institute and the city, functions as a site for negotiation and reinterpretation of these various socio-economic segments of populace. It can emerge as a legitimate place for displaced and ephemeral economies to exist, emerge and springboard into the concreted mainstream. Furthermore, it allows students to break free of traditional boundaries of design as they address issues such as homelessness, rurbanity and urban ecology.

The temporal dimension imbibed in the architectural allows multiple uses to permeate into the

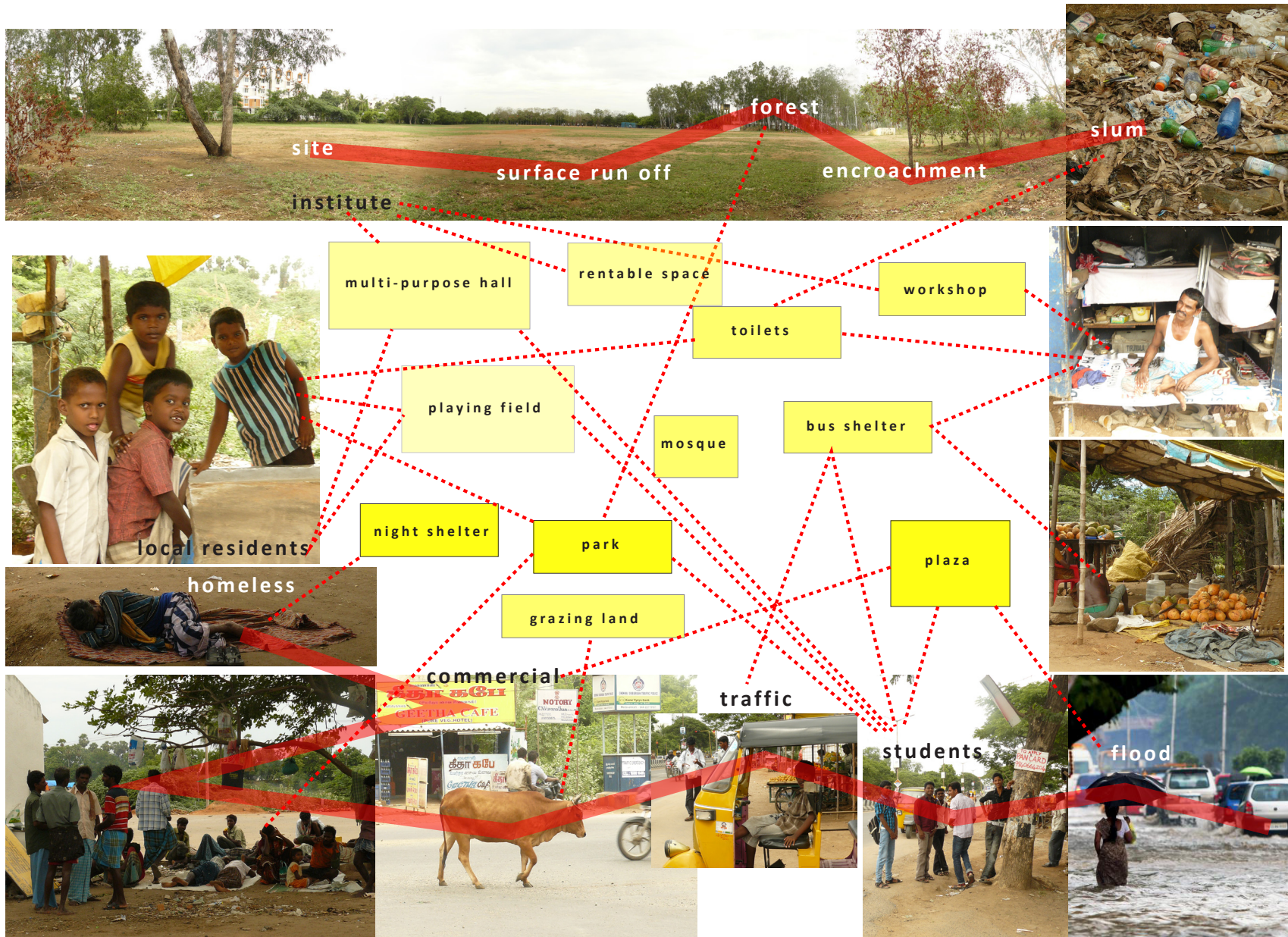


Fig 5.4 Manipulating existing networks and forging new links

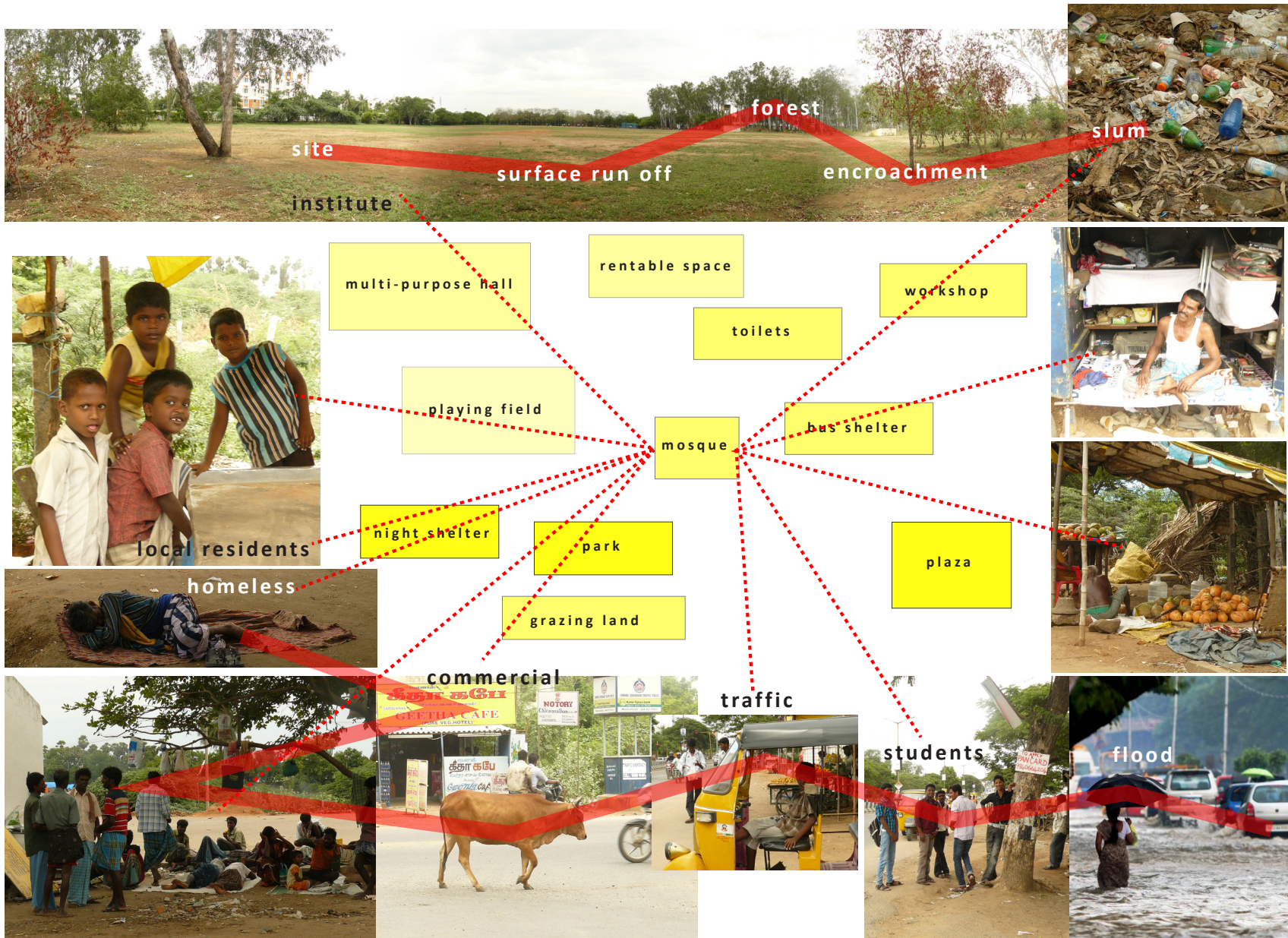


Fig 5.5 Mosque as site of collusion



Fig 5.6 Spatializing the program and networks

project. The playing field apart from being used by the institute can be leased out to other sport based events and finally, activities for the immediate community can be organized here on weekends and evenings. The commercial platform holds the weekly Friday bazaar and can double up as night shelter for the homeless. Furthermore the nature of the entire campus, including the mosque can transform to accommodate seasonal camps and diverse activities. Hence, the Medusa extends herself through these connections beyond the physical confines of the site into the city and gathers urban fluidities into her purview.

## CHAPTER 6

### Design: A manipulation of fluidities

#### 6.1 Strategy: Emerging ideas

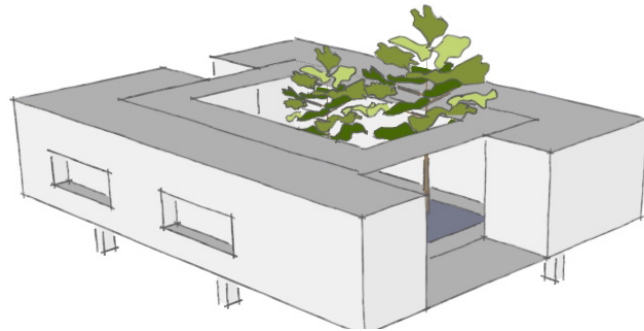
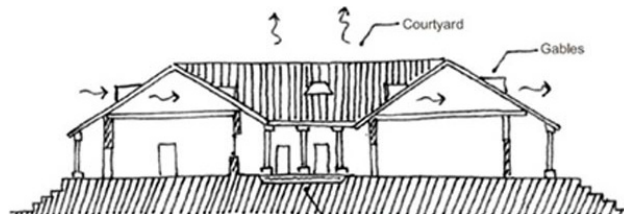
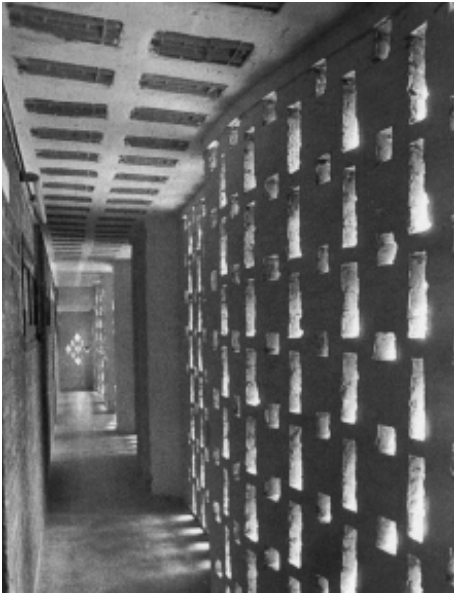
From the multiple threads explored in the analysis, the design process emerged as disparate ideas collaged into the purview of the project at various levels. These concepts, respond to the aspects of delineated complexity are adopted to catalyze and detract phenomena. The major strategies are discussed below.

The need to further to enhance the cross-pollination between the different realms brought about the incorporation of Tree Urbanism and Traffic Light Urbanism. Deriving from the early *Gurukuls*<sup>66</sup>, Tree Urbanism acknowledges the existing Indian culture of using trees as more than relics of the natural world- as shaded areas for respite and gathering; as commercial and working zones; as props to hold signage and a recreational center for children, supporting a host of activities such as climbing, swinging etc. Seating platforms, children's play furniture are wrapped around trees to heighten this usage. The concept of Traffic light Urbanisms seeks to enhance the interaction between the traffic and roadside vendors using the corner junction as an epicenter of informal selling. The intersection shall be paved to slow down traffic and increase pedestrian movement. The public pedestrian corridors shall stem from this junction, capitalizing on the generated bustle.

The public platform is envisioned as impartial ground with necessary infrastructure such as elec-  
66 Gurukuls are the earliest Indian schools where young boys lived in with an accomplished teacher. The classes were held under the shade of trees, where students gathered around their mentor.



Fig 6.1 Design Strategy: Tree and Traffic Light Urbanism



**native arch.**



Fig 6.2 Design Strategy: Native architecture



Fig 6.3 Designing interface and infrastructure

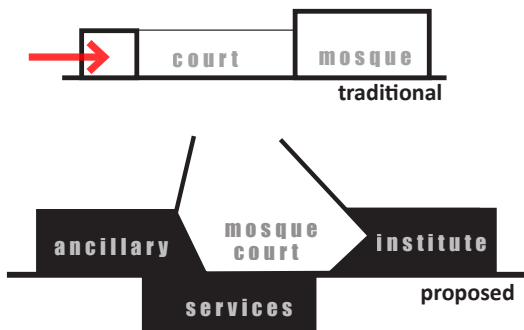


Fig 6.4 Mosque design: Transforming typology

tricity and internet. Semi-permanent modules, vending carts can be parked and plugged in to this interface, then removed easily to generate more than one use to the space. The forest permeates through the porous campus while the city sometimes interacts, conflicts and pushes back simultaneously. The introduction of two bands infrastructural bands are meant to cultivate more permanent work and sell establishments. Abutting salvage yards shall actively engage with garbage pickers from the slum, local sellers and the design school.

The mosque pulls the public sphere toward the campus in the direction towards Makkah. The wide pedestrian corridor ramps up gradually from the platform to culminate at the mosque, which is envisioned as a transforming space stretched between its spatial orientation and the temporality tied to specific region. The design moves from away the traditional mosque complex by combining the main praying hall with the courtyard. This court/mosque cuts into other academic and institutional spaces like the Islamic prayer pierces the day at five precise times. The services such as ablution areas, restrooms etc. are taken below this level.

The design draws extensively from native passive architecture in order to sensitively interface with the scrub jungle. The institute is designed to be a non-conditioned space and hence cooling techniques such as deep overhangs, perforated screens, cross ventilation have been utilized. The courtyard, an integral part of the hot and humid South Indian architecture is a central organizing element in the project and all the functions have been consolidated into ramping loops around these courts. The loops are wound around existing buildings and trees and are linked by ramps that at some stretches function as display spaces for student work.



The underlying theme of collusion is taken forward within the institute, where the all the studio spaces are designed to combine into larger work areas during the inter-disciplinary interim semester. The loops intersect in plan and section to create networks between different floors and blocks, and therefore to reduce any kind of disciplinary or spatial isolation. Furthermore, the three departments and existing institute share a large number of common facilities, which have been implanted into buildings to engender cross-pollination.

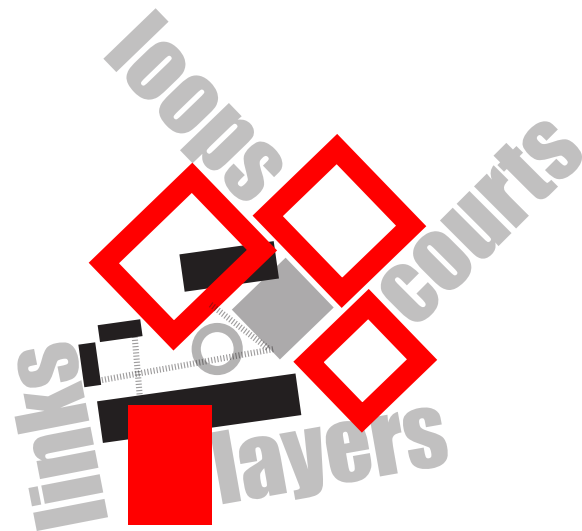
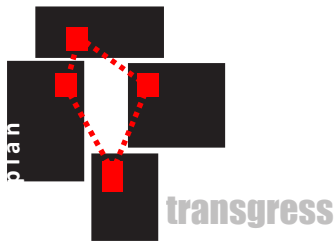
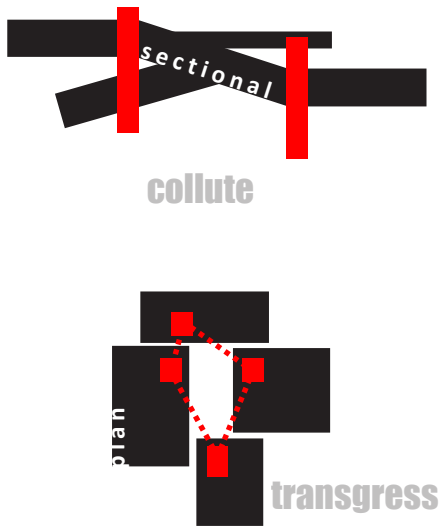


Fig 6.5 Design strategy: combine, collute, transgress

across Fig 6.6 Emerging form: Loops, courts, links and layers

## **6.2 Stitching and sequencing intervention**

The design ideas evolved quickly once an understanding of the context was established however the stitching together of these fragments into a coherent- though not monolithic- whole was a difficult task. At the time I was working on my digital model trying to perceive the inter relations and sequencing of the project. The process suddenly fell into place as I went back to the idea of the collage and started diagramming the progression via a methodology that was able to represent and inclusive of the ethos. The next slides represent the strategic development, which extends beyond mere phasing of the project into the realm of uncertainties and human experience.

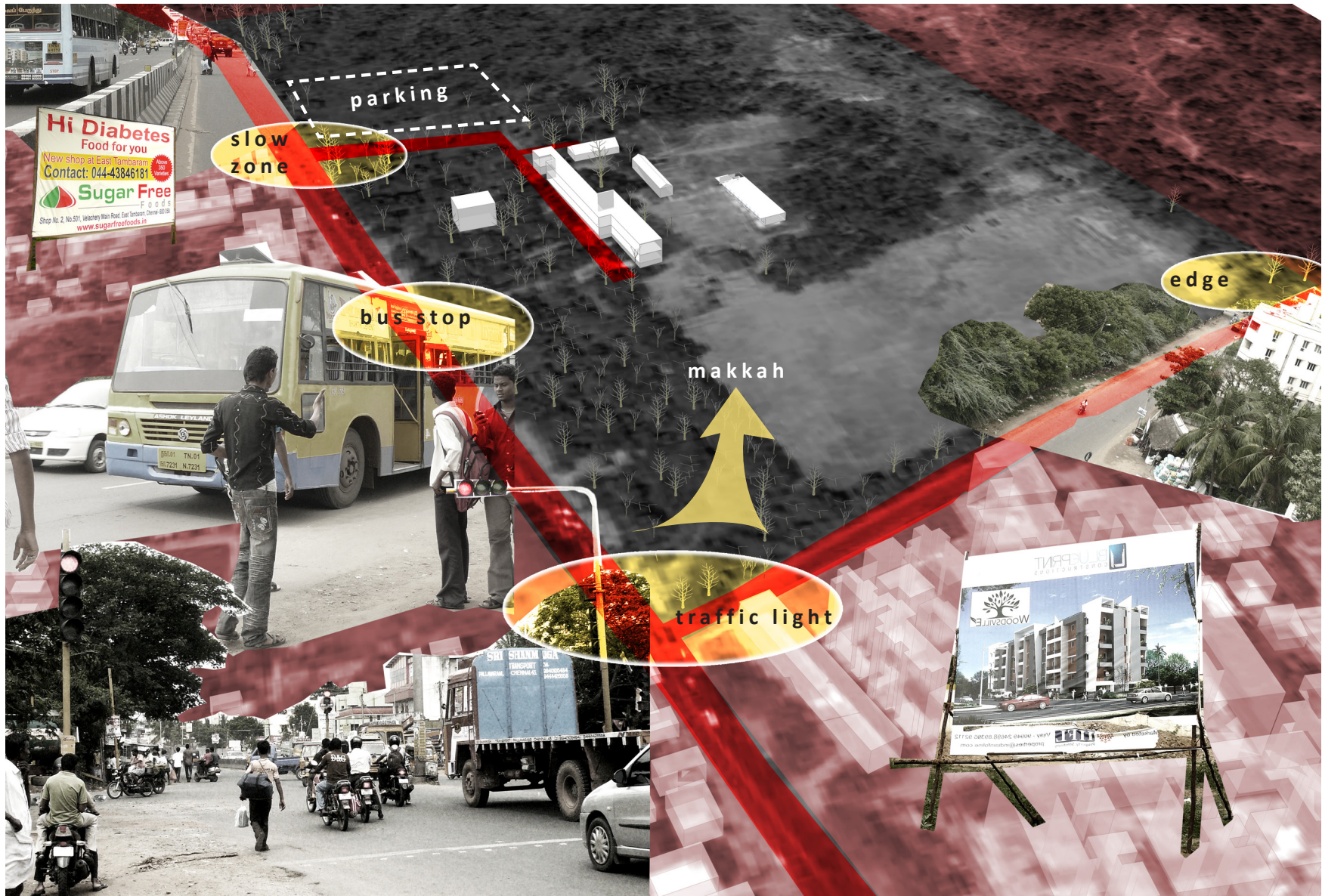


Fig 6.7 Collaging Elements: The site-street interface

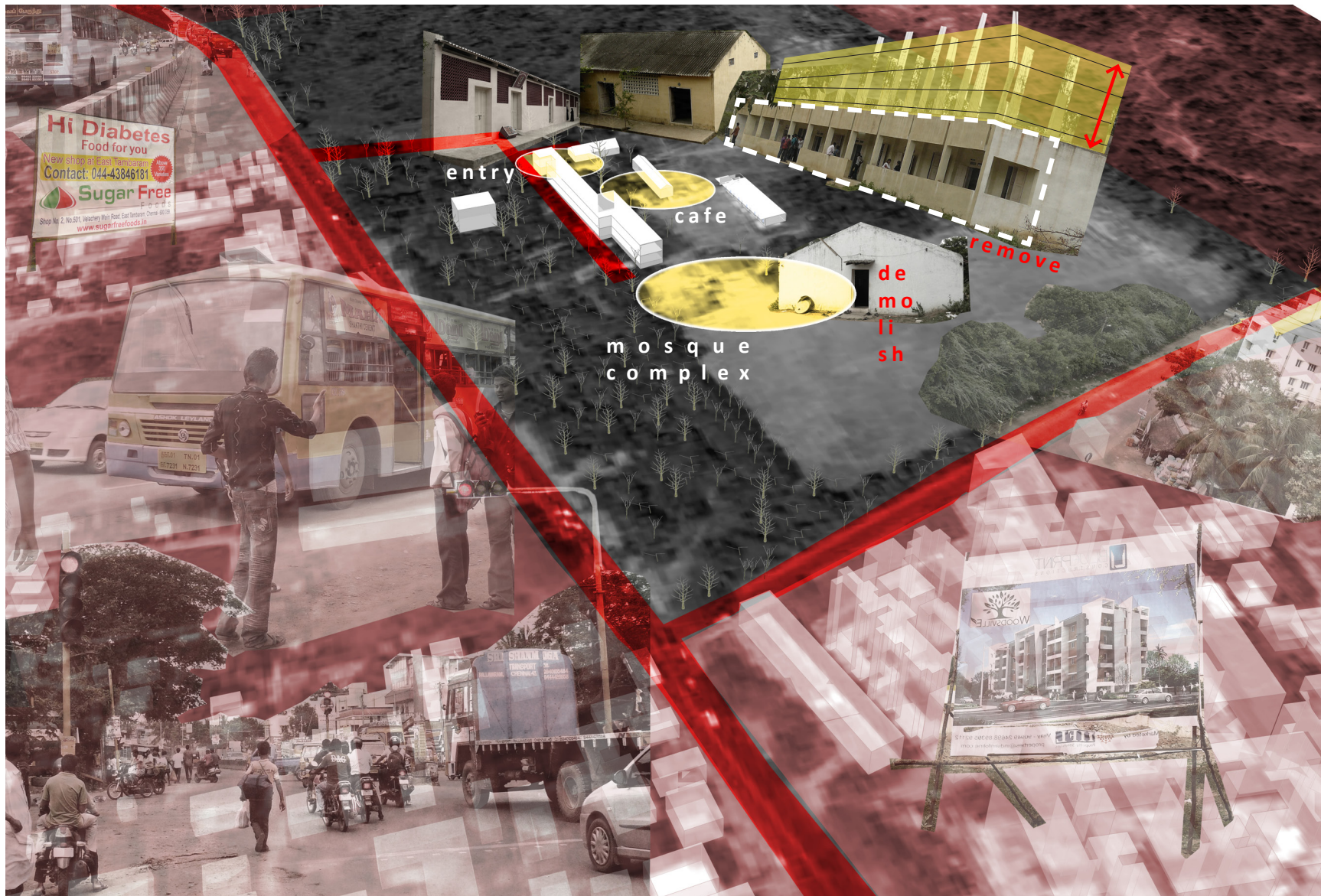


Fig 6.8 Collaging Elements: Inside campus



Fig 6.9 Collaging Elements: Infrastructure



Fig 6.10 Collaging Elements: Processes and networks

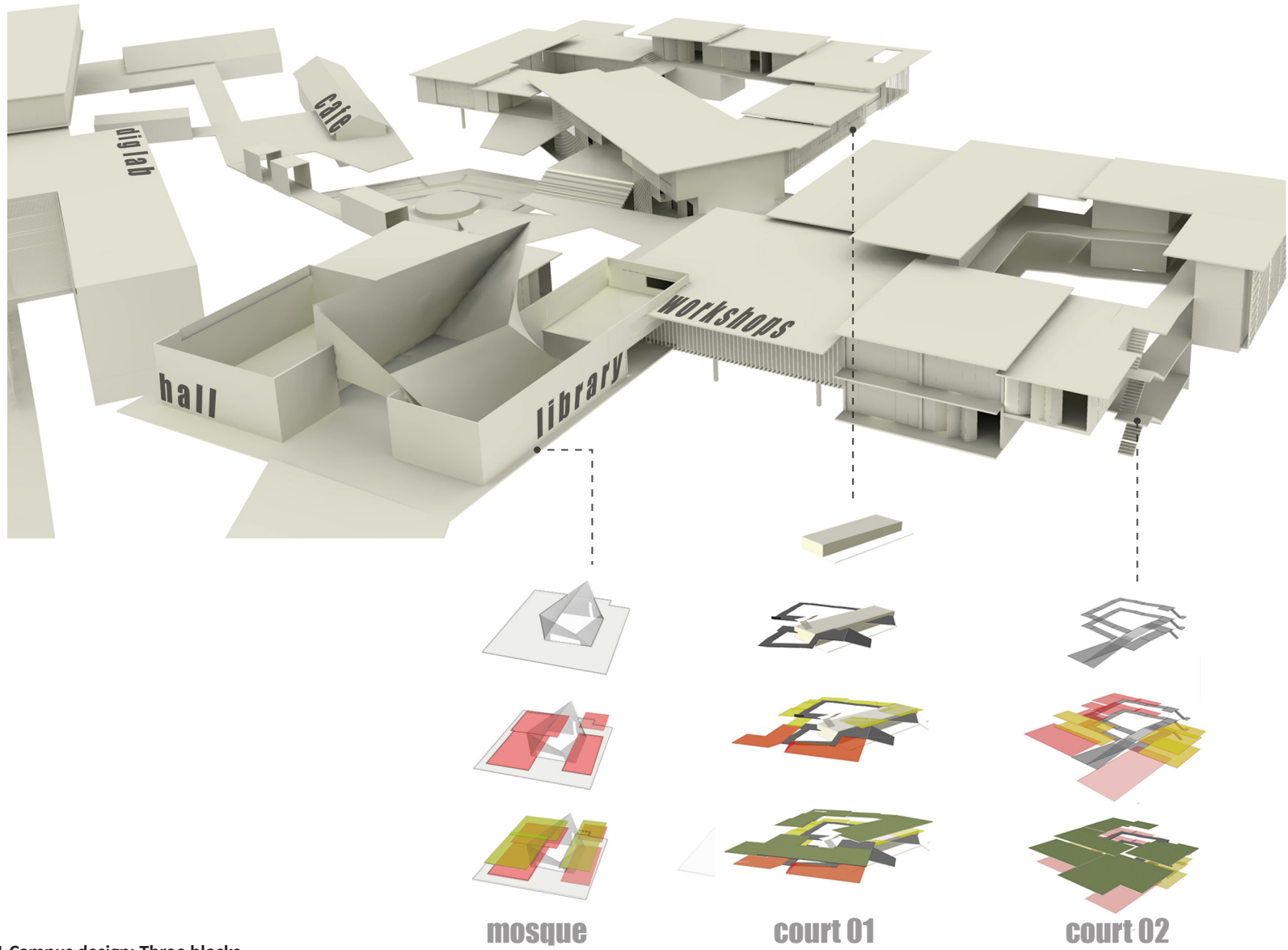


Fig 6.11 Campus design: Three blocks

### 6.3 Final outcome: A configuration of moments

The final presentation comprised of vignettes that seek to depict the usage, temporality and dynamics of the spaces. These varied moments are a sample of events that can emerge and lead to other possibilities of manifestation.



Fig 6.12 Redesigned Portico: Two moments



Fig 6.13 Collaging Urbanisms: Tree, traffic light and infrastructure

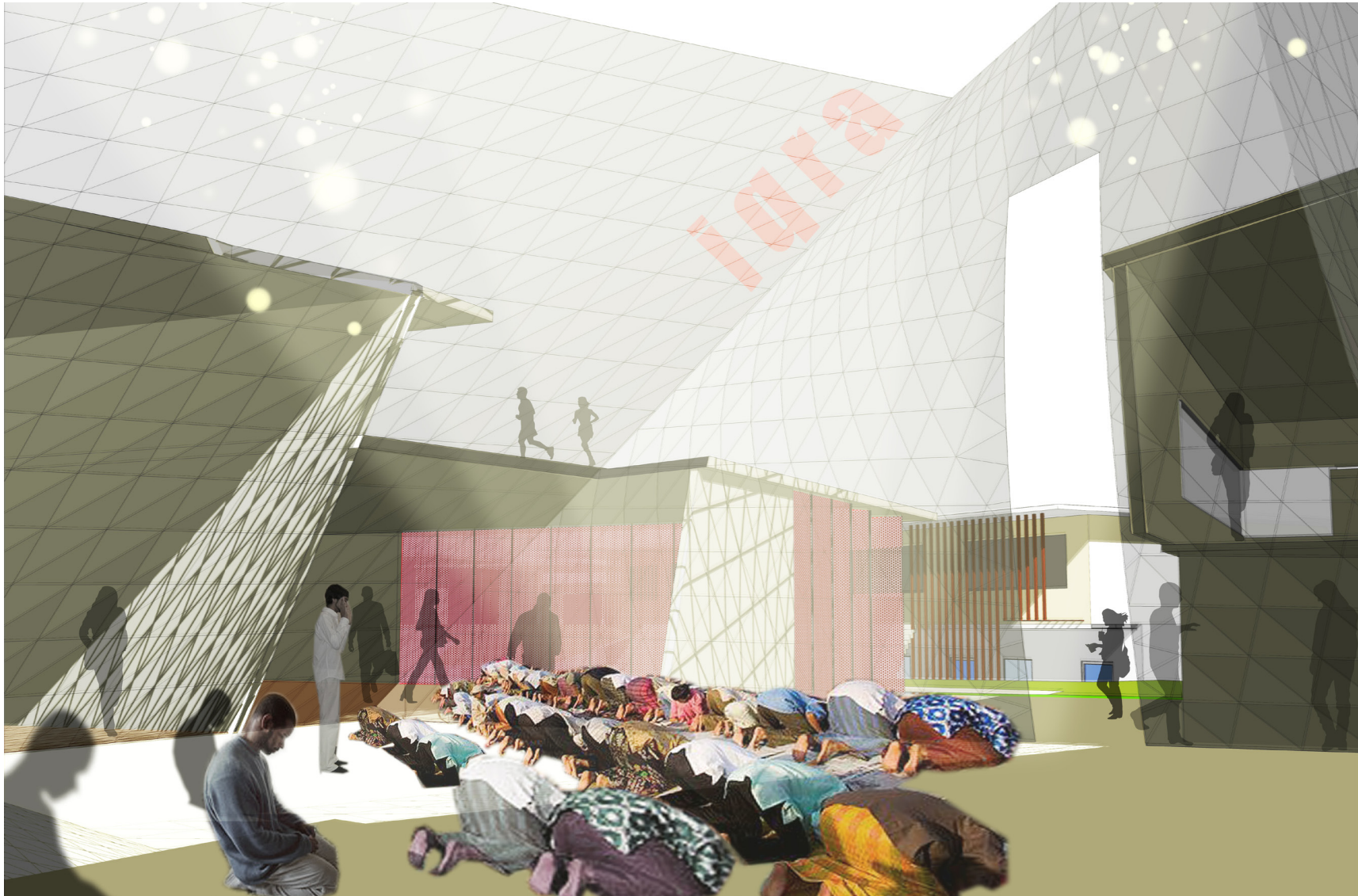


Fig 6.14 A sacred plaza

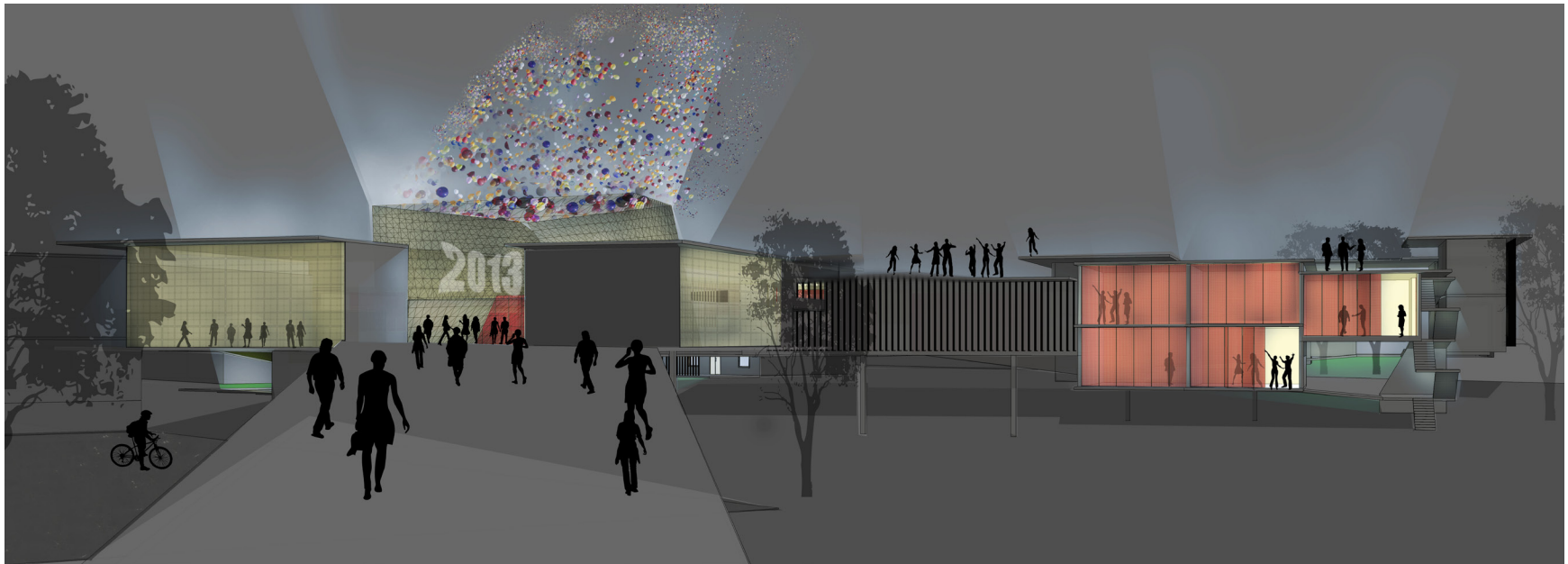


Fig 6.15 A secular mosque



Fig 6.16 Colliding axes: amphitheatre

## Conclusion

Medusa city is rooted in emerging fronts of holistic science, like phenomenology, and folds in uncertainty of social sciences to evolve into a methodology of post-colonial urban discourse. This project contests the hegemony of the meta-narrative, master plan and positivist science not only through proposed architecture but through process adopted, theory and the format of this document. All of the above mentioned faces of the thesis have been considered as hermeneutic experiences- open to interpretation- dealing with hierarchies and organization yet at the same time deconstructing the same. Like the city, these experiences too have a life of their own, extending and reaching beyond the capabilities of the author.

This thesis challenges traditional epistemological boundaries and addresses a pressing need to represent those who simultaneously belong to seemingly opposite sides of burgeoning conflict. As I come from an ethos, where such dichotomies are negotiated and dealt with on a daily basis, it was always surprising to see that “accepted” norms construed them as binaries. I have tried to give voice to this kind of spontaneous negotiation and to provide a theoretical justification. Faced with a bewildering “global” assault on multifarious scales and levels, the Third world has dissolve the forced dialectical resolution, boldly explore unorthodox possibilities and legitimize this distinction. There is a choice between stasis and change; despair and resilience.

I embrace resilience.

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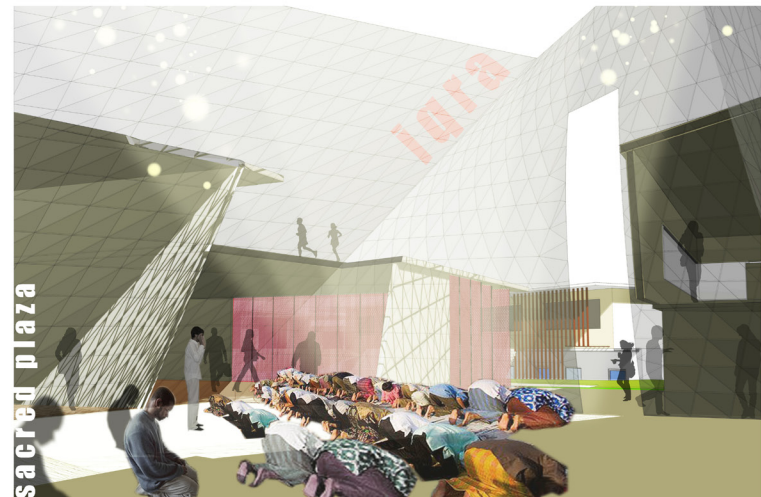
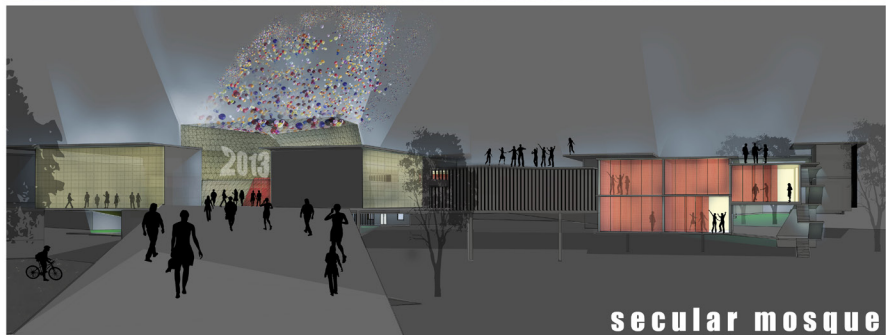
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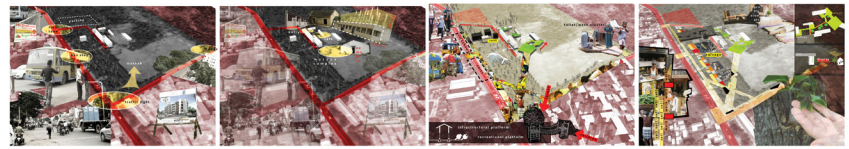
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- 4.30 Author's diagram. Base image: Aga Kahn Publications.
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- 4.37 Author's diagram. Google image search 2011.
- 4.38 Author's diagram. Google image search 2011.
- 5.1 Author's diagram.
- 5.2 Author's diagram. Images courtesy: Vijaey Amridth.
- 5.3 Author's diagram. Images courtesy: Vijaey Amridth.
- 5.4 Author's diagram. Images courtesy: Vijaey Amridth.
- 5.5 Author's diagram. Images courtesy: Vijaey Amridth.
- 5.6 Author's diagram. Base image: Google maps
- 6.1 Author's diagram. Google image search 2011.
- 6.2 Author's diagram. Google image search 2011.
- 6.3 Author's diagram.
- 6.4 Author's diagram.
- 6.5 Author's diagram.
- 6.6 Author's diagram.

- 6.7 Author's diagram.
- 6.8 Author's diagram.
- 6.9 Author's diagram.
- 6.10 Author's diagram.
- 6.11 Author's diagram.
- 6.12 Author's rendered image.
- 6.13 Author's rendered image.
- 6.14 Author's rendered image.
- 6.15 Author's rendered image.
- 6.16 Author's rendered image.

# Appendix A: Final Presentation Boards





**medusa city**  
 a minority run design school in postcolonial milieu  
 hamida najla mohideen committee: vikramaditya prakash, nicole huber

