Resilience in Historic Indian Native Towns

Community Resilience for Conserving Heritage Values Within a Historic Indian Native Town

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Introduction

Resilience amidst communities is a function of its ability to negotiate and overcome chronic stresses and shocks. Historic urban spaces in a rapidly urbanising economy like India are extremely contested and exhibit social as well as spatial stresses. Coupled with these 'natural' stresses, the state developed tools & mechanisms fail to protect the urban fabric or actively abets a biased unreal development model. In this context, methods to develop studied proposals aimed towards safeguarding the cultural identity embedded in built heritage of the historic town is very much required both in people's imagination as well as the state vision.

In Mumbai, the recent World Heritage tag for the Gothic Architecture and the Art Deco Ensemble prompts one to relook at the status of the communities, their livelihood and their housing within the Inner Fort Precincts as well as the Native Town.

Objective

The course intends to identify inherent resiliences of the historic urban communities and develop models to further strengthen them based on the values, interests and aspirations of various stakeholders. The studio also seeks to update and enrich the base data of the housing and livelihood conditions.

Preliminary Findings

- Rich community network across religious, regional identities, food and cultural diversities
- Spirit of Entrepreneurship reflected in the livelihood activities
- Unreal Estate driven Speculative development pressures are not sustainable and resilient solutions. The new high rise typologies are leading to poor quality of urban spaces.
- Lack of empathy towards heritage and myopic vision for a holistic development reflected in the development plan leading to relatively rapid erasure of the identity of the place.
- Lastly the preliminary interactions with stakeholders elicit mix responses ranging from largely despondency to few voices of hope

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