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Living and Sustainability: An Environmental Critique of Design and Building Practices, Locally and Globally

Abstract / Initial Proposal Form:

1. Paper / Proposal Title:

Living with Density – An exploration of Density Models for Living in South Asian Megacities

2. Format:

In person presentation

3. Author(s) Name:

Jude D'Souza

4. University or Company Affiliation:

JDAP Design – Architecture – Planning

5. Abstract (300 words):

The question of Affordable Housing is one with a diversity of responses in the context of the South Asian city. This question is exemplified in the mega city of Mumbai [earlier Bombay] where about one in three families in the metropolitan region live in slum settlements while two of three families within the municipal limits of the Greater Mumbai city are slum dwellers. There are several issues tied to the question of affordability,

starting with income levels - 50% of the population of the city has a household monthly income of under USD 250 and 99% under USD 1250; another is the issue of 'shortage of land' - a tired, over-used cliché that is essentially the lack of "serviced" land being made available for the city to grow into. There are a number of related issues as well including speculation on real estate, land occupied by functions other than living or working and the geographical nature of the city itself.

The urbanisation model of a city like Mumbai follows a self-fulfilling pattern largely influenced by the politics of city planning processes. Political interest in allocating funding into developing areas that are well populated is higher than fund allocation to areas where there are no clear, immediate vote banks to be addressed. As a consequence, the city feeds on itself leading to a highly compact model of development, expanding only slowly onto the peripheries, gradually packing it in first before spreading outwards in expanding its physical boundaries.

While a compact urbanism is substantially more beneficial from an ecological perspective than uncontrolled sprawl, it also has its adverse ecological effects within the city right from encroachments on sensitive wetlands and protected forest areas, high levels of pollution and substandard living standards and lack of green open space.

The question of Affordable Housing then is clearly one that must be answered at multiple levels - from the level of policy to the level of design, from a strategic perspective of planning for city expansion to provide for serviced land for living and working to localised interventions at the level of slum redevelopment schemes and related processes.

As the scope of this project, we take the view that densification is an inevitability that the South Asian city is going to have to confront and make virtue of. Taking the case of Mumbai as an exemplar of the need to Pack It All In, the project explores typologies of housing developments with permutations of plot sizes, unit types and built contexts to explore models of density that take the notion of Packing it In to its extreme while ensuring living conditions and spatial qualities are met in each case. The process of progressively experimenting and attempting to reach a Peak Person Density in each case will be explored that would help build grounds for setting [or stretching] limits of density in urban regions of South Asia.

6. Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Jude D'Souza is the Founding Principal of JDAP - a Design, Architecture and Planning firm based in Mumbai, India. Working on a variety of projects across scales and disciplines covering residential, cultural, commercial and hospitality sectors, the firm has been published and awarded both nationally and internationally. The firm works with

the principle "Design that is closer to Nature". This emphasises a wide range of ensuing approaches, key among which is developing the ability through design, to do "More with Less".

Jude is also involved in academics and has been Studio Head at Parsons Mumbai, the Sir J.J. School of Architecture and is currently teaching at the Kamla Raheja Institute for Architecture.

He is also a passionate designer with a strong focus on sustainable building and transportation systems with patent pending inventions to his name. He has designed among others a human-powered vehicle powered by the walking motion and lightweight modular canopy systems using bamboo. He is a nature lover and an avid cyclist.