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It is indeed my pleasure to participate in the waterfront conference at this historic city of Riga. I am particularly happy and moved by the quality and diversity of the presentations at this conference.

My presentation is broadly divided into three sections. The first being – "Dream into Reality", the second being a short introduction to "Mumbai's History" and the third being – "Bandra Waterfront Redevelopment Project".

Before getting on with my main presentation, I would like to share with you all a few observations that I have in this conference. As I said, there has been a vide variety of presentations with differing philosophies and beliefs. I agree with many, and disagree with the others.

My observations & views may be summarized in the following manner.

Some want mega development
Some want to promote mega building projects
We do not want to construct buildings rather down size them

You want to expand your cities but we want to decentralize our growth

You want to build on the water, filling-up the bays and the marinas.
We want to 'free our waters'
You want to raise real-estate values and interests.
We want to demolish them for larger public access
You call it reclaiming from water
We call it landfilling,

I   A DREAM INTO REALITY

Development of nearly 4 kms of the sea front at Bandra and the ongoing redevelopment of nearly 6 kms of the seafront at other places is a part of a larger movement for reclaiming the sea front as a public open-space, has greatly rejuvenated these places and the people.

That people from all classes freely share these newly created unbarricaded spaces along the sea is truly heartening.

What is particularly remarkable is the strengthening of community network and participation due to this continuing movement for democratization of public space, particularly the waterfront.

There is an urgent need for city planning to respond to the environmental conditions, to preserve natural resources and conserve the coastline.

Since the government cannot be absolved of its responsibility to ensure a good quality of life for all, citizen's initiatives must put pressure on state agencies to implement progressive and people friendly policies and plans and introduce new ones where there are none.

We hope to convince that an active and participative people can translate a fantastic dream like the plan for Bandra's waterfront appeared to be when it was first presented into reality.

It involves struggles on many fronts, but the reward is immense.

II   MUMBAI CITY

(1)   Introducing Mumbai's History:

In 1668 King Charles II of England married Princess Catherine de Braganza of Portugal and the islands were given to him in dowry. The British realized the potential of this city by the bay, and developed it into a major port. Under the British rule the islands were merged by land-fillings. The city took shape and grew into prominence in this period. The contributions of the British range from gothic buildings to India's first train service. Bombay hold a significant place in the freedom struggle of the country as it was from here that the historic "Quit India Movement" was started in 1942 by Mahatma Gandhi, father of the Nation. The British rule ended in 1947 when India gained its independence.

Bombay originally was an archipelago of seven islands. Massive landfilling spanning over a period of 60 years joined the seven islands. In fact the city's politics and development has been largely influenced dominated by landfilling. The city's seafront measures 44 km on its western and 14 km on the eastern coasts respectively. Set-up as a port, by the British, "Mumbai developed looking out to the ocean with the quay as it focus, Bombay grew precinct by precinct, becoming a collage, not only of varying architectural styles and different urban forms, but more importantly, of the many ethnic and social groups that colonized its growing localities." Bombay now called "Mumbai" has now transformed into the commercial and financial capital of India. Its population being over 14 million and land area 437 sq. kms, the second largest city in the world today.

(2)   Mumbai's Waterfronts:

1   One of Mumbai's greatest assets is its extraordinary coastline and a series of unique and picturesque waterfronts.

Tragically, these waterfronts are also the city's biggest dumping ground – both literally and metaphorically.

The fact is that these thirty-four kilometers of the western coast have never been considered in the planning and development process as an integral part of the city's landmass. On the contrary, landfilling, sewage disposal and encroachment have constantly abused the waterfronts. The eastern coast has been put to restricted use for defense and docks and has thus been restricted to public access.

Abuse and Misuse of the Waterfronts:

Yet, for the millions who live in our crowded city, the waterfronts are the only major open spaces.

People flock there to catch a breath of fresh air, to soak in the golden light of the setting sun in the far horizon or to share a moment of togetherness with a loved one.

Unfortunately, unplanned commercialization has largely destroyed the natural environment.

The absence of a master plan for development of the waterfronts has encouraged the powerful to manipulate and grab land, thus gradually starving the city of its most vital public space and dwindling spaces on class basis.

Further, under the present mindless trend of privatization of development in India, spaces for public life are down sized and emptied of their interactive and deliberative purposes.

This movement in Mumbai city is an attempt to overcome such undesirable social and cultural menace and help in providing space to foster better relationships amongst people and concern for public-space.

Survey of the waterfronts:

The survey of the western waterfront by P.K. Das & Associates in 1997 brought into focus for the first time the degree to which the city's waterfronts had degenerated. It showed the existence of a definite nexus between the state and private developers, which allowed the manipulation of land use in total disregard of the larger public interest. The survey attributed the socially unjust developments along the waterfront to the absence of a cohesive master plan.

Objectives of the Movement:

Our objective is to restore and preserve the natural beauty of these waterfronts in a pragmatic and realistic manner, working within existing realities and solving key problems through simple, modest design solutions; thereby also creating momentum for positive change. There can be no grandiose ideas here. In fact, no major construction of buildings on these waterfronts should be allowed. Instead there must be firstly, a halt to the abuse of our waterfronts; secondly, a selective reallocation of spaces and activities; and thirdly, very minimal restructuring where necessary. Most important, these waterfronts must remain the collective asset of the city and all its citizens, and a vital, vibrant element in its environmental and social fabric.

Open-spaces in Mumbai is the lowest in ratio to its population in comparison to major cities in India and world over. Open-spaces ratio per 1000 population in some of the cities of the world and metropolitan cities of India is as follows – New York – 5.33 acres, London – 4.84 acres, Paris – 3.11 acres, Tokyo – 0.68 acres, Delhi – 4.4 acres, Calcutta – 3 acres, Mumbai – 0.03 acres. It is therefore socially and environmentally necessary to protect and maintain the cities dwindling open-spaces.

III   BANDRA WATERFRONT REDEVLOPMENT PROJECT

(1)   What was for several years the backyard with filth and violence is now transformed as a fore-court of social and cultural activity.

Personalization of this space and a sense of belonging by those who come here are the hallmark of this development.

(2)   **Protests:**
This project is a protest, against the various forms of urban crime in public-spaces; it challenges the various attempts by unscrupulous developers for grabbing land for commercial interest; it opposes the growing nexus between anti-socials, politicians, police and officials that is increasingly undermining public interest.

(3)   This project is not meant to promote any grandeur plans for construction of buildings and entertainment malls but, is a humble attempt to protect the coastline, safeguarding the ecologically sensitive areas, protect the mangroves, beds of rocks, sandy beaches etc., simultaneously developing space along it as an effective public forum for social and environmental justice.

(4)   **Popularizing plans & designs:**

Comprehensive planning and designs are is a powerful instrument for mobilizing and sphere heading the movement for reclaiming public-space.

Initially designs and design presentation were used to attract attention and to bring interested people together, particularly the neighbourhood citizens. A public discussion of the design   invited and instigated participation. Citizens began to then realize the different dimensions of   the project and found opportunity to express their views. They were able to relate to the project and comprehend the important change that it would bring about in their life in the neighbourhood. Regular discussions of the design and other aspects relating to the implementation then became engaging whereby more and more people got attracted to the project and participated actively.

It is extremely important therefore to consciously popularize our designs and professional values. Besides merely designing the architect needs to undertake a larger responsibility. Architects do need to play the role of an activist and carry out regular campaigns for popularizing their plans and designs as well as the project

It is a myth that planning and designing is an exclusive responsibility of exclusive professionals.

Making planning and designing process inclusive and participatory and a subject of public discourse is my professional objective and my social responsibility.

(5)   **Community participation & City's Governance:**

This is an important beginning in the movement of citizen's participation in decision-making and collective control of the development programmes & projects that affects their neighbourhoods. Learning to work together for public good and taking collective decisions together is an important democratic process.

I believe that our cities have a tremendous opportunity for co-operation and co-operative action and not one of competing spaces.

This movement along with other democratic rights movements in the city has set new directions in the governance of the city.

(6)   **A Bottom-up Development Process:**

We have to be committed to a bottom-up approach in decision-making, in which vital decisions are taken at the community level first and then presented for approval at the highest level. In the case of Bandra Waterfront development, a series of community presentations and community approvals preceded the various sanctions by the concerned authorities. This resulted in the plan being owned by the community in contrast to the general situation in which the plans are forced down on the neigbbourhood for its implementation.

Implementation of this project has led to new and meaningful relationship between the neighbourhood community and the local government. Otherwise an apathetic Municipal administration, uncaring about the city's public-space and the coastline in particular is now more responsive and supportive to the citizen's movement. That these developments and the facilities are the basic rights of   people is being increasingly realized. The Police too behave differently now.   They too respond and co-operate with the local citizens. This collaborative effort has enabled the formation of a more meaningful and effective monitoring group to not only execute this project but also to maintain discipline, confront dubious interests and challenge encroachments.

(7)   Finance & Monitoring:

While people's participation is crucial to the sustainability of such projects, finance   is important too. In this project we have successfully forged partnerships with private sector for their financial contribution for construction and subsequent maintenance, but with a difference. Appointment of the private sponsor is made directly by the Citizen's Association and not by the city administration. The Association approves the plans and activities of the sponsor and also regulates it too. Regular review meetings are held between the Association and the sponsor (s) to review the situation and to plan for its further development. Agreements are drawn between the private sponsor and the citizens trust. This is different from the normal procedure in which the private sponsor enters into a direct agreement with the local government. Invariably the sponsor then manipulates and undermines the sanction to their benefit while neglecting, even abusing public interest.

(8)   **Time for celebration & Solidarity – Its festival time.**

The residents of the various waterfronts in Mumbai and future generations must be ready for an unrelenting struggle against the forces of so-called development and destructive ventures and take the responsibility for maintaining high aesthetic standards of beauty and social responsibility for all public spaces.

Lewis Mumford in his book - *'The Highway and the City'* says: "Perhaps the best reason for bringing out this book now is that it may still further widen the circle of public discussion, and thus prepare the ground for a more humane order of building and living than that which a money-centred and power-intoxicated economy has seen fit to impose."[21]

It is this concern with humane architecture and democratic functioning that underpins our struggle to develop and humanise the landscape of Mumbai with its vibrant waterfronts.

As Zillah Eisenstein, Professor of Politics at Ithaca College, and activist, observes, "Democracy thrives in the open public spaces where body and mind can be exercised."