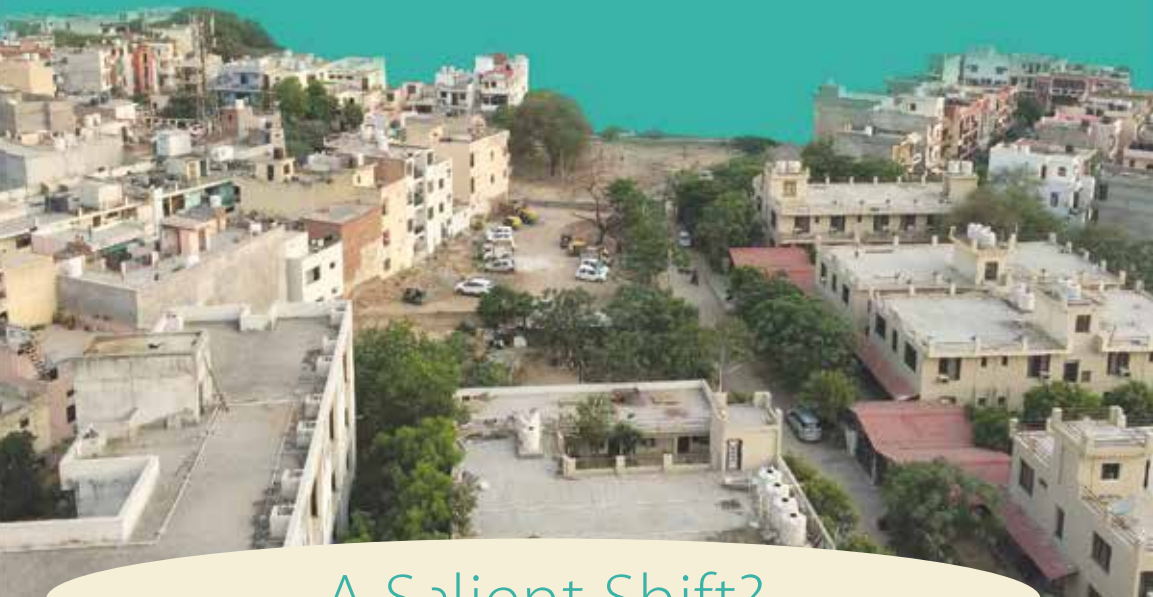


Understanding India's New Approach to Spatial Planning and Development



A Salient Shift?

Sanjeev Vidyarthi
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Learning by Doing

Urban Planning in Bangalore

*Neha Sami**

The question of who plans human settlements is a contentious one and difficult to answer. Several scholars writing on Indian cities have described the prevalence, extent, and efficacy of urban planning in India, especially the role of the government and its agencies.¹ There is also a vibrant body of literature on contemporary Indian cities explaining how non-state players create, support, and shape formal and informal planning processes as well as the politics of these processes. It is not difficult to see that while the overall responsibility for urban planning rests with state and city governments and their agencies, these are far from being the only stakeholders in the

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¹ See, for example, Chatterjee (2004); Ghertner (2011); Roy (2009); Sundaresan (2013). This issue is far from a new one. Debates on the role and efficiency of government planning in India have a long history both in academic writing as well as in the policy sphere.

process.² Highlighting the complex and intricate governmental machinery responsible for the planning of and in Indian cities, ongoing debates have also illuminated the wide range of actors and institutions involved in this process formally as well as informally, within the government as well as outside.³

Indian governments have long created venues and provided support for particular types of formal engagements with non-state actors (Brenner 2004; Sridharan 2008). Planners and policymakers in the Indian national and state governments have frequently invited a variety of advisors, consultants, and institutions to work with them. Examples range from Le Corbusier (in the case of Chandigarh), Otto Königsberger (for Bhubaneswar), and the Ford Foundation (in the case of the master plans for Delhi and Calcutta [now Kolkata]) (Banerjee 2009; Kalia 1985, 2006) to more recent examples of consulting firms such as McKinsey and Company, SCE-Creocean, and Infrastructure Leasing and Finance Services (IL&FS) working with city, state, and national governments (Ghosh 2005; Weinstein 2011).⁴ The involvement of external actors—whether in the form of consultants such as McKinsey and Company; or international agencies such as the World Bank; or government officials, agencies, or government-sponsored delegations from other countries—is not unique to the Indian case. Understanding the planning process in Bangalore can help us better examine and raise questions about planning in other cities in the developing world. There are multiple influences that shape policy in cities of the Global South, where ‘external input is sought to counter limited local capacity and confidence’, and consequently, both the ‘international development discourse and national policy imperatives frame local strategy formation’ (Parnell and Robinson 2006: 337).

² See, for example, Baud and de Wit (2008); Benjamin (2008); Kundu (2011); Sami (2013a); Shatkin (2014); Weinstein (2008, 2011).

³ In this chapter, the focus is only on the more formal and contractual engagements that non-state actors have had in Indian urban planning and policy. There is a wealth of information on the more informal ways in which a range of stakeholders work to influence policy in Indian cities. See, for example, Kamath and Vijayabaskar (2009); Sami (2013a); Shatkin (2014); Sundaresan (2013).

⁴ There have undoubtedly been many colonial and Indian officials, as well as private individuals, who influenced the planning and building of Indian cities before and after Independence. A full discussion of these interventions, however, is beyond the scope of this chapter.

The idea of bringing in external ‘consultants’ is, therefore, not new or unusual to Indian urban planning. However, the specific nature and type of work that they do has undoubtedly changed over time, as has the process by which these experts are identified and engaged with. Consultants today are much more specialized, and are often brought in by government agencies to work with them on very specific issues that range from providing particular technical expertise to helping with process management. Another change, as Weinstein (2011) shows in the case of Mumbai, is that consultants today are more visible. With a few notable exceptions, while ‘consultants on earlier schemes had advised Indian bureaucrats in the background’ (Weinstein 2011: 250), today these experts are much more in the public eye, which often serves to legitimize development agendas that states feel both ‘obliged and constrained to pursue’ (Weinstein 2011: 252). Sood (2015: 5) also highlights the role that multinational real estate developers have played in transferring ‘innovations such as township development expertise across national boundaries’ as well as the role of multinational consulting firms ‘in transferring policy paradigms to cities such as Hyderabad’.

This chapter focuses on the role that external experts or consultants have played in urban planning in Bangalore, and the influence they have had on the planning process itself in the city that has continued to grow rapidly (see Figure 4.1). It also uses the changing roles and varied engagements that Bangalore’s government has had with external experts and consultants as the lens with which to understand the transitions in planning practice in the city. From Independence until the late 1990s, most of the planning in Bangalore was carried out by planners within the city government (Sundaresan 2013). This changed in 1999, when a new state government with a focus on urban reform came to power and appointed a consortium of consultants to develop the new master plan for the city (Kamath 2006; Sundaresan 2013). This chapter focuses on two distinct phases in Bangalore’s planning history—from 1999 to 2004 (when the 2015 plan for the city was being developed), and from 2010 to the present (when the planning process itself was being rethought with the ongoing process of developing the 2031 plan).

Over time, Bangalore’s primary planning agency—the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA)—has consciously moved away from

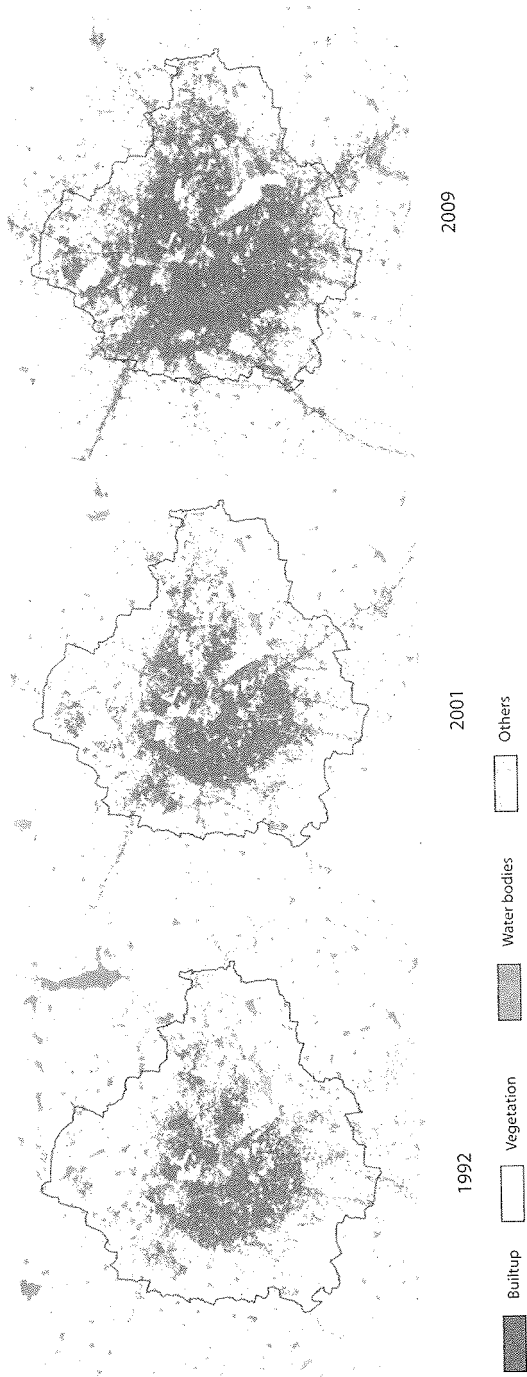


Figure 4.1 Bangalore Built-up Density, 1992–2009

Source: Author's own creation.

developing in-house plans, preferring rather to turn to external consultants to carry out this process on the basis of a brief that the BDA provides. Their experiences of working with external consultants over the last two decades have shown, however, that better communication between the BDA (as client) and the consulting firms (as planners) (Friedmann 2011); being specific about the requirements of the assignment; and working closely with consultants, especially to provide local context as necessary, leads to better plan-making.⁵ The challenges with plan implementation remain. Further, the shift in Bangalore's plan-making approach has been both slow and strenuous, shaped in part by the regime's dependence on the support of individual civil servants at the head of various urban local bodies (ULBs) that could help or hinder the planning process. It is also rigorously shaped by Karnataka's ongoing political and social dynamic: repeated regime change at the state level, incremental restructuring of the state and city relationship, and a growing demand from a rapidly expanding middle-class clientele for planning in urban and semi-urban areas.⁶

The data for this chapter comes from a range of primary and secondary sources: semi-structured interviews with the key actors involved (such as planners at the BDA, consultants involved with the planning process, other government officials, and knowledgeable observers), reviews of government documents, academic writing such as dissertations and papers, newspaper articles, and reports. Since several of the interview respondents requested anonymity, they are not explicitly identified or quoted in the text.

The chapter begins by briefly describing the role of external experts in urban planning of cities in the post-Independence India.

⁵ Friedmann (2011) discusses the role of communication between planners and their 'clients' in some detail in his work on transactive planning, building on his own experiences as a consultant to governments in Latin America, highlighting the importance of planners, especially those who come from outside the local context, communicating with local officials or their clients.

⁶ In the case of Bangalore specifically, the social and political dynamics between an elite middle class demanding better planning, the state government, and various senior politicians and bureaucrats have been well documented. For more see Ghosh (2005, 2006); Kamath (2006); Sami (2013b); Sundaresan (2013).

A discussion on the planning history of Bangalore, examining the role of both government agencies as well as other non-state actors in the process follows next. The rest of this chapter is devoted to understanding the process by which the 2015 and 2031 plans were developed; the relationship between external consultants, and city and state governments; and how the planning process in Bangalore itself has evolved and changed over this period. It aims to show how city governments in India are trying to be proactive about planning, and the challenges they face in doing so. There are lessons in this not only for other cities in India, but elsewhere as well, especially with governments and international and bilateral agencies turning to consultants for help and advice (Weinstein 2011). This work is also relevant in the context of the current global trend towards decentralization of power and administration to local urban and regional governments.

Working with 'Experts'

External advisors, practitioners, and experts on issues of urbanization, urban planning, and governance have been associated with Indian cities in a variety of ways since Independence. As Kalia (2006) writes, one of the challenges facing the newly formed government of independent India was the building of new cities for a new country: cities which had to house resettled refugees as well as new state capitals for newly formed states, but also needed to exemplify a break from India's colonial past, while representing the future. Faced with a lack of domestic architects and planners with the expertise to take on such a task, the Indian national and state governments turned to architects and urban planners outside the country (Kalia 1999).

The purpose of inviting foreign architects such as Le Corbusier, Albert Mayer, and Otto Königsberger was twofold. The first was to draw on their expertise and experience to define what an Indian city 'unfettered by tradition' (Kalia 2006: 134) as Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru demanded, would look like. Second, these initial experiments in city building were also meant to function as a training ground for home-grown urban experts including architects and planners who, in time, would be able to build and manage urban India (Kalia 1985). Neither of these two objectives, however, was

entirely fulfilled. Questions of what makes an Indian city and how to build it are among those that have challenged Indian and international architects and planners over the six decades since Independence, and continue to do so. Although Indian architects are now globally competitive, Indian cities are planned and managed largely by engineers, few of whom have a background in urban planning, architecture, or related fields (Banerjee 2009). There continues to be a shortage of trained urban professionals in Indian cities today and there is a severe lack of urban expertise within city, state, and national government agencies (2009).

Recognizing this constraint, governments and their agencies in India have frequently turned to a range of external 'experts' to help with the planning of their cities. Recent examples include the largest urban renewal programme in India, launched in 2005—the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JnNURM)—that encouraged greater private sector and civil society participation in the planning and governing of urban spaces. In particular, the JnNURM identified a set of pre-approved consultants that city governments could turn to for help with developing city development plans (CDPs) (Mahadevia 2006). The CDPs were needed to obtain funding under the programme (MoUD 2005, 2006). Additionally, in Bangalore as in other Indian cities, city and state governments have drawn on other non-state actors and organizations, such as the Bangalore Agenda Task Force (BATF) and the Mumbai First (Kamath 2006; Mumbai First 2012; Sami 2013b).

The shortage of trained professionals in ULBs combined with rapid urban spatial and demographic growth and the resulting growing demands placed on governments have meant that consultants continue to play an important role in Indian cities. Bringing in external experts is a means of accessing specialized knowledge that ULBs may not otherwise have access to. Moreover, as interview respondents frequently pointed out, it is often more efficient to hire consultants to do specific tasks rather than hire new staff, given various bureaucratic and regulatory constraints. Further, training government officials is time-consuming and expensive, the quality of the training imparted is rarely monitored, and there is rapid turnover and transfers within government agencies. Therefore, local governments often do not see the value of this capacity building.

Bringing in external advisors has indeed enabled local governments to avail themselves of the expertise that they are lacking. However, there have also been challenges in working with consultants, especially those that come from other geographical, social, and political contexts. This is increasingly true as multinational consulting firms become more involved with various governmental processes. During interviews conducted for this research, several government officials noted that the challenge of working with consultants is that they are often not aware of or grounded in the local environment for which they are planning. They also try to incorporate 'best practices' and processes from other locations, frequently without adapting them to the local context. In such cases, the final output produced is often difficult to use, especially if it does not speak to the ground reality. In the case of Bangalore, local (Bangalore-based) subsidiaries of the consulting firms completed the assignment. However, the staff at the local offices came from all over India as well as from other countries, leaving the question of understanding the local context unresolved. Contextualizing consultants' advice also becomes difficult because often there is little coordination between local government agencies and the consultants, once the contract is assigned.

Bangalore faced a similar situation in the 1990s, when the planning process for the 2005–15 comprehensive development plan was outsourced to a consortium led by a French consulting firm called SCE-Creocean (Ghosh 2005) as part of a larger urban development and reform agenda that came from the then chief minister, S.M. Krishna (Kamath 2006; Sami 2013b; Sundaresan 2013). The 2005–15 plan made an attempt to move beyond just land use planning to make Bangalore's city plan more comprehensive by integrating other concerns, such as transport and economic development, within the same plan document. The consortium also aimed to make it a more participatory process by involving other stakeholders. However, this effort did not succeed. Several concerns with the plan development process, as well as the final plan itself, remained unaddressed, and many recommendations of the plan were eventually not implemented (Kamath 2006; Sundaresan 2013).

Building on this experience, the primary planning agency in the city, the BDA, sought to rework the planning process, first by trying

to build capacity to develop the plan internally, and when that failed, by revising the process by which they invited and chose consultants to assist with spatial planning as well as the planning process itself. One of the primary goals of this revised process was to use it as an opportunity to build internal capacity and enable the urban planners at the BDA to carry out long-range planning and visioning (for at least a 10–15 year period), maintain continuity across plans, and avoid the trap of planning for the immediate future and the constant fire-fighting that comes with such a consideration. This time, however, building on their earlier experience, the BDA reworked the entire process by which they invited bids from consultants, and were also much more specific in laying out the terms of reference (ToR). This revised process continues the attempt made in the 2005–15 comprehensive development plan, to move beyond just land use planning, and aims to make the new 2031 plan more comprehensive and integrative.

At the time of writing this chapter, the BDA had awarded the contract to the Delhi-based arm of the Dutch company, Royal HaskoningDHV (Bhardwaj 2014a; Rohith 2014). However, due to the fragmented governance structure in Bangalore (Sami 2013b), there has been a continuing turf war between city and state agencies as well as various citizen groups about which agency has the responsibility for plan development and implementation (Bhardwaj 2014a, 2014b; Jacob 2008). With the establishment of the Bangalore Metropolitan Planning Committee (BMPC) in January 2014, several community groups and urban experts in Bangalore are now questioning the premise of the BDA's authority to continue with the master planning exercise (Bhardwaj 2014a, 2014b; *The Hindu* 2014b).^{7,8}

⁷ The term 'master plan' is often used with statutory standing in the Indian context to indicate a long-term plan of about 15 to 20 years, typically called a comprehensive plan or a general plan in the United States of America (USA) and elsewhere.

⁸ The BMPC was established in January 2014. It is envisaged to be the nodal body for all development and planning in the Bangalore Metropolitan Area. See Government of Karnataka (2014); *The Hindu* (2014a).

Planning Bangalore

Urban planning work in Bangalore is pursued within the larger framework of urban planning in the state of Karnataka that is governed by the provisions of the Karnataka Town and Country Planning (KTCP) Act of 1961. Set up in 1976, the BDA is the local planning and development authority for the city of Bangalore. Planning and development functions were earlier distributed between separate local agencies such as the Bangalore Municipal Corporation, the City Improvement Trust Board, and the Bangalore City Planning Authority. These disparate agencies were combined into a single agency, the BDA (Sundaresan 2013). The BDA, therefore, functions as a public sector developer, a real estate provider, a planning authority, and a service provider.

The BDA is a parastatal body, governed by a Government of Karnataka (GoK) appointed board that comprises representatives from a range of state and local government bodies. Officials of the BDA are appointed from the bureaucracy by the GoK, and are not directly elected. The GoK also appoints a senior bureaucrat as the BDA commissioner, who is the chief executive officer and holds office for a term of three years.⁹ In addition, the GoK appoints a secretary to manage the internal administration, and a town planning member (TPM) to act as the head of the BDA's planning division. The TPM is assisted by two deputy directors of planning and five assistant directors of planning (Sundaresan 2013).

The BDA is responsible for developing the master plan for the functional urban region of Bangalore (an area of approximately 1,300 square kilometres or 502 square miles), as well as for providing basic urban infrastructure such as housing layouts, open space, and civic amenities (Sundaresan 2013).¹⁰ As per the requirements of the KTCP Act, the plan for the city is to be revised every 10 years (BDA 2012b). The BDA also regulates all major developments and land use changes within its jurisdiction. It is vested with the power to raise financial resources either independently or through government

⁹ In practice, however, there are frequent reshuffles within the bureaucracy that lead to transfers of officers regardless of whether they have completed their term in office or not.

¹⁰ The 'functional urban region' is the area that lies within the administrative jurisdiction of the BDA.

sources. The BDA can also acquire land through eminent domain, the market, or through various forms of leases with private and public institutions and individuals.

While the BDA is responsible for the development of the master plan for Bangalore, and the provision of urban infrastructure, the responsibility for implementing the plan is divided mainly between the BDA and the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) or the Bangalore municipal corporation, which is an elected body. In addition to the BDA and the BBMP, there are several other parastatal and local agencies that share the responsibility for different aspects of plan implementation, as illustrated in Table 4.1.¹¹

There have been frequent attempts to transfer the responsibility of planning and development away from the BDA to various other agencies such as the BBMP, the Bangalore Metropolitan Region Development Authority (BMRDA), and the latest in that string—the BMPC. However, these attempts have so far been unsuccessful. Planning in Bangalore is consequently a very fragmented and often contentious process due to overlapping jurisdictions and responsibilities. However, this chapter is concerned mainly with the process of plan development that was carried out under the auspices of the BDA and, therefore, will focus largely on the role of the BDA since this is the main state-sponsored planning effort for the city.

A Brief History

Until the late 1990s, in-house planners employed by the city government—primarily the BDA—planned Bangalore. The BDA prepared its first CDP in 1984.¹² As Sundaresan (2013) writes, the 1984 plan was basic in its approach: the focus was largely on land-use, zoning, and building regulations for the functional urban region of Bangalore. The 1984 plan also officially established the greenbelt around Bangalore. As per the requirements of the KTCP Act, the 1984 plan was revised in 1995. Although it remained focused on

¹¹ For a more detailed description of these and their various functions, see Sudhira, Ramachandra, and Subrahmanya (2007); Sundaresan (2013).

¹² A master plan is called a City Development Plan (CDP) in Bangalore. This CDP is different from the CDP mandated by the JnNURM.

Table 4.1 Functional Distribution between Government Agencies in the Bangalore Metro Area

Agency	BBMP	BDA	BMRDA	BWSSB	BESCOM	BMRL	BMT	KSRTC	KUIDFC	KSCB
Jurisdiction	Municipal Limits	Urban Dvpt Area	Metro Area	Metro Area	Metro Area	Metro Area	Metro Area	Statewide	Statewide	Statewide
Water, sewerage, and drainage										
Electricity										
Transport: road										
Transport: rail										
Road infrastructure										
Development control										
Slum clearance and rehabilitation										
Urban finance										
Tax collection										

Original function	Overlapping function	Coordinating function
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Source: Author's compilation based on various government documents and Sudhira, Ramachandra, and Subrahmanya (2007).

physical planning, the 1995 revision was a little more detailed in laying out the specifics of land use, zoning, and building regulations.

The elections for the Karnataka state legislature in 1999 changed the manner in which planning was done in Bangalore. For the first time since its inception, plan revision and development did not take place in-house within the BDA. This shift needs to be understood within the context of the larger transformation that was taking place within the state government. A series of ineffective chief ministers prior to 1999, as well as the purportedly growing corruption within the BDA had led to the perception that civic authorities in Bangalore were incapable of managing the city (Kamath 2006; Sundaresan 2013). Bangalore was also facing competition from other cities such as Hyderabad for attracting information technology (IT) and biotechnology firms, and for retaining its position as the preferred location of choice for these firms in India (Sami 2013b). As Kamath (2006: 112) writes, by the end of the 1990s, Bangalore and Karnataka were facing a 'governance deficit between governance needs and governance capacities and a deep-seated legitimacy crisis'. The newly elected Congress government that came to power in 1999 and its chief minister, S.M. Krishna, had a clear reform agenda that emphasized the need to build a 'modern' state using 'modern infrastructure' in an attempt to revitalize a declining state economy (Pani 2006).

'Reforming Urban Planning': Public-Private Partnerships, Planning, and the Bangalore Agenda Task Force

Aiming to break away from the older ways of functioning, the S.M. Krishna government focused on market-based reforms, and planned to tap into the vast pool of knowledge in Bangalore by extensively involving the corporate sector and other non-state actors in governance processes through public-private partnerships (PPPs)—the most prominent of these being the BATF (Kamath 2006; Sami 2013b). The BATF was one of the nine taskforces appointed by the state government to help with its reform agenda.¹³ Through the BATF,

¹³ The remaining task forces addressed health and family welfare, primary and secondary education, IT in higher education, infrastructure, the revival of the Government Flying Training School, women, IT, and biotechnology,

the government aimed to tap into the wide expertise and know-how of its members and their networks to help transform Bangalore into a world class city (Sukumar 2003).¹⁴ This marked a shift in urban-planning-related decision-making in the city. In particular, state government officials and BATF core members took most of the decisions, consciously leaving out local government officials.

The chief minister and several senior bureaucrats felt that ULBs in Bangalore were inefficient and corrupt and needed to be reformed (Kamath 2006). They hoped to pressurize the ULBs, politicians, and lower-level bureaucracy into changing by involving corporate and other non-state actors through the BATF. Although the BATF's stated mandate to make Bangalore 'the best city in India' (Ghosh 2005: 4916) was rather vague, its actual focus was narrower: land and infrastructure development within Bangalore (Sami 2013b). While this narrow focus had wide-ranging impacts on local governance and policy practices in Bangalore, this chapter pays closer attention to the specific impacts it had on Bangalore's urban planning process.

The BATE, together with the BDA, undertook a range of projects that focused on spatial planning and development through the Metropolitan Spatial Data Infrastructure (MSDI) Initiative. However, in most instances, the BDA's role was minimal. With the involvement of the BATF in urban planning, there was an emphasis on the adoption of Western principles of urban design and planning, and the use of technology—especially geospatial techniques—to assist in the planning and development of the city. Some of the anticipated outcomes under the MSDI Initiative included the creation of a digitized land use map of Bangalore based on satellite images, the revision of the CDP, the development of a local server that would store and provide sub-city-level data, and the training and capacity-building of local officials (BDA 2012b; Kamath 2006).

Since the BDA lacked the capacity to implement these proposals, it recommended setting up a consortium of international and

emphasizing the state government's commitment to fostering IT and biotechnology development in Bangalore specifically, and Karnataka more broadly.

¹⁴ For more on the BATE, its functioning, and Bangalore's other task-forces, see Ghosh (2005, 2006); Kamath (2006); Sami (2013b).

domestic consulting organizations. These organizations included four French public and semi-public companies (SCE-Creoccean, Groupe Huit, APUR [Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme], and IAURIF [Institut d'aménagement et d'urbanisme de la région Île-de-France], one university (Paris-Sorbonne University in collaboration with the London School of Economics), and two Indian survey companies (IramConsult and Magnasoft Consulting) (Kamath 2006; Sundaresan 2013).¹⁵ SCE-Creoccean led this consortium. The BATF played an important mediating role between the consortium of consultants and the BDA. One of the core members of the BATF acted as the liaison between the two, and conveyed the BDA's expectations to the consultants. Subsequently two BATF staff members were hired by the consortium to coordinate between the BDA and the consultants (Kamath 2006). The planning process, therefore, shifted from being one that was largely managed in-house by the urban planning staff at the BDA, to one where the BDA and its planners had little role to play in the development of the CDP.

One of the key aims for the hiring of consultants for developing the new CDP was to benefit from the knowledge and the technical expertise of a wide range of individuals and institutions that may not have been available to the BDA otherwise. The BATF had also aimed to use this process to build capacity internally within the BDA to enable local officials to carry out long-term visioning and planning, through training and collaboration during the CDP preparation process (Kamath 2006). The consortium for the new CDP for 2005–15 brought together over 100 experts including urban planners, architects, economists, demographers, geographic information system (GIS) and IT specialists, geographers, cartographers, and infrastructure and transport specialists (Sundaresan 2013). The consultants used administrative data from local and state government agencies, and field-based data collected from numerous locations in the city, to develop the database that informed the preparation of the CDP.

¹⁵ The involvement of the French consultants and the Paris-Sorbonne University was supported through a loan from the French government for land management under the Indo-French Financial Protocol. The Protocol was signed in 2003 (Kamath 2006).

The new CDP was a much larger document than previous plans, both in its scope and aims. It attempted to integrate spatial planning with social, economic, and infrastructure planning. The entire process took approximately two and a half years.

The BDA undertook the preparation of the CDP (2005–15) with considerable help from the BATF. Although officially, the plan was supposed to be developed in collaboration with the planners at the BDA, there was little actual interaction between the BDA staff and the consultants.¹⁶ Most of this interaction took place through the BATF. The BATF and its members were almost solely in control of all the actual decision-making. They suggested bringing in external consultants to assist with the planning process. Together with state government officials, the BATF oversaw the process of selecting the consultants, and the reform of the planning process as suggested by their proposal. These decisions were implemented without consulting the BDA planning staff (Ghosh 2005; Kamath 2006).¹⁷

The plan was finally submitted to the GoK for approval in 2005. However, several objections were raised. Most of these focused on the plan development process. There were concerns about the undemocratic nature of the process, especially because of the deep involvement of the BATF and its staff, often by excluding the BDA officials. The lack of public participation was another concern. Although the BDA had committed to a public consultation process, no such consultations were held during the plan preparation process (Kamath 2006; Sundaresan 2013). Further, although the plan was subjected to public review, the objections raised were not taken into consideration.

Given the minimal interaction that the planning staff at the BDA had with the consortium, there was little scope for collaboration between the two, nor was there enough attention given to the training and capacity-building component during the plan revision process. The BDA, therefore, would not have had the capacity to

¹⁶ Personal interviews with town planning officials (BDA) in 2014, Bangalore.

¹⁷ Also, personal interviews with town planning officials (BDA) in 2014, Bangalore.

continue with the newly reformed planning process or to maintain the extensive spatial database that had been planned, should the CDP be implemented. Although the GoK eventually approved the 2005–15 CDP in 2007, it was mired in litigation (Jacob 2008), and was not implemented (Khanna 2014).¹⁸

In addition to the plan being under litigation, there was also political instability at the state level in Karnataka. No political party won clear majority in the 2004 state legislative elections. Consequently, the three leading parties formed a coalition government. However, this arrangement was rendered unstable because of disagreements over power sharing, and Karnataka was finally brought under President's Rule in 2007 until fresh elections were scheduled in 2008. Although the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won the 2008 elections, the state suffered from more political instability during the BJP's tenure. The newly appointed chief minister had to face rebellion within the party and fight allegations of corruption. The political instability at the state level impacted planning and decision-making at the local level with the city governments maintaining the status quo but being unable to implement new plans or modify existing plans. During this time, there was also not much progress made in the litigation against the 2005–15 CDP.

The change in the planning process in Bangalore was brought about largely by an elite middle-class coalition—the BATF—with little reference to the local planning authority. This was a deliberate attempt on the part of the chief minister and senior bureaucrats to supersede local planning agencies, which they felt were corrupt and inefficient (Sami 2013b). The BATF, on its part, insisted on bringing in Western 'experts' who would reform the planning process in Bangalore and help make it a 'world-class city' (Ghosh 2006; Kamath 2006; Sami 2013b). Despite the passage of the 74th Constitutional Amendment that mandated devolution of power to ULBs, most of the key planning-related decisions were taken by an urban coalition made up of the chief minister, senior state-level bureaucrats, and elite middle-class activists. The 2005–15 CDP reflected the priorities of

¹⁸ The petition brought against the GoK and the BDA states that the BDA was 'overreaching its powers' by passing the master plan, which legally comes under the purview of the BMRDA (Jacob 2008).

this coalition. The BDA would, therefore, have had to implement a plan for which they had provided little input.

Learning by Doing: Urban Planning in Bangalore after the Bangalore Agenda Task Force

The S.M. Krishna government failed to win the state elections in 2004. Since the BATF derived its power largely from the backing and support of Krishna and the government, its influence dwindled as well (Kamath 2006; Sami 2013b). However, the impact of the BATF's recommendations was far-reaching. In particular, the BDA began to embrace the use of modern technology and spatial analysis tools to help with the planning process. The use of external consultants also became an increasingly popular method by which the BDA secured expertise that it lacked. Gradually, the BDA also began to outsource to consultants the tasks that were earlier done in-house.

The then-commissioner of the BDA, Bharat Lal Meena was instrumental in making the BDA embrace newer technology to make the plan development and revision process smoother and more transparent. He decided to build on the idea of incorporating modern technology in the planning process that had emerged during the BATF period. In order to do so, he emphasized the need to build internal capacity within the BDA to be able to access and use technology (especially tools such as GIS and satellite imaging) to help generate and manage information that would enable informed planning for Bangalore.¹⁹ There was also a renewed focus on building a spatial database of Bangalore for the BDA through various means including the creation of an in-house GIS cell in partnership with the local academic institutions, and the development of a web-based application called Drushti (which means 'sight' in Kannada, the state language of Karnataka). Using Google Earth as the base, this application allowed users to superimpose the map of the proposed master plan on the existing land use and survey map of Bangalore to assess and understand potential changes that would take place as

¹⁹ Personal interviews with academics in 2014, Bangalore; Personal interviews with town planning officials (BDA) in 2014, Bangalore.

the plan was implemented, enabling a wide variety of stakeholders to interact with the master plan (Manjusainath 2013).

However, with the end of Meena's tenure at the BDA, several of these initiatives dwindled.²⁰ The BDA also faced other challenges especially with internal capacity building. One of the key constraints was the lack of funding within the BDA. Further, planning staff were willing to devote little time to learn new techniques, and they increasingly began to use the in-house GIS cell as consultants to carry out the required spatial analysis rather than learn how to conduct such analyses themselves.²¹ This had two side effects: First, the planners at the BDA began to mechanically use the maps and other data generated by the consultants as they were used to doing earlier, and the benefits of actually incorporating the spatial analysis within the planning and visioning process were lost. Second, the consultants that staffed the in-house GIS cell lost interest in the process, since the original purpose of bringing them on board was very different from what they ended up doing. Moreover, given the political instability in the state, there were frequent reshuffles within the bureaucracy, leading to several changes to the BDA's leadership. Realizing that this process was not working, the BDA revisited its approach to planning, and turned once again to consultants to assist with the plan revision and preparation process.

As mentioned earlier, the KTCP Act requires that the BDA update the CDP every 10 years (BDA 2012b). Despite the fact that the last CDP (the 2005–15 plan) had not been implemented and was still in litigation, in 2012, the BDA began the process for developing a new CDP for the horizon year 2031 (BDA 2012a). However, this time, the process was different. Building on the lessons learnt from the earlier experience with the BATF, the BDA issued a call for a Request for Proposals (RfP) from interested consultants to assist with plan preparation. According to interview respondents at the BDA, the process by which the consortium had been built under the BATF and the Krishna government had not been very clear or transparent—the

²⁰ Personal interviews with town planning officials (BDA) in 2014, Bangalore.

²¹ Personal interviews with academics in 2014, Bangalore; Personal interviews with town planning officials (BDA) in 2014, Bangalore.

BDA had not been involved at all in the identification and selection of the consultants, and had very little involvement during the plan preparation stage (Ghosh 2006).²² This time, however, the process of soliciting consultants was very different—the main distinction being that the BDA was closely involved in all aspects of decision-making.

To start with, the CDP revision process was initiated by the BDA, not by the state government. The BDA's planning staff was closely involved in drafting the new RfP soliciting applications, as well as in creating the new ToR for consultants. The evaluation process, and the shortlisting and final selection of the consultants were also carried out by the BDA. Drawing on the help of a local academic institution, the BDA drafted new ToR that were incorporated into the RfP call (BDA 2012b). The new ToR were based on established international protocols used by multilateral agencies such as the World Bank.²³ The ToR emphasize the need to move away from single-dimensional, land-use-planning-based approaches to urban planning and broaden the scope of the CDP beyond spatial planning and development control (BDA 2012b).

Some of the key changes that the new ToR required include (BDA 2012b):²⁴

- Creation of a coordination mechanism between various government stakeholders involved in urban planning, economic development, and service provision to enable the stakeholders to provide input on the plan and to review the output, that is, the draft CDP.
- Integration and reconciliation of key sector plans including transport, infrastructure development, economic development, and environmental plans. These should also be integrated into a geospatial database.
- Sensitivity towards the need to develop a liveable, economically and socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and economically

²² Also, personal interviews with town planning officials (BDA) in 2014, Bangalore.

²³ Personal interviews with academics in 2014, Bangalore.

²⁴ For more details on the specific ToR, see BDA (2012b).

robust and innovative city; and involvement of all key stakeholders, especially the poor and vulnerable in its visioning, development, and implementation.

- A clearly articulated plan for public participation during the plan development and review process.
- Chosen consultants to assist the BDA with plan implementation and review, and to build internal capacity and establish standard procedures within the organization, especially those related to the use of GIS-based technologies.
- Consultants to ensure that the plan was dynamic and adaptive to change.
- Plan preparation process and the plan itself to be compliant with the Right to Information (RTI) Act (2005).

The BDA's revised process is much more progressive than that of several other cities in India. It includes several features that are not considered in other urban plans, such as, the integration of various sectoral plans, the creation of a coordination mechanism between government agencies, and the establishment of a clear process for public participation. It indicates the desire to move closer to internationally accepted norms to understand urban planning as being much broader than simply spatial or land use planning. In this case too, the BDA drew on the knowledge and understanding of local academics and practitioners to help revise the CDP preparation process, and the RfP. However, building on their earlier experience with the development of the CDP 2005–15, the BDA worked closely with these experts and were able to articulate their requirements clearly.

The entire process of developing the new ToR, and soliciting and evaluating applications took approximately a year and a half. In early 2014, the BDA announced that it had awarded the contract to a Dutch company with an India office based in Delhi—Royal HaskoningDHV (Rohith 2014). However, while the BDA has commissioned the consultants and issued the requisite work orders, the fate of this process and the plan itself remains unclear. There have been objections raised, questioning the premise on which the BDA is taking on the responsibility of developing the new CDP, given the establishment of the new Metropolitan Planning Committee (MPC) in January 2014, although no formal litigation process has been

initiated at the time of writing (Bhardwaj 2014a). While the process of developing the 2031 CDP was an improvement over earlier iterations, it remains to be seen whether these lessons will continue to inform decision-making at the BDA for future plans.

Lessons Learned

The process of revising the CDP for Bangalore has implications not only for planning Indian cities but also cities in other parts of the world. This becomes especially important with the global push for devolution of power to local governments, and the increasing role that non-state actors, especially consultants, are playing in urban planning processes. As Parnell and Robinson (2006) show, this global push towards decentralization comes from particular academic and policy discourses that have emerged largely in the context of the United States of America (USA) where there are much greater levels of municipal autonomy and devolution. Cities in less wealthy countries are encouraged by both international financial institutions as well as donor governments to promote decentralized governance structures and decision-making. However, given the (often) weak capacities of local governments, officials and politicians turn to a wider range of local development agents, whether from civil society, the private sector, international financial institutions, or donor governments.

For Bangalore, and specifically the BDA, the BATF's emphasis on using modern technology and spatial data to develop the 2005–15 CDP made the BDA aware of the advantages of using more modern technology and also made planning staff realize that they lacked these technologies and the know-how to use them. The BDA briefly attempted to build capacity internally, but this did not succeed. The planners at the BDA did not see the value addition of learning these skills and preferred to outsource the data collection and analysis to external consultants. However, it was clear that merely appointing consultants to undertake discrete parts of the plan development process would not be a solution either. To be meaningful, the plan revision and preparation process needed to be conducted in close collaboration with the planning officials at the BDA. The new ToR for the 2031 CDP reflected this realization.

However, the inability of the external consultants to 'anticipate and negotiate the local institutional traditions and ... build broader support among the public and local civil society' (Banerjee 2009: 206) jeopardized the implementation of the 2005–15 CDP. It also limited the extent to which the innovations that these consultants and the BATF brought were absorbed by the BDA and other ULBs. Banerjee's (2009) reflections on why the planning expeditions from the USA to India were not more successful remain relevant—the BATF and its consultants especially, like the American planners, proposed important innovations in the planning process, but were unable to ensure their widespread use because they failed to build Indian capability to engage with these innovations. Nor did they anticipate how the local political and institutional context would impede implementation (Banerjee 2009). The other issue was the lack of communication and coordination between the external consultants, local planning officials, and the larger public. The ability of consultants to absorb and incorporate local 'experience-based' knowledge into the plan itself is critical to develop a dynamic plan document (Friedmann 2011).

However, the struggle that the GoK and the BDA have faced with respect to assigning responsibility for planning for Bangalore needs to be understood within the larger framework of urban governance in India. Despite the devolution of power to ULBs mandated by the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (1992), implementation has been piecemeal (Sami 2013b). In the case of most Indian states (including Karnataka), 'the local or city government has little autonomy in decision-making and what little there is, is hindered by political and bureaucratic hurdles' (Sami 2013b: 125). Most of this power rests with the state government—the devolution of responsibilities and power is at the discretion of the state government. The powers that ULBs have are not the same across the country because state governments have not uniformly devolved power. Given this situation, it is challenging for ULBs to be proactive about reform, since they lack the authority to take and implement decisions. In addition, governance in Indian cities is extremely fragmented. Consequently, governments and their agencies are currently not capable of meeting the increasing demands placed on them by international capital, inter-city competition, and urban residents. This has led to governments turning to non-state actors for expertise and technical knowledge.

Also as argued earlier (Sami 2012, 2013b), as governments come to rely on non-state actors such as consultants and on task forces such as the BATF, a more hybrid model of urban planning seems to be emerging in Indian cities, where these actors are playing an increasingly important role in policy and planning decision-making. Such trends are evident in Indian cities such as Pune, Delhi, and Mumbai, and in other parts of the developing world where governments are increasingly turning to various non-state actors such as civil society groups and private consultants (Ghertner 2011; Kundu 2011; Parnell and Robinson 2006; Sami 2012; Weinstein 2011).

In part, this evolving approach to urban planning in Bangalore and other Indian cities reflects a growing trend where governments are gradually withdrawing from active service provision and investment, relying increasingly on non-state actors to fill the gap. This is not to indicate that governments are in any way becoming less powerful or relevant, but rather to illustrate their changing role. The involvement of the private sector and other non-state actors continues to take place within a specific framework set by the governments and their agencies.

There are also concerns about how this shift—from government- to non-state-actor- provided services—will impact the manner in which urban residents, especially marginalized groups such as the urban poor, interact with the government (Coelho, Kamath, and Vijaybaskar 2011; Kundu 2011). This was and remains a key issue in the Bangalore CDP preparation process—while the BDA committed to a public participation process during the revision of the CDP 2005–15, it did not deliver on that promise. Consultants and other non-state actors, unlike governments and their agencies, are not required to keep the interests of the wider community in mind, and so may focus only on selected groups. It becomes important, then, to make certain that government agencies and officials work closely with consultants (and other non-state actors) to ensure that the planning and policymaking processes are equitable and speak to a wider range of interests and constituents.

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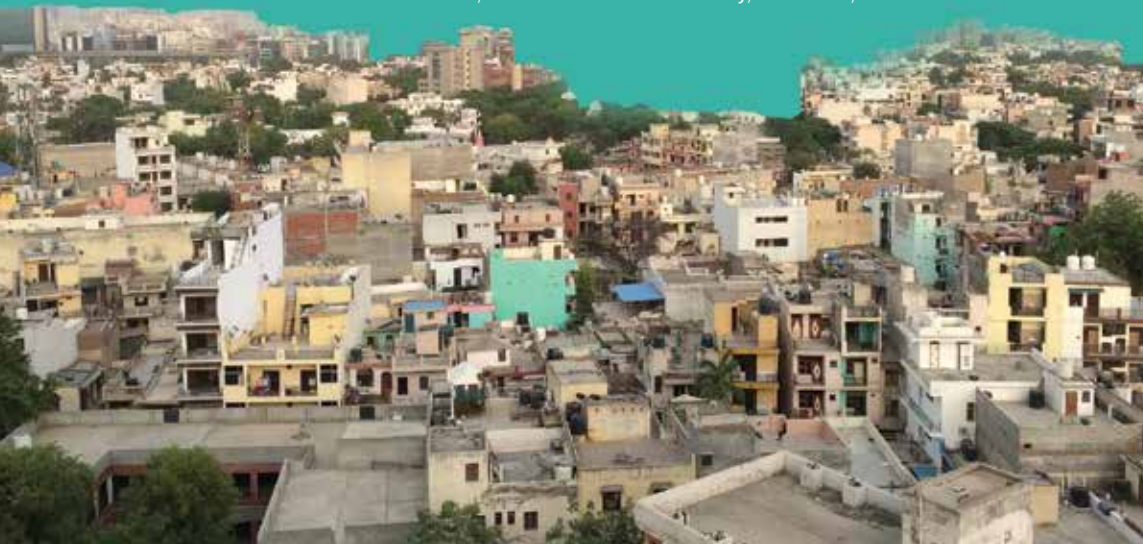
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