# Feature Articles

## Neoliberal Spatialities in Gurgaon: Privatization, Negotiation and Reciprocity in India

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**Discussion of the emerging neoliberal urbanism in peri-urban regions of India typically provokes critical comments focused either on the dispossession of village peasants by processes of capital accumulation or the capacity of villagers to resist such processes. Departing from both these perspectives, this article seeks to investigate a more hybrid case of neoliberal spatiality in the city of Gurgaon (Gurugram). Here, the attitudes of native landowning villagers have evolved to accommodate a new landscape of neoliberal accumulation under mutually beneficial and negotiable conditions. The article seeks to uncover the network politics that exist between private developers and landowning villagers based on principles of reciprocity and negotiability in the co-production of neoliberal spatiality.**

Since the arrival of neoliberalism in India in the 1990s, the nature of the country's urban transformations has dramatically changed. A pattern of instant urbanism has spread across the rural peripheries of metropolitan cities to accommodate new "spaces of flows" tied to global capital.[1] Today, special economic zones (SEZs), IT corridors, satellite townships, technology hubs, and other new-economy enclaves are being extensively promoted by politicians and urban state agencies and built by private developers through the conversion of peri-urban agricultural land. A marked urbanization of neoliberalization thus seems to be under construction, spatializing the economic imperatives of an ideology that rests on belief that "open, competitive, and unregulated markets . . . represent the optimal mechanism for socioeconomic development."[2]

Typically, this new urbanization is described in terms of capital accumulation based on the dispossession of the peasantry. However, this article aims to document and dis-

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cuss a more complex case of neoliberal spatiality.[3] Through a close study of specific spaces in the city of Gurgaon (also known as Gurugram), we will show that native landowning villagers have largely come to an accommodation with neoliberalism, collaborating with real estate developers under carefully constructed conditions seen as mutually beneficial and negotiable. Conditions in Gurgaon thus showcase the production of spaces where such opposing imaginaries as global/local, urban/rural, modern/traditional, and formal/informal may be simultaneously present, interweaving, and in continuous negotiation. Our primary objective in this effort is to highlight how landowning villagers seem to have risen above the fate of dispossession, and instead are benefitting from larger neoliberal processes (although the sustainability of this development model is questionable on several counts). The article thus seeks to uncover the special "network politics" that exist between private developers and landowning villagers, illustrating how the two groups have established strong alliances based on principles of reciprocity and negotiability.[4]

Methodologically, the article will focus on ordinary "interstitial spaces" as sites for thick description.[5] Our intention is to look at the boundaries or intersections where both identities — rural and urban, modern and traditional — meet and interact in multiple ways. In convergence with AbdouMaliq Simone and Edgar Pieterse's understanding, "it is here that we see the reciprocal complicities, divergence and interdependencies that exist among things we otherwise just see as diverging."[6] Interstitial spaces such as streets, markets, and village commons may provide a stage to unravel everyday socio-spatial co-mingling, where diverse actors maneuver via intricate operations to claim their rights to space. In focusing on these spaces, we specifically hope to uncover how larger processes of neoliberal urban change are negotiated, contested or constructed. Interstitial spaces in Gurgaon are still evolving in form, and a wide range of actors (private developers, native villagers, migrants, state authorities, street hawkers, etc.), each with different objectives, are seeking to stake a claim to them. Since so much comes together in these spaces, they provide an apt foundation to (re)describe emerging neoliberal spatiality.

This analysis draws upon several months of fieldwork by Anamica Singh, carried out between 2014 and the present, in the spaces of Nathupur village and DLF Cybercity (which form major components of the present-day city of Gurgaon). The fieldwork employed two important urban research methodologies in parallel. The first comprised "ground truthing," in which the researcher placed herself as a detached observer, interpreting the spatiality of interstitial spaces from an urbanist's point of view.[7] By inter-referencing mixed data (Google maps, historical maps, archival records, observation of interstitial space by walking and making field notes, photography, and critical drawing), the researcher sought to use this methodology to map the most salient and hybrid features of these spaces. This mapping was then enhanced by a second, ethnographic method, in which the researcher sought to establish herself as an attached participant observer, trying to examine the space from the point of view of its residents and users. The ethnographic approach relied on interviews, mapping participant trajectories, photo-ethnography, and scratch notes. As actors in the field variously included native villagers, private developers, white-collar workers, and service-class migrants, the researcher sought to employ Martin Beattie's notion of "shifting personal identity" during the process of collaborative documentation, by adapting from time to time to the interviewee's positionality.[8] This changing position helped in capturing multiple voices that were in dialogical relation.

In what follows, we will first discuss the historical context that allowed for the production of contemporary neoliberal urbanism in the peri-urban areas of Indian metropolitan cities. We will then focus on the case of Gurgaon, on the negotiations between developers and landowners there, and on the interstitial spaces where these negotiations may be seen to result in hybrid spatialities. Finally, in a concluding section, we will discuss how this hybrid urban reality has the potential to alter the way we perceive the production of neoliberal space.

## THE RISE OF NEOLIBERAL CITIES IN INDIA

As one approaches Gurgaon from Delhi along the elevated Delhi-Jaipur highway (NH8), a sixteen-story "Ship Building," clad half in granite and half in glass and housing the headquarters of the real estate company DLF (Delhi Land and Finance), marks a "new frontier" of neoliberal urbanism.[9] Behind it lies the "Cybercity" built by DLF, featuring glazed corporate offices (for prominent international companies like Ericsson, Microsoft, Oracle, GE, and Pepsi), an elevated Rapid Metro light-rail connector line, an entertainment "Cyber-Hub," and luxury apartments. DLF Cybercity is among the biggest integrated technology parks in India, spanning some 125 acres **(FIG.1)**. It is also only one component of a multiphase effort by DLF to develop Gurgaon as a neoliberal satellite city.

In recent decades, since the liberalization of the Indian economy, similar examples of highly visible development, epitomizing the "space of flows," have appeared across the country.[10] According to one observer, they express "glitter and privilege."[11] And as they have rapidly emerged in the peri-urban regions of Indian cities, they have helped accommodate the growth of the information-technology and business-process-outsourcing sector (IT-BPO) as well as a "new post-liberalization middle-class."[12] In addition to DLF Cybercity near Delhi, such emerging spaces include Whitefield near Bengaluru, MWC (Mahindra World City) near Jaipur, Rajarhat near Kolkata, and Dholera Smart City near Ahmedabad.

In India, the adoption of neoliberal policies such as "[economic] liberalization, privatization and decentralized

FIGURE 1. *The DLF Ship Building and Cybercity herald a "new frontier" of neoliberal spatiality.*

urban politics" in the 1990s led to this completely new urban phenomenon.[13] These policies opened the country's once-dormant economy to global capital, allowing international corporations and global investors to participate in its rapid rise. Most importantly, this resulted in the emergence of the IT-BPO sector — which, on the one hand, has required acres of new urban development to accommodate international firms, and, on the other, introduced India to a "global culture" that demands that a new post-liberalization middle-class be supplied with such amenities as gated communities and entertainment hubs.[14]

Neoliberal strategies such as privatization and the decentralization of urban politics have also led to a more entrepreneurial mode of urban governance, which has encouraged private initiative over state-led development. And under the framework of public-private partnerships, various actors such as corporations, civil society organizations, private consultants, and private developers have now become involved in shaping this new urbanization. In particular, private developers today receive targeted support from national planning institutions and state-level political actors to promote economic growth. Various revisions to land-related laws have also been implemented — such as the removal of long-held limits on the private ownership of large parcels and the granting of tax exemptions — which have increased foreign investment in urban development.

Two typical responses have emerged to this neoliberal urbanism within scholarly discourse. From a neo-Marxist analytical viewpoint, one relies on the theoretical logics of "accumulation with dispossession" — a concept championed by the geographer David Harvey. Within this frame, scholars have highlighted how the state may foster privatized or corporate interests through the vehicle of capital-intensive urban development. Thus, by invoking the land acquisition act of 1984, they have described how the Indian state may snatch away village agricultural lands through eminent domain — in effect collaborating with private developers to consolidate large land banks under the umbrella of public-private partnership. Yet these efforts also leave millions of villagers, who are currently dependent on agriculture, displaced and dispossessed. In the last two decades these policies have resulted in thousands of acres of agricultural land, much of it within the boundaries of India's major cities, being acquired and sold to private developers.[15] Llerena Guiu Searle has referred to such landscapes of accumulation as "speculative gambles," which primarily benefit the state, private companies, investors and developers, "while landowners, farmers, and labourers are often poorly compensated."[16]

Issues related to capital accumulation, dispossession of villagers, privatization, eminent domain, and land seizure have thus emerged as key areas of debate within the context of neoliberal urbanization.[17] Gurgaon is no exception. Investigations have associated its disintegrating condition with the state's practice of forceful land acquisition, which perpetuates fear among villagers, leading to preemptive sales to private developers.[18] To this critique, Shubhra Gururani has added that Gurgaon has grown through a practice of "flexible planning," according to which development is manipulated and redefined to suit the desires and demands of political and "global elites."[19] This top-down process is now creating resentment toward urban authorities among villagers, amplifying issues related to "social exclusion, non-participation and

social discontent."[20] The result, according to one writer, is a "privately led patchwork-quilt development pattern."[21] This has led to what another has seen as a partition of imagination between the "global" and the "local" at the fragmented urban frontier of neoliberal India.[22]

The second strain of scholarly research into these new development patterns has emphasized the socio-cultural, or political, capacity of villagers to resist the logics of such an imposed, elite-driven economic vision. Within this work, a frequently citied example is the resistance of native villagers and activists to the establishment of a special economic zone (SEZ) to build an automobile factory (for Tata Motors) at Singur in West Bengal — a movement which ultimately led to the termination of the project in 2008.[23] Agitation by farmers in peri-urban regions of Mumbai and Gurgaon has likewise forced Reliance Industries to abandon two other proposed SEZ projects.[24] Similarly, in recent years, in the Noida extension area east of Delhi, the lands of two villages were returned to their previous owners after the villagers petitioned against their forceful and unfair acquisition by the state to facilitate the plans of private developers.[25] Scholars have suggested that these acts of resistance and protest by the villagers indicate the ongoing threat of displacement and dispossession in recent times.[26]

Both the above streams of research addressing the logics of dispossession and resistance have produced valuable insights, but they mostly highlight the friction between global elites and native villagers. The objective of this research, on the other hand, is to build on the assumption that there are other dynamics evolving beneath the polarized conventional imaginaries of neoliberal urbanism, and that these need also to be uncovered to gain a comprehensive understanding of what Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore have termed "actually existing neoliberalism."[27] As Pieterse would suggest, neoliberalism and its resulting urbanization need to be understood beyond its representation as "a simplistic duality between those with power and those without. In truth, cities are more complex and political terrains are more complex, and there are multiple relations at play — this is the key to understand."[28]

The narrative of accumulation through dispossession seems, in particular, to be deprived of understanding about the agency of the local. Thus, Gavin Shatkin and Sanjeev Vidyarthi have highlighted how there is a need to move beyond the homogeneous assumption of the neoliberal turn, toward a more "flexible, context-sensitive approach, which allows for deeper understanding of the interaction between global ideal and local context."[29] Our work attempts to do just this, to move beyond the prevailing analytical frames, and instead capture flexible and context-sensitive "necessary hybridity."[30] In doing so, it seeks to "(re)describe" the narrative of neoliberal spatiality through "visualizing alternative realities."[31]

In general, in India, there are three ways in which agricultural land may be acquired for urban development. First is the longstanding practice by which a state or municipal authority uses the legal mechanism of eminent domain to notify villagers of the intended action. It then compensates landowning villagers, acquires the land, and develops it for its new urban purpose. Second, since the advent of liberalization, the state may instead invite private real estate developers to transform the acquired land. Sometimes the tender for such projects has remained closed, which has become a subject of criticism. Third, as per new policies, and with minimal state intervention, private developers may directly approach villagers to acquire their land. They may then go to the planning authorities to convert the land use, access financial support from banks or private investors, and develop the land either to sell or lease.

Scholars have mostly focused on the first two forms of land acquisition and development. And it is here that the friction between accumulation of capital and dispossession has typically provided the dominant frame within which to analyze the results. Very little research has to date been done around the condition by which private developers approach villagers directly. Some have suggested this third process may allow private developers to use their financial muscle to forcefully acquire land. However, not all villagers are so ignorant and weak that they can be easily displaced by power from above. Thus, Swagata Sarkar has illustrated how powerful farmers may be beyond dispossession.[32] Indeed, in the case of Gurgaon, the villagers appear to be powerful actors who have collaborated with the private developers in the co-production of new urban spaces. By focusing on newly formed network politics between landowning villagers and private developers, we intend to reveal a different facet of neoliberalism. According to this case, native villagers may not necessarily be seen as victims or subjects of displacement, but rather important producers/actors in the co-production of neoliberal spatiality.

## GURGAON: FROM SUBURB TO "GLOBURB"

Located 32 kilometers southwest of India's national capital, Gurgaon is one of a number of satellite cities of Delhi. It was officially renamed "Gurugram" in 2016 by the chief minister of Haryana state, Manohar Lal Khattar, to evoke its supposed historic origin.[33] However, in this article, we will retain the older name, because that is what it is still popularly called in literature and the media.

Anthony King has described the transformation of places such as Gurgaon as being from a suburb to a "globurb."[34] In this process in Gurgaon native landowning villagers have played an important role. Landowning villagers of this region are mostly from the Gujjar, Yadava and Ahir clans (all traditionally known to be cattle herders). In some places Jats (the dominant peasant clan in north India) are also local landholders.[35] In historical times these groups were commonly referred to as *zamindars*.

In the area of Gurgaon, individual villages have typically been inhabited by members of a single clan (either the Yadavas, Ahirs or Gujjars), and these villages were surrounded by fields largely owned by these clans. Yet, although the land was generally owned and worked by these clans, no village was composed entirely of them. Their populations also included members of other castes, especially the scheduled ones — Dalits, Harijans, etc. — who provided services to the landowners and occupied a small portion of each village's *abadi deh* [residential area].[36] Brahmans acted as family priests; carpenters maintained ploughs; barbers repaired nails and hair; and others acted as messengers and servants. In some villages, there were also tailors, dyers, weavers, goldsmiths, and Khatri shopkeepers. At the bottom of the caste hierarchy, tanners removed dead cattle and tanned the skins, while sweepers kept the streets and gutters clean.[37]

The focus of ethnographic analysis in this article revolves around landowning villagers and their relation to private developers through invisible network dynamics in the land-acquisition process. Even in the neoliberal present time, however, landless minority villagers, who have historically provided services to this privileged peasant class, also continue to provide services to them. However, the nature of these services has been transformed, from helping them in the fields, taking care of their cattle, etc., to driving and servicing their newly purchased vehicles (such as taxis, buses and trucks) or working in their newly opened shops.

Gurgaon's urban evolution can be traced back to the 1960s, when it was included in the 1962 Masterplan of the Delhi Metropolitan Area (DMA). This plan recognized the expansion of the greater Delhi urban region to include five satellite towns located in the neighboring states of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh (FIG. 2). Among these satellite towns, Gurgaon and Faridabad were located in Haryana (then part of the state of Punjab). Gurgaon, however, remained predominantly an agricultural suburb until the late 1970s. Indeed, it was known as the least developed of Delhi's satellite towns and for being "handicapped for want of water resources."[38] By contrast, Faridabad (its neighboring town in Haryana) emerged as a thriving new industrial area. It was only in 1982, after the public-sector automobile manufacturer Maruti Udyog Limited (in collaboration with Suzuki Motors of Japan) set up a manufacturing unit abutting the Delhi-Jaipur national highway, that Gurgaon started to take its first serious steps toward industrial development.

It was also around this time that a few private developers like DLF and Ansals started to look for opportunity in Gurgaon. Push factors included the rigid laws in Delhi itself, where only highly regulated state-led urban development was possible. Private developers were hence forced to look beyond

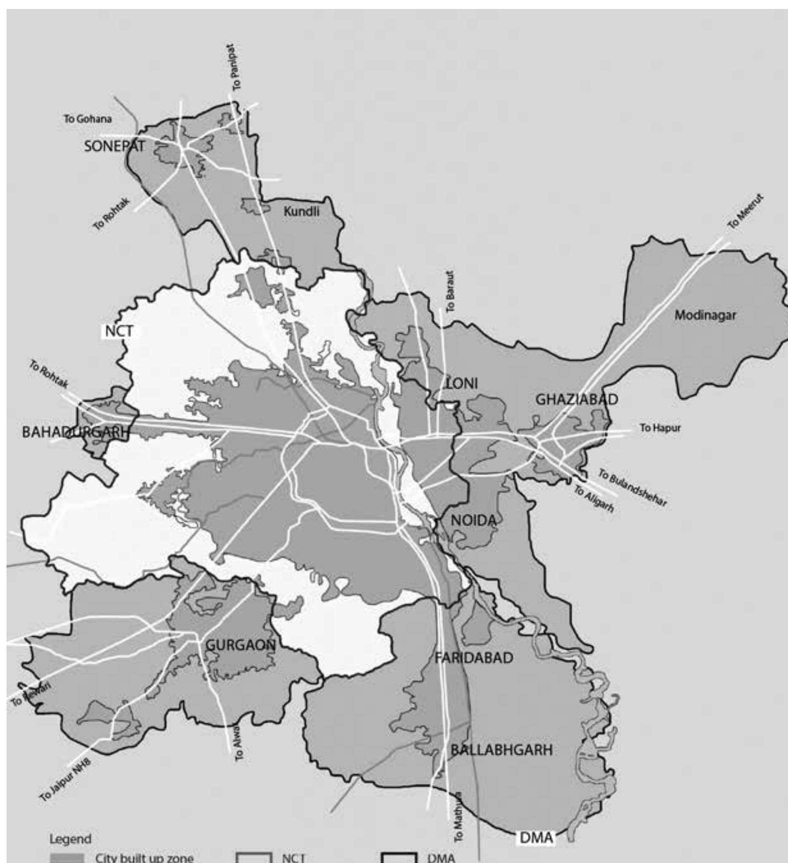


FIGURE 2. *National Capital City Delhi plan, showing the National Capital Territory (NCT) and the surrounding satellite towns in the Delhi Metropolitan Area (DMA). The highlighted area is the city of Gurgaon, 32 kilometers to the southwest, in the state of Haryana.*

the Delhi National Capital Territory (NCT) for survival.[39] Additionally, Gurgaon provided various pull factors, such as its close proximity to the capital, its international airport, and the Delhi-Jaipur highway. To these could be added cheaper land prices, Haryana's liberal policies, and relatively easy access to licenses to develop large private-sector projects.[40]

In April 1981 the first license to develop an area of 40 acres in Gurgaon was issued to DLF.[41] However, by the mid-1990s there were some 26 developers with projects ongoing in Gurgaon, including housing for nonresident Indians (NRIs) and office space for multinational companies from the IT-BPO sector.[42] A further boost came in 1999, when Haryana state announced new policies to develop IT and cyber parks, followed by the enactment of the national SEZ act in 2005.

At the present juncture, Gurgaon is considered a development "pace leader."[43] And it is seen as a successful experiment in neoliberal economic policy on account of the success of some 45-plus private developers in raising its level of economic growth.[44] From a low-income agricultural suburb, Gurgaon has now risen economically to boast the third highest level of per-capita income in India. And from a tiny municipal urban area of 35 sq.km. in 2001, by 2011 it had come to spread across more than fifty villages, increasing in size to 207 sq.km. Its population has likewise tripled in just two decades, as large numbers of post-liberalization middle-class white-collar workers and members of the lower-paid service class have moved there from across the country.

However, the flipside of Gurgaon's fame as a successful neoliberal enclave becomes visible in headlines that typically describe its reality on the ground in almost apocalyptic terms. In these accounts, Gurgaon is considered a "model of failure," and is much in the limelight for "How not to build a city."[45] After two decades of growth the city faces serious problems of infrastructure dysfunction and urban malaise — including a severe water shortage, power outages, a lack of public transportation, insufficient basic sanitation, and traffic congestion. Ramaswamy R. Aiyer, one of India's most respected names in water management, put it in harsh terms:

> *Gurgaon is a disaster, a horror story of how urbanization should not happen. It is not merely Gurgaon — little Gurgaon's are emerging all over India. When these monstrosities were being developed, did anyone think about where the water for them would come from, and where the waste generated by them would go? Now they exist and answers have to be found. I have nothing to say except to say that this isn't development, but mal-development.*[46]

Gururani has argued that the making of the unequal and deeply divided city of today is the outcome of a history of contradictory planning imperatives. Even though Gurgaon was incorporated into the DMA in the 1960s, no interstate or state-level urban authorities monitored its growth in the decades that followed.[47] Other scholars have thus associated Gurgaon's disintegrating conditions with the state's incapacity to effectively shape new urban development.[48]

In recent years this failure to regulate and monitor urban development in Gurgaon has only been amplified.[49] On the one hand, private developers have indicated their utter disappointment in state authorities for not fulfilling their responsibilities. As K.P. Singh, the president of DLF, pointed out, "had the state government worked side by side with the private sector to create offsite roads, water supply, drainage, parking spaces and green open spaces, Gurgaon would have been a world-class city. Unfortunately, despite all our efforts, this cooperation remained a dream."[50] On the other hand, urban planners have criticized the powerful network that exists between politicians, government officials, private developers, and village leaders, which often intervenes in matters of planning and urban development. Indeed, Nathupur village and surrounding villages (which will be further discussed below) are often cited as examples of locales where powerful networks hinder the work of planning authorities, preventing them from taking action against haphazard, informal, and "illegal" development.[51]

Gurgaon thus today stands as an urban/rural paradox: at once a place where rustic agrarian villages abut the new-millennium city; where slums and gated communities share common compound walls; where children from the village and the new middle class attend similar international schools; and where Mercedes and bullock carts run on the same pot-holed roads. In the literature, Gurgaon has thus been perceived in terms of contradictions and differences. Likewise, scholars have only begun to understand the role of the state and of private developers in shaping its urban development and politics. However, the state and private developers (or the global elite, as they are commonly referred to) are not the only actors shaping Gurgaon's urbanism. Urban villagers, who are often dismissed as subjects of dispossession and displacement, are participating with equal vigor in the production of its new urban spaces.

## ACCEPTING PRIVATIZATION ON THE BASIS OF RECIPROCITY

Delving into the experiences of (former) landowners in their dealings with DLF and other developers reveals how their role is much more active than often assumed. At least in this case, it also reveals how they are far from simple-minded victims of the forces of neoliberal capitalism. In the late 1970s the landowning villagers of Nathupur were quite aware that sooner or later their agricultural lands would be acquired for urban development. They had witnessed how properties in neighboring villages like Dundahera and Mulahera had been acquired by the state for the development of the Maruti Udyog factory and associated residential colonies. They were

thus ready when K.P. Singh and his private company DLF approached them in the 1980s.

Many landowning villagers admit they were initially reluctant to accept Singh's proposals. In particular, they were concerned about selling their "mother land," which had provided the only means for their families' survival for generations, to a private developer instead of state authorities. Singh has suggested that it was thus difficult for him and his company to gain the trust of villagers at the beginning. "It's not as simple as [the process] for the state, which just needs to pass an order, pay compensation at the price it chooses to fix, and take over the land," he said. By contrast, DLF "spent weeks and months on building relationships with farmers whose lands [DLF] wanted to buy. [DLF] spent time in patiently explaining the logic of how they stood to gain if they sold their land."[52]

According to Singh, buying a site of sufficient size to develop in Nathupur and its surroundings was a Herculean task, as individual landholdings were typically no more than four to five acres. This meant dealing with 700-odd families, each with five to six members. Singh, however, confessed that being a Jat (a closely related clan to the Gujjars and Yadavas of the village), helped him connect with the villagers on a sociocultural and personal front.[53] It was also revealing to learn that the name and position of Singh, along with DLF, is still evoked in a humble and appreciative manner by the landowning villagers. As one of elderly villager remarked, "If it was not K.P. Singh and DLF, we would have never progressed this far even in the next five generations." The villagers also typically recounted how Singh — along with his two *dalaals* [middlemen], Amrit Lal and Saroop Chand — personally came to Nathupur and surrounding villages (principally Sikanderpur and Chakkarpur) to convince them either collectively or individually to sell their agricultural lands. And within a year these men had established deep roots in the community.[54]

Because DLF needed financial support to advance the process of land acquisition, Singh conceptualized a partnership model for the villagers. In effect, he proposed that the villagers invest in DLF and become shareholders. So popular was this partnership proposal that, according to Singh, "there were times when [DLF] bought land, handed over the money, and then got [the villagers] to give it back to use as an investment in DLF on the very same day! It was a win-win situation for them and for us."[55] In return, DLF offered 12 percent interest to villagers who invested in the company, a higher return than any bank was offering at the time. Among the landowning villagers interviewed for this study, about 75 percent agreed to participate in the DLF investment deal, for which they continue to receive interest payments on time, sometimes at an even higher rate.[56] It thus becomes understandable that Singh is proud to declare that "DLF was able to acquire thousands of acres of land in Gurgaon without a single case of litigation against [them] or even a hint of violence or protest" (FIG. 3).[57]

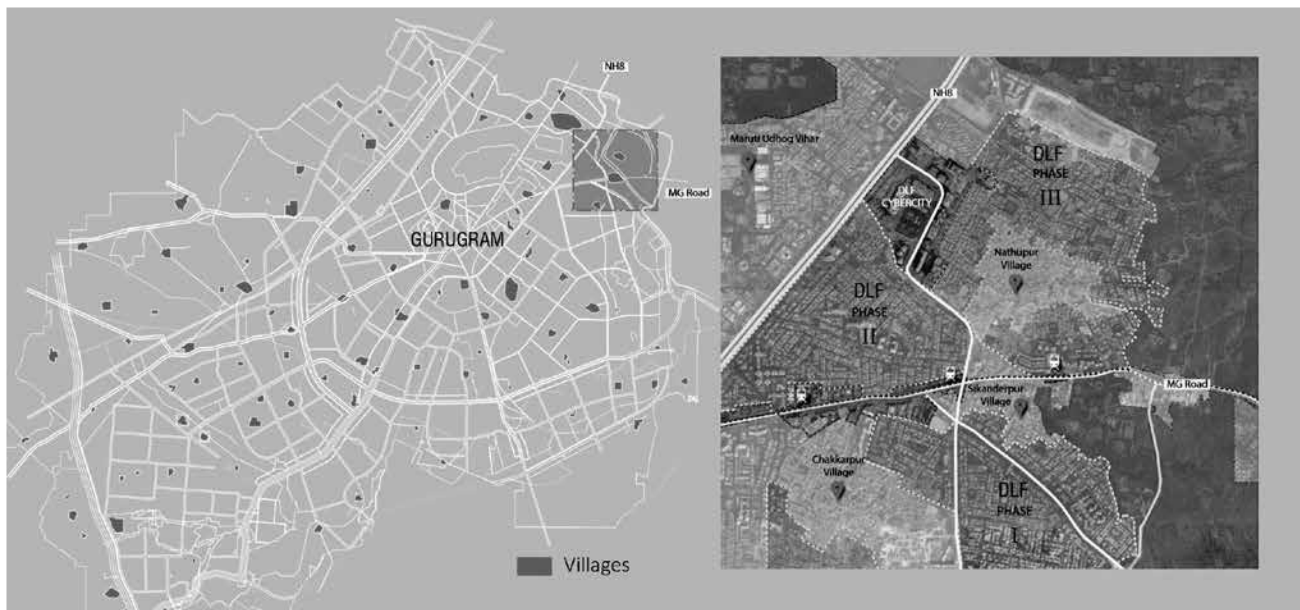


FIGURE 3. *In addition to Nathupur village (location shown by a shaded box), the Gurgaon district contains more than fifty other villages also subject to rapid urbanization. This massive transformation started with the arrival of K.P. Singh and his company Delhi Land and Finance (DLF) in the 1980s. The first parcels of land acquired by DLF were in the vicinity of Nathupur, Chakkarpur and Sikanderpur villages, as shown in the blow-up to the right.*

However, there were a few landowning villagers who never sold their land to DLF, mostly due to unclear land titles and conflict within a family over the land — but sometimes also for personal emotional reasons. And a few others wanted to negotiate on their own terms and conditions, mostly with a greater compensation and a higher interest rate return in mind. DLF couldn't accede to every such demand, as it would have led to uncertainty and unrest between the villagers themselves over land values. But other private developers did successfully recognize this opportunity, and they entered the game by approaching villagers and acquiring their lands according to different patterns of negotiation. Thus, within the large expanse of DLF Cybercity one can easily today spot many small islands of development which are owned by different private developers (**FIG.4**). On the whole, the exigencies of private-sector land assembly thus provide the background for the area's present splintered and patchwork-quilt development pattern.

Direct compensation of landowning villagers in various ways is not new in Indian peri-urban development scenarios. Indeed, state authorities in many regions have likewise sought to compensate villagers in ways that allow them to obtain land with the villagers' consent. Indeed, the development of Noida (in neighboring Uttar Pradesh) by the state urban authority is replete with such narratives.[58] However, in Gurgaon, the extent of the effort by private developers to pitch their proposals to landowning villagers was unprecedented. In the words of one such villager, "A stage is set were private developers happen to exhibit their proposals to the village collectives. It is on [the villages] to agree or not."[59] And with the passing of years and the arrival of competing developers, landowning villagers in Gurgaon have become aware of a floating range of property deals, and have started to alter their decisions whether to sell their land according to their own logic of profitability. As individuals or as part of collectives, they now seriously consider the nature of each proposal submitted by a developer. And typically proposals for corporate and commercial developments are given preference over residential proposals, because the villagers have learned of the greater economic benefits that come with such developments.

Yet even with increased competition between private developers, DLF has remained the main negotiator in Nathupur and surrounding villages. For DLF it was, and still is, a demanding and sometimes impossible task. As DLF's chief planner suggested:

> *With the increase in competition between the private developers over acquisition of land, the challenge is not over the speculative value of the land, but mostly on micro-political interactions and the practice of assembling land. . . . Sometimes landowning farmers come up with mundane negotiations, and then, as developers, you either accommodate them with your own reformulations, or you step back for others to take over. But in most cases you opt to negotiate and settle, as it is, yes, very important to assemble contiguous land, but also to retain the relationship built with the village collectives over the last few decades.*[60]

**FIGURE 4.** *On the left, a map of Nathupur village in the early 1980s displays the extent of its old, unconsolidated agricultural lands and intervening wetlands. On the right, a map of Nathupur village of 2017 displays the expansion of DLF's various developments and the built-up area of the village into its surroundings. A lighter shading is used to show properties belonging to other developers inside the DLF development.*

**FIGURE 5.** *Map showing the location of site one. At the right is a view showing DLF's iconic Ship Building, the recently built Rapid Metro line, and the sixteen-lane expressway.*

In Nathupur and surrounding villages, many landowners also seem to have agreed with what DLF had to offer. And with time they have evolved from being the rustic *zamindars* of yesterday to the well-off urbanites of today. The transformation has not only altered their life economically, but socio-spatially as well. From farming and livestock rearing, they have adapted to the ways and means of the new neoliberal era. In particular, many have started their own real estate and construction businesses. Their new economic activities include being property dealers, small-scale developers, providers of transportation services (private bus/taxi/auto), suppliers of construction materials, and so on. In this way they have become invested in multiple facets of neoliberal urbanism — from building studio apartments to accommodate the new middle-class, and *juggi jhopadis* [slums] for the new service class, to operating restaurants and shops to serve both these new populations. However, this doesn't imply that there have not been instances of displacement. With the sudden arrival of new avenues of wealth, there have also been cases of reckless spending, which have led to tragedy for some families.[61]

## SITE ONE: INDIVIDUAL NEGOTIATIONS

After many years of neglect by state authorities, DLF finally took control of the effort to build a Rapid Metro connector line and a sixteen-lane expressway to Gurgaon in the 2000s. Completion of this transportation infrastructure was critical to overcoming the woes that had clouded Gurgaon's image as a millennium city. Ever since work on these projects began, informal economic activities have also slowly disappeared in and around DLF Cybercity. Nevertheless, one or two patches of informality seem to have persisted in interstitial areas amid its otherwise spectacular neoliberal landscape.

One such patch is located in front of DLF's Building No.4, which stands right across from its symbolic Ship Building (its corporate headquarters). In this space one can find informal activities taking place through the day **(FIG.5)**. Starting in the morning, the patch provides parking space, and a few light, temporary structures also contain shops that remain open throughout the day. But at lunchtime a number of other informal vendors arrive to sell hot meals to workers in DLF Cybercity. And in the evening another set of informal vendors appears to offer evening snacks. A line of auto and cycle *rikshaw walas* can further be seen parked in a disciplined line on the site throughout the day **(FIG.6)**.

**FIGURE 6.** *The progress of informal economic activity in the hybrid space in front of Building No.4 on one day in January 2017.*

FIGURE 7. *Building No.4 on the left, and the landowner who negotiated for its construction on the right. Leelu Ram (the former village* sarpanch*) is shown holding a traditional* hukka*, with his elder brother at the left and a friend in the center.*

Interestingly, the hybrid patch in front of Building No.4 actually occupies land still partially owned by Leelu Ram, the former *sarpanch* [head] of Nathupur village.[62] During an interview, Ram revealed that this particular site had been the subject of negotiation for years between his family and DLF. For reasons of emotional attachment, the family had never been in favor of selling it, even though DLF tried to acquire it for almost a decade.[63] Then, one day, Amrit Lal (a middleman for DLF) came to the family with a surprising proposition. DLF would build and administer a corporate building for Ram on the site, from which leasing fees would be directed to his family; in return, DLF would share property rights for the site and the building.

It is this deal that has given rise to the rather startling mixture of practices on the site. Technically, Building No.4, which stands right across from DLF's signature Ship Building, is partially owned by Ram's family. And they receive Rupees 1 crore (10 million rupees) in monthly lease fees for space in it from companies like Reliance and Maruti (FIG.7). But the mixed ownership of the site also means that a pattern of informal street vending persists from prior times, because Leelu Ram (and not DLF) has allowed it to continue. Indeed, these activities reflect an additional micro-level of negotiation between Ram and other-caste villagers who needed space to operate their own small businesses in the changing built environment.

This ongoing instance of negotiation between Ram's family and DLF displays an unprecedented act of bargaining and dealing. Instead of complete acquisition of the land with one-time compensation, a long-term partnership was worked out between the parties. Although the benefits are purely monetary for Ram's family, for DLF the benefits are mostly related to their business and brand identity: because of the site's important location, it was important for DLF to build on it to manage the overall image of the Cybercity project.

## SITE TWO: FRACTIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Over the last three decades, DLF has managed to acquire most of the agricultural land in and around Nathupur. However, a few parcels remain in the hands of villagers who have yet to negotiate their sale to developers. Meanwhile, these medium/small-size parcels are typically being utilized by villagers to generate temporary income. These sites thus may be occupied by *juggi jhopadis* for service-class migrants, a parking lot for the new middle class, or a *mandi* [informal market].

In 2012, when this research began, just such a *mandi* existed in the U-Block of the DLF development (FIG.8). It constituted a compact cluster of around sixty stalls for vegetable and fruit vendors, covered in blue and yellow plastic sheets.

FIGURE 8. *Map showing the location of site two. On the right are pictures of the* mandi *as it appeared in 2014.*

However, in 2015 the *mandi* was flattened, to be developed by DLF into something new. After three long decades it appeared that the villager who owned this parcel had finally decided to negotiate its sale to DLF.

Indeed, this villager told a researcher he had been approached by at least twenty big and small private developers in the last two decades.[64] But his family had not been in favor of selling, because the site was the last remaining parcel of their land, and they wanted to retain it for emotional reasons. However, in 2015 the family finally agreed to negotiate its sale to DLF on the basis of a fractional partnership. According to the deal, 35 percent of the property would remain with the villager, while 65 percent would be owned by DLF. Another villager (a family friend), who understood the logic of partnership, helped explain what this 35-65 partnership meant in actual numbers:

> *One can assume if a residential colony is to be built on approximately 2.5 acres of land, the farmer will roughly own 18 out of 50 villa plots. Looking at present market value, 18 plots would bring him an amount of approximately Rupees 72 crores (720 million rupees) easily. And if it's a corporate building, which will be the most likely scenario, nothing less than Rupees 2 crores (20 million rupees) or more, monthly rental money by leasing the property to the companies.*[65]

At present, such fractional partnerships between villagers and private developers are not limited to Nathupur village and its surroundings. Rather, the practice has become widespread throughout Gurgaon, where many such 60-40, or 40-60, deals are being invisibly used to spatialize the neoliberal city. The tactic of the landowning villagers to negotiate fractional partnerships with private developers guarantees them a lifetime of income. Instead of completely giving away their land at one go, many have chosen to become long-term partners in sharing of profitability of their assets.

## SITE THREE: THE TRANSFORMATION OF COMMON LAND

In the last decade interest among private developers in negotiating such deals has expanded from individual agricultural holdings to the transfer of ownership over larger areas of *shamlat deh*, or village common land. In India, protests by villagers over state acquisition of such lands have typically highlighted the use of eminent domain to advance the interests of private developers. However, in Nathupur, the village *panchayat* [local governing body] successfully negotiated the sale of this common land to DLF without much controversy.

According to Leelu Ram, his brother, and a few other former members of the *panchayat*, DLF first approached the village in 2002 asking to acquire its *shamlat deh* for development.[66] The village *panchayat* subsequently agreed with other landowners in the village to support the decision to sell it to DLF. As a result, the land was first gifted to the state, as per formal agreement, before being transferred to DLF by the state for urban development. Since then, DLF has built various important components of Cybercity and associated developments on the acquired nineteen acres of *shamlat deh*. In particular, a linear space between Cybercity and Nathupur village today includes a Rapid Metro station that serves as a crucial aspect of Phase 2 of the larger DLF effort (**FIG. 9**).

At first glance, this linear interstitial space appears to be a highly regulated, privatized, gated environment. It is posted with signs proclaiming "private property," "no entry," "restricted area," etc., and it is patrolled by a team of security guards with DLF badges (**FIG. 10**). However, as one slowly starts to uncover the everydayness of the space, it reveals a hidden logic of negotiation between DLF and the villagers (in this case, both those who own land and those who don't). Indeed, the interstitial space accommodates various hybrid socio-spatial practices that reflect shared access to it.

For example, just below the newly designed DLF Rapid Metro station stands a newly constructed temple belonging

**FIGURE 9.** *The in-between space (on the village's former* shamlat deh*) between DLF Cybercity and Nathupur village, showing the newly built Rapid Metro station that was part of DLF's Phase 2.*

**FIGURE 10.** *The first impression of DLF's development is of a highly regulated, gated, private enclave.*

to the villagers, and the gate of the temple acts as an opening from one world to the other, allowing all kinds of local residents (upper-caste and other-caste villagers and new middle-class and service-class migrants) to access and traverse the interstitial space when required **(FIG.11)**. Furthermore, in a park built by DLF, which is signed as a "restricted-area" and controlled by security guards, a bunch of teenage boys from the village may be found playing cricket during the day without being disturbed by the guards **(FIG.12)**. The same boys may also be seen enjoying their evening coffee in the café of the Rapid Metro station, suggesting that they have managed to adapt their village lifestyle to the new environment.

The informal street market in the DLF U-Block that lies adjacent to the station is yet another intriguing hybrid space **(FIG.13)**. The U-Block was supposedly developed to provide housing for the economically weaker section (EWS) of local society. In particular, landless villagers from other castes were its primary intended beneficiaries. But with time many of these same landless villagers managed to negotiate and partner with landowning villagers to build and rent matchbox-size studio apartments to newly arrived middle-class workers **(FIG.14)**. And the street market is run informally in the space between these developments by both landowning and landless villagers and other small stakeholders through various forms of negotiation.

The land-tenure arrangements and multiple categories of ownership in this area thus represent a complex entanglement between DLF, upper-caste landowning villagers, landless villagers from other castes, and new middle-class and service-class residents of the area. It suggests once again that space in Gurgaon is being produced by actors from both sides of the urban/rural, private/public, formal/informal divide. Such actors engage in discreet, often invisible forms of negotiation to accommodate each other's interests, either through simple reciprocity or by facilitating each other's prospects for economic gain.

**FIGURE 11.** *The newly built temple below the Rapid Metro station has a gate that provides access to the linear in-between space. On the right, kids from* juggi jhopadis *[slums] accessing the space for their everyday rag-picking activity.*

**FIGURE 12.** *Young boys from the village playing cricket on "restricted" grounds of the privatized DLF city.*

**FIGURE 13.** *An informal and supposedly illegal market in front of the Rapid Metro station. The market occupies ground-level space in DLF's U-Block.*

**FIGURE 14.** *Match-box-size illegal studio apartments for the new middle-class in the DLF U-Block. These illustrate the complex land tenure arrangements and ownerships that pertain between the private developer (DLF), villagers (of both its upper and other classes), and new middle-class residents of the area.*

## THE COMPLICATED LOGIC OF CO-PRODUCTION

Presently, the outcome of neoliberal urbanization in the peri-urban regions of India is largely thought to reflect a simple logic of accumulation through dispossession. But the main objective of this article has been to complicate this logic and highlight a more flexible and context-sensitive understanding of "actually existing neoliberalism." Instead of focusing on aspects of friction — by which global elites and the state supposedly dispossess and displace the former rural peasantry — its intention has been to explore how different urban realities may exist in parallel. We thus took up the suggestion of Simone and Pieterse to focus on interstitial spaces where we might "find ways that work with the frictions, the incompatibilities, the fissures, and the supposedly seamless confluences in these interfaces to generate new potentials of urban thought and action."[67]

While exploring the interstitial spaces in and around Nathupur village and DLF Cybercity, a different facet of neoliberal spatiality thus came into view. Landowning villagers, often depicted as victims of dispossession and displacement in the production of neoliberal urbanism, were instead found to be accommodating to neoliberalism under mutually beneficial and negotiable conditions. They thus happened to resist less and be more accepting of new private-sector partnerships and practices because these were helping transform their formerly local, agriculturally based economy into one engaged with global resources. Indeed, by establishing strong connections with private developers based on simple exchanges and reciprocity, they were found to have evolved into important stakeholders/actors in the production of space. Capitalizing on their own history and strong community ties, many had also proved to be smart operators who were able to forge favorable deals with DLF and other parties.

It is evident that the landowning villagers had been preparing themselves for such a transformation, and with time they had developed a collective/individual capacity to benefit from market speculation. On the one hand, they were thus partly able to control the terms and timing by which their lands were sold into the market, thus moderating the commodification process to reflect their own interests. On the other, they have been able to enter into fractional partnerships with private developers to guarantee them a lifetime of monetary returns. Many of them have thus succeeded in turning the sale of their lands into a profit-making mechanism that has left them and their family better off than before. And in doing so they smoothly transformed themselves into capitalist agents, and re-wove their family and community bonds into functioning networks that comprised new roles and responsibilities.

Of course, it is doubtful this complicated process has benefitted all those involved. For example, we did not focus on the gender dynamics within this group; nor did we investigate the reality of the change among members of minority castes. What stands out, however, is that in the case of Gurgaon, village landowners cannot simply be described as victims of dispossession, but are clearly active co-producers of the resulting neoliberal spatialities. This article thus highlights the need for a new perspective, one that engages with urban reality beyond binaries and standardized narratives, and one that better recognizes the variegated n-dimensions that shape the neoliberal urban world of today.

## REFERENCE NOTES

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1. M. Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).
2. N. Theodore, J. Peck, and N. Brenner, "Neoliberal Urbanism: Cities and the Rule of Markets," in G. Bridge and S. Watson, eds., *The New Blackwell Companion to the City* (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), p.15.
3. Formulation of the term "spatiality" in this article is based on the influential work *For Space* by Doreen Massey (London: Sage, 2005). In it (pp.10–11), Massey extended understanding of spatiality as the product of intersecting social relations and developed the idea that space and time are mutually constituted. She thus conceptualized space as "the product of interrelations . . . , from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny; as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity . . . as a sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist, as a sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity; as always under construction, as it is always in the process of being made. It is never finished, never closed." By adopting this view, we intend to challenge the preexisting and bounded imaginary of neoliberal urbanism and replace it with an open conception of space as a hybrid and complex phenomenon. In the process we may also perhaps contribute to what Massey described as "alternative imaginations that enable different spaces to be."
4. According to Gavin Shatkin and Sanjeev Vidyarthi, "network politics is most visible in the appearance of elite networks around the pursuit of particular projects or shared agendas of spatial change. These networks represent a direct response to the lack of any stable state institutions that can exercise sufficient influence to coordinate an agenda of change. They bring together a range of actors (such as developers, politicians at various levels, middle-class associations, corporate interests, and others) around shared interests, which are often interests in property ownership and usages of urban land." See G. Shatkin and S. Vidyarthi, "Introduction," in Shatkin and Vidyarthi, eds., *Contesting the Indian City: Global Visions and the Politics of the Local* (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), p.27.
5. S. Chakravarty and R. Negi, *Space, Planning and Everyday Contestations in Delhi* (New Delhi: Springer India, 2016).
6. A. Simone and E. Pieterse, *New Urban Worlds: Inhabiting Dissonant Times* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), p.12.
7. According to Kelly Shannon, "Ground-truth is a term used in cartography and refers to information that is collected on

specific location. It is often used to calibrate findings of remote sensing, and aids in the interpretation and analysis of what is being sensed." For a detailed overview of the method, see K. Shannon, "Vietnamese Field/Work: The Case of Hanoi's Water Urbanism," in S. Ewing et al., *Architecture and Field/Work* (Abingdon, Oxon: Taylor and Francis, Kindle Edition, 2011), p.81.
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14. A. King, *Spaces of Global Cultures: Architecture, Urbanism, Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
15. Weinstein, Sami, and Shatkin, "Contested Developments," p.55.
16. L.G. Searle, *Landscapes of Accumulation: Real Estate and the Neoliberal Imagination in Contemporary India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p.7.
17. See, for example, S. Banerjee-Guha, ed., *Accumulation by Dispossession: Transformative Cities in the New Global Order* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2010); M. Levien, *Dispossession without Development: Land Grabs in Neoliberal India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); M. Goldman, "Speculative Urbanism and the Making of the Next World City," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol.35 No.3 (May 2011), pp.555–81; Gururani, "Flexible Planning"; and Searle, *Landscapes of Accumulation*.
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24. Levien, "Preface," in *Dispossession without Development*, p.x.
25. V. Vasudevan, *Urban Villager: Life in an Indian Satellite Town* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013).
26. Levien, "Preface"; and Searle, *Landscapes of Accumulation*, p.7.
27. The concept of "actually existing neoliberalism" by Brenner and Theodore "underscores the ways in which neoliberal ideology systematically (mis)represents the real effects of policies upon the macro institutional structures and evolutionary trajectories of capitalism." They thus criticize the representation of states and markets as if they are diametrically opposed principles of social and economic organization according to a one-size-fits-all model of policy implementation. The notion of "actually existing neoliberalism" is thus intended to "illuminate the complex, contested ways in which neoliberal restructuring strategies interact with pre-existing uses of space, institutional configurations, and constellations of socio- political power." See, for example, N. Brenner and N. Theodore, "Cities and the Geographies of 'Actually Existing Neoliberalism,'" *Antipode*, Vol.34 No.3 (July 2002), pp.349–79.
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33. Specifically, the name Gurugram suggests a prehistorical link to the Sanskrit Hindu mythic epic *Mahabharata*. Thus, "guru" symbolizes the aura of the military expert and teacher Guru Dronacharya, and "gram" refers to his village, producing "village of Guru Dronacharya."
34. In *Spaces of Global Cultures* (p.103), Anthony King defined the term "globurb" as a settlement on the outskirts of a city, whose economic, social, cultural and architectural origins are generated, on the one hand, by international and global forces like global capitalism, and on the other, by practices associated with imperialism, colonialism, nationalism, etc. In the case of Gurgaon, the contemporary phenomenon of neoliberalism is here considered the primary force shaping its character as a globurb.
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39. K.P. Singh, *Whatever the Odds: The Incredible Story behind DLF* (India: Harper Collins, 2011), p.180.
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47. Gururani, "Flexible Planning."
48. Jim Yardley has thus criticized the Indian state, stating that "In Gurgaon and elsewhere in India, the answer is that growth usually occurs despite the government rather than because of it. India and China are often considered to be the world's rising economic powers, yet if China's growth has been led by the state, India's growth is often impeded by the state." See J. Yardley, "In India, Dynamism Wrestles with Dysfunction," *New York Times*, June 8, 2011; available at https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/09/world/asia/09gurgaon.html (accessed May 2, 2014).

49. Chatterji, *Citadels of Glass*.
50. Singh, *Whatever the Odds*, p.195.
51. Interview with the chief town planner of the municipal corporation of Gurgaon, January 18, 2017. Lands in Nathupur and surrounding villages were largely acquired by private developers in the 1980s under the umbrella representation of village *panchayats* (local administrations). Yet, for many years, despite being subject to rapid transformation, they remained under the administrative control of these local bodies, and it was only in 2016 that they were finally incorporated into Gurgaon's municipal limits. By then, these villages had outgrown their *abadi deh* [residential areas] to also occupy their vacant common lands [*shamlat deh*]. The result was typically a condition of extreme decay, as the formerly rural fabric disintegrated, allowing the abrupt emergence of congested slums.
52. Singh, *Whatever the Odds*, p.99.
53. Ibid., p.88.
54. Interview with collected landowning villagers of Nathupur, January 15, 2017.
55. Singh, *Whatever the Odds*, p.107.
56. In the last four years of fieldwork, Anamica Singh has interviewed close to 62 landowning villagers in Gurgaon, out of which 28 belong to Nathupur village. Most of the interviews provided hours of casual discussion over the land acquisition process and their changing socioeconomic lifestyle. Others remained very specific over a minimum 45 minutes of discussion.
57. Singh, *Whatever the Odds*, p.97.
58. For more on this, refer to Vasudevan, *Urban Villager*.
59. Interview with a landowning villager of Nathupur, July 15, 2018.
60. Sunil Koul (chief project head, DLF, Gurgaon), interview by Anamica Singh, February 20, 2017.
61. As suggested in Singh, *Whatever the Odds*, p.108, few villagers "were so carried away by the rush of wealth that they spent it on amassing pointless consumer goods they could easily have done without . . . many bought expensive cars and SUV's as these became a new status symbol of progress. Some blew it up on newly acquired lifestyles. They carelessly spent on clothes, expensive restaurants and hotels, alcohol, shopping and travel. The result was that many farmers were sucked into the life of debt and poverty."
62. Leelu Ram is one of the most prominent actors in the village. He was responsible for its administration as *sarpanch* for more than a decade. He only stepped down from his role as village head in 2016 when the village administrative council [*panchayat*] was dissolved and control of village affairs was shifted to the Gurgaon city administration. Ram maintains a very close relationship with K.P. Singh and DLF, and they have periodically supported and reciprocated each other's concerns and demands. For that matter, on the day of this discussion, Ram had just arrived home from a marriage reception ceremony for K.P. Singh's granddaughter.
63. Leelu Ram, interview by Anamica Singh, Nathupur, Gurgaon, February 21, 2017.
64. Interview with a landowning Nathupur villager, January 15, 2017.
65. Ibid.
66. Leelu Ram and collected villagers, interview by Anamica Singh, Nathupur, Gurgaon, July 15, 2018.
67. Simone and Pieterse, *New Urban Worlds*.

All illustrations are by Anamica Singh. The maps were created using overlapping layers of (i) historical village maps maintained by the *patwari* (local state agent), (ii) Google maps, and (iii) field surveys.

# Crossed Cultures in Lunda, Angola: Diamang's Urban Project and Its Legacies

BEATRIZ SERRAZINA

**The diamond-mining activities promoted by Diamang (Companhia de Diamantes de Angola), a chartered company based in the Lunda district of Angola, shaped a colonial built environment where both European and African cultures and traditions were present. This article explores the interplay between those traditions, and examines their impact on the space of company-created settlements, during both the colonial and postcolonial periods. Analyzing which former colonial spaces have been preserved, modified or demolished will also allow understanding of the impact of the company's urban development on later space production, and help reveal postcolonial continuities and ruptures.**

Companhia de Diamantes de Angola [the Angola Mining Company] — better known as Diamang — was a chartered company created in 1917 within the scope of the Portuguese colonial project (FIG. 1). To support its mining activities, the company designed a particular built environment in the Lunda district, in the far northeast of Angola, where both European and African cultures were present. In this large region, at the border with the Belgian Congo, and until then devoid of any major intervention from the European colonial powers, the company supported the construction of urban settlements and infrastructural networks that completely changed the previous pattern of local spatial relations.

Diamang's extensive infrastructural power, understood according to Michael Mann's conception as a "state's capacity to actually penetrate society," allowed the company to master an original set of urban practices and traditions.[1] However, the new forms of urbanity triggered by Diamang's activities in the area did not result from a univocal process, but from the relationship between European and African people. At Diamang's urban centers, a network of public leisure spaces — e.g., clubs, swimming pools, cinemas, and botanical gardens — mimicked the Western everyday life, while African folklore was celebrated with the construction of a "native village" in Dundo, the company's headquarters. Several Portuguese traditional festivals were also brought to Lunda to carry on the so-called "civilizing mission" of the colonizers. Nevertheless, the construction of model

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**FIGURE 1.** *A Diamang magazine advertisement. Hemeroteca Municipal de Lisboa – CML.*

villages and the organization of a "Best Village" contest, while intended to show African people how their houses should be built, also revealed the persistence of native traditions.

The idea of "mimetic transit" — defined by Ricardo Roque as a "reciprocal bundle of movements of similarity and difference between European collectives and African collectives" — can be very useful to understand the kind of relationship developed in Lunda during the colonial era.[2] In 1955, during the Festa Grande Indígena [Indigenous Festival], José Redinha, the curator of Diamang's Ethnographic Museum, tried to sum up the overlapping nature of this encounter: "the festivities program, involving two races, two continents, two cultures and two lifestyles, could not and should not be unilateral. . . . It also includes Portuguese traditions, as remote as our almost legendary colonization of the Congo Kingdom. Both play a role in our modern colonization mission."[3]

The study of Diamang's urban models, housing typologies, and collective programs that will be reported on in this article reveals the presence of a social-spatial system that mixed both European and African cultures and customs, setting (in the words of Gwendolyn Wright) "tradition in the service of modernity." Thus, as Wright has written, during the colonial era, "urban design . . . assumed a major role in the efforts to make colonialism more popular among Europeans and more tolerable to the colonized people."[4] Yet, with regard to the activities of Diamang, the opposite condition might also be said to have applied. For both Europeans and Africans, the goal was "to protect certain aspects of cultural traditions while sponsoring other aspects of modernization."[5] After all, as noted by Ernesto de Vilhena, Diamang's managing director, the company promoted an industrial modern life in Africa that was a novelty for everyone. Dundo was "not a simple village or inhabited place of Angola, but in the administrative center of a large industrial enterprise . . . , a veritable tower of command and vital center of an organization in which 332 Europeans workers, accompanied by 417 women and children, and about 17,000 indigenous people were gathered and organized toward a well-defined purpose."[6]

Diamond mining continued in the Lunda district after Angola achieved its independence in 1975. And the article further intends to assess Diamang's legacies there, addressing how decolonization affected urban policies and spatial dynamics. Exploring which former colonial spaces have been preserved, modified or demolished will help reveal the impact of the company's urban development on the later production of space, and it will allow reflection on the role of tradition in the establishment of postcolonial continuities and ruptures.

## DIAMANG'S "MICROCOSM" IN LUNDA

Diamang operated across an area of 52,000 sq.km. (more than half the area of Portugal), including a great part of the Lunda district. The company's creation was originally spurred by the discovery in 1907 of a few diamonds in the Chiumbe River, at the border between the Belgian Congo and Angola, by mining prospectors from the Belgian Société Forestière et Minière du Congo (Forminière) (**FIG.2**).

The creation of chartered entities like Diamang was not something new in Portuguese colonies. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, the Nyassa and Zambeze Companies had been chartered in Mozambique.[7] Indeed, they were seen as key instruments in the "effective colonization" of Portugal's African territories, extensive areas of which remained uncontrolled at the time. As noted by Catherine Boone, the operations of such companies were typically established in "pockets of *Africa utile*" [useful Africa], as opposed to regions which could not be economically exploited.[8] Such enterprises were considered "colonial power blocs" independent of outside political control.[9] As such, they were designed as "real substitutes" for the state, with administrative powers over local populations in a clearly defined area.[10] Despite their "primarily and necessarily commercial essence," such enterprises were thus imagined as being of great "value [for] their services to the Empire."[11]

In fact, diamond production was seen as a powerful driving force for the so-called "civilizational process" in the Lunda district. Diamang controlled not only extractive processes but also most aspects of everyday life, building its own "microcosm" (**FIG.3**).[12] The company asserted itself as an "apparatus" — with "its own universals and own ideologies."[13] It thus provided a variety of services, covering such areas as health, sanitation, religion, energy production, agriculture, farming, transportation, information, native assistance, music, topography, urbanization and conservation.

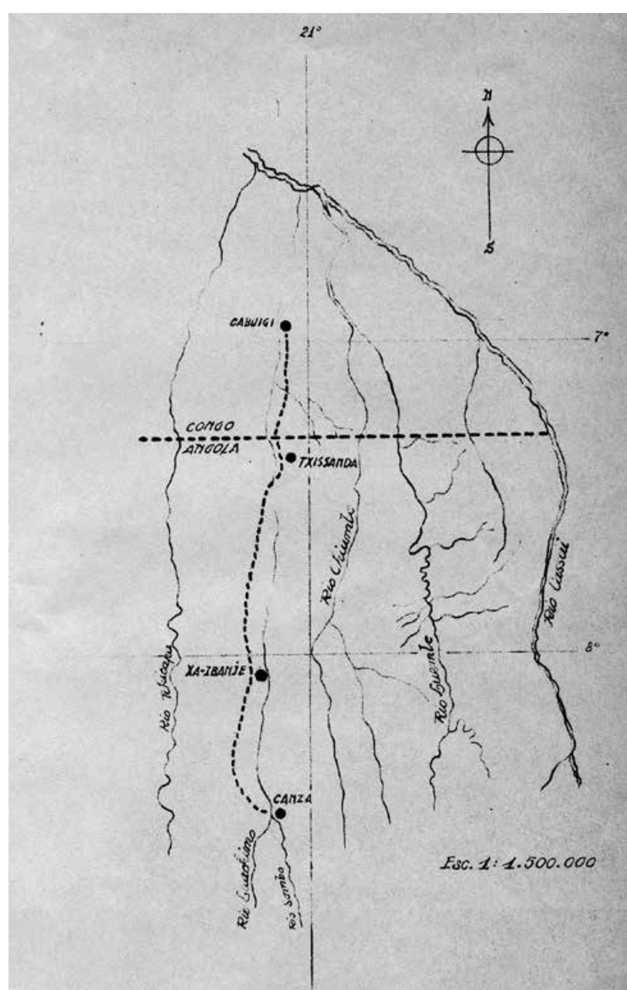


**FIGURE 2.** *Diamang's first settlements were located between the border of Angola and the Belgian Congo (1913–1914). Universidade de Coimbra, 2018 (courtesy of the Project Diamang Digital).*

**FIGURE 3.** *Single-family houses with verandahs and gardens at Dundo. Courtesy of diamang.com.*

To carry out this immense and multidimensional project, architecture and urbanism were regarded as key tools not only to plan and design infrastructure and buildings, but also "to realize the twin objectives of domination and sociopolitical control."[14] Like other private enterprises, Diamang became a "key actor in the translation of transnational influences to architectural production at the edges of empire, and continu[ed] to shape the nature of the built environment far from the established centers of architectural practice and debate."[15] Alberto de Almeida Teixeira, a former colonial governor who wrote about the social-spatial organization of the Lunda district in the 1950s, thus argued that the diamond enterprise was more than simply a business in Lunda — it was a "civilizing" force.[16]

At the time of the company's establishment, the northern part of Angola had yet to be "pacified."[17] Indeed, it was only after the British Ultimatum of 1890 that the Portuguese authorities put any effort into the development of the area at all.[18] Brandão de Melo, one of the first Portuguese servicemen to visit the region to be occupied by Diamang, thus reported that "throughout the company's concession area, there were no roads, no bridges, no communication routes."[19]

The lack of infrastructure did not mean, however, that Lunda was an empty place. The oldest colonial accounts of the region are those of Henrique de Carvalho's expedition to the Matiânvua Kingdom between 1884 and 1888. And, after making contact with its people, the Portuguese explorer described them in his book *Ethnographia e história tradicional dos povos da Lunda* [*Ethnography and Traditional History of the Lunda People*]. He saw the residents of the area as "savage," but with a "great spirit of curiosity."[20] Yet, Carvalho also used the book to reveal his own eagerness to understand the Other as a way of discovering the Self. While studying the origins of the people in Lunda — their dialects, dwellings, and most remarkable customs and traditions — he thus reflected on the ideas and prejudices of Europeans regarding Africa and the supposed prestige of the Portuguese mission. Recognizing "how different practice in Africa was from theory in Europe," Carvalho was aware of a needed process of "entangled modernity" that would shape a new built environment.[21]

## THE GOVERNMENT OF SELF

Diamang founded more than thirty villages throughout the district of Lunda, and all of them were a reflection of social and racial hierarchies. Thus, not only were African workers denied a place at the town centers, but as part of the prevailing colonial dynamics, Europeans were housed according to their position in the company. Above all, space was planned according to the typological ideas of the company town.[22] This meant it was outside the control of the state authorities, inhabited entirely by workers — a place where paternalism was used as "the hegemonic ingredient of company power."[23]

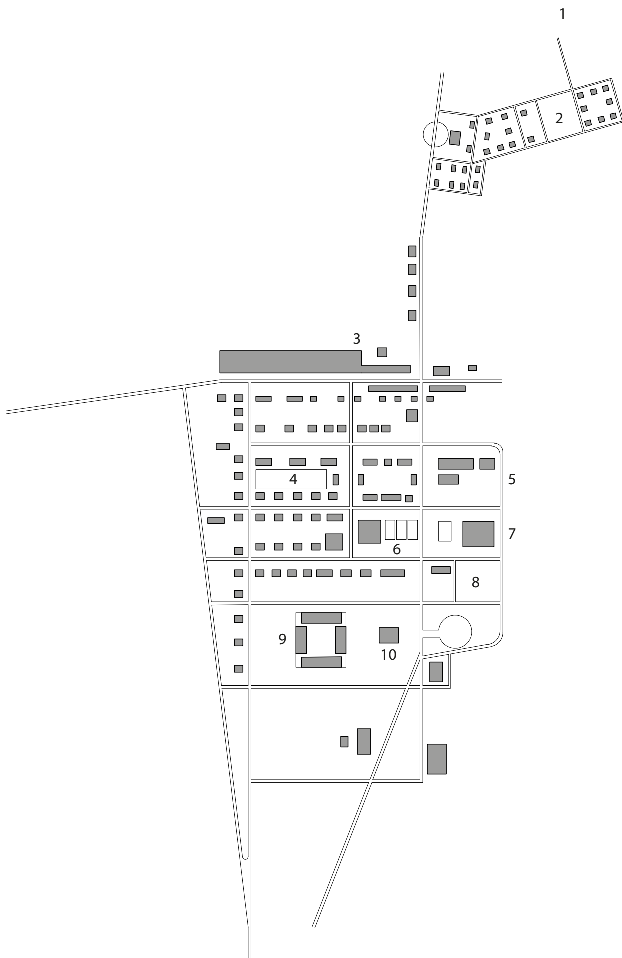


**FIGURE 4.** *Plan of Dundo, 1935. 1) experimental park; 2) specialized African worker's quarter; 3) warehouses and repair shops; 4) plant nursery; 5) offices; 6) club and sport fields; 7) head office; 8) botanical garden; 9) hospital; 10) church. Drawn by the author from Diamang's archives.*

Dundo, the company's headquarters, was developed according to a standard grid pattern, possibly designed by the group of American engineers who managed Diamang during its first decade **(FIG.4)**. Wide, long streets shaped several blocks, which were nevertheless constrained at the edge by topography. Thus, at the town center, situated on a plateau, the blocks were laid out in a regular pattern, yet they would take more irregular outlines where they encroached on rivers or steep slopes. As in any other company town, "around this central nexus lapped a sea of housing peculiar both for its uniformity of style and for its obviously contemporaneous character."[24] Dundo was therefore a town of single-family houses, with low constructed density. In many ways it also fulfilled the "Garden City" ideas that were popular at the time. This urban model, created by Ebenezer Howard, was seen as a "surprisingly suitable option" in colonial Africa: it was both appropriate to cope with the climate and insalubrity, and it provided a "useful political tool to enhance segregation."[25] When European workers arrived at Lunda, they would be given both a house and all the household items needed to occupy it. Yet, any time they left Lunda for some reason, they would be given a different house on their return, as every building belonged not to them but to Diamang.

The company's settlements were often described as "beautiful, organized, model towns."[26] Visitors claimed that it was "comforting to see Dundo's marked appearance of civilization."[27] Buildings had a homogenous aesthetics that announced centralized formal planning **(FIG.5)**. Archetypal colonial architectural features were dominant, including exterior covered porches, natural ventilation grills, and outbuildings in the backyard. Yet, as J.D. Porteous noted, "architecturally, uniformity was often carried to the point of monotony."[28] This uniformity was expected to reinforce the company's power and induce the feeling of control and authority. Every town thus featured a carefully designed civic center, usually dominated by a Representation House and a Club, where employees could hang out as a "corporate family." Around these twin facilities were typically also located gardens and parks, health facilities, schools, and a church.

Wattle trees (a type of acacia) were also planted everywhere, defining the picture-postcard image of Diamang urbanism. De Vilhena believed vegetation needed to function as a natural complement to buildings. According to Porteous, even if company settlements were "essentially a temporary pioneering device," built to explore and exploit previously unknown territories, companies were committed to creating their own "urban image," and special attention was given to the embellishment of every town.[29] Each building was thus the object of a detailed preliminary study; as a result, according to the anthropologist Nuno Porto, everything was "tentative," and everything could be "improved."[30] Government documents compared colonial urban centers to picturesque

**FIGURE 5.** *Lucapa village in 1963. Courtesy of diamang.com.*

FIGURE 6. *Children's gymkhana in Dundo. Casa do Pessoal organized many such activities for European employees and their families across Diamang's urban centers. Universidade de Coimbra, 2018 (courtesy of the Project Diamang Digital).*

FIGURE 7. *Swimming pool in Andrada village. Universidade de Coimbra, 2018 (courtesy of the Project Diamang Digital).*

Portuguese cities like Sintra or Buçaco. They were seen as "an example of the colonizing effort, which neutralizes the hostile nature of Africa . . . in order to establish the white element under favorable conditions and with very appreciable comfort."[31]

This so-called comfort was achieved through the construction of an extensive network of social and leisure facilities. In particular, Casa do Pessoal, a club for European employees and their families, had a great impact on everyday life in Diamang (FIG.6). Created in 1938 by merging several existing employees' clubs into a single organization, it offered several buildings across Diamang's main urban centers, and all the employees paid a monthly fee to belong to it. Through the Casa do Pessoal, several Portuguese traditions were brought to Lunda, including Carnival, Santos Populares [Popular Saints], dancing matinees, *garraiadas* [small bullfights], and even a Minho typical *arraial* [fair]. Exhibitions and workshops were organized regularly and covered all the traditional topics: stamp collecting, fruticulture, horticulture and livestock, floriculture, painting, drawing, and women's crafts. All of these events were considered "highly beneficial, since they instill[ed] a taste for the practice of useful and instructive activities."[32] Multiple recreational, cultural and sporting activities were also promoted at the Casa do Pessoal through a regularly released *Folha de Informações* [*Information Sheet*]. Such activities included tennis, billiards, swimming, table tennis, skeet shooting, cricket, and horseback riding, to name a few. A cinema, library, theater group, and disco were also part of the club.

Besides Casa do Pessoal, other leisure spaces could be found in Diamang's European centers. Swimming pools were a very popular facility to use on weekends, and several towns had their own pools, usually built inside forest parks (FIG.7). An extensive network of green areas, composed of gardens, parks, botanical gardens, greenhouses and nurseries, was also cherished by Diamang employees. All of these European-like places mimicked facilities found in the white employees' homelands, and made life in the "heart of Africa" not so African at all. Indeed, when the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre visited Lunda in 1951, he reported that in Dundo one could feel the "absence of Africa in Africa." "In the air, in the environment, in the climate itself, [there is] something unmistakably anti-tropical that dominates nature, crushing its spontaneity . . . , taking advantage of its beauty."[33] These harsh comments were not welcomed by Diamang's employees. Yet even the governor-general noted that "it was only when the cold and humid evening arrived that the feeling came that one was actually in Africa."[34]

The building in Dundo where a commitment to the African environment and traditions could be found mostly notably was its Ethnographic Museum. Created in 1936 and organized by José Redinha, it fostered several studies of Lunda's native culture, and became one of the key elements of Diamang's "scientific occupation."[35] In 1942 the museum expanded outdoors to include a *sanzala de figurações* [native village]. This was built according to African urban models, to celebrate Lunda's folklore and cultural traditions (FIG.8). Native plants and trees were grown around it to further enhance its image as an authentic, natural environment, and it was peopled by African artists (e.g., musicians, painters and sculptors), who would organize native celebrations from time to time.

Initially the museum managers wanted these folklore festivals to be as free and spontaneous as possible, but they soon started to "control and lead" the native schedules to prevent them from lasting "too long." During its early years, the *sanzala* was even criticized by Dundo's inhabitants because it was "too close" to their houses.[36] This reaction stoked Freyre's remarks about Diamang's "artificial life," suited best

**FIGURE 8.** *A family of female artists living in the* sanzala das figurações, *outside Dundo's Ethnographic Museum. Universidade de Coimbra, 2018 (courtesy of the Project Diamang Digital).*

for "individuals who do not want to be contaminated by tropical communities."[37] In fact, during a visit by the Portuguese colonies minister Armindo Monteiro in 1932, Diamang's headquarters were compared to an "oasis in the desert." This perceived praise was repeated several times, and eventually became of one the company's hallmarks.

## THE GOVERNMENT OF OTHERS

While native traditions were being studied, preserved and celebrated in Dundo's town center, African villages across the Lunda district were expected to change and become closer to European urban ideals. After the first report on sanitary conditions in Lunda, made by Dr. Gillet, Forminière's head doctor, in 1921, de Vilhena described the working conditions of Africans there as "absolutely deplorable."[38] Since there were no proper facilities for these men, it was therefore considered necessary to adopt some special measures regarding labor supply. Gathering an adequate workforce had always been a main concern of Diamang, as the native population was too scarce for such a great venture. And since its earliest days, workers had had to be recruited from other regions of the colony (and later from São Tomé e Principe), with the support of Portuguese colonial authorities.

As a result, urban planning and housing were considered critical areas within Diamang's development program. Villages were an essential tool to enhance labor settlement and stabilization, and toward this end, the company organized a new service, SPAMOI — Serviço de Apoio à Mão de Obra Indígena [Indigenous Labor Propaganda and Support Service] — in 1937. As part of a wider workforce stabilization strategy, SPAMOI's goals were very clear: "to engage volunteer workers in the conservation and enhancement of their villages and farming fields; to show them the benefits of long-term work and their permanence in the same place; . . . to take the natives to settle near of the mining camps, to build their houses of adobe or barred wood, with large dimensions and to provide them with the necessary material."[39]

The African workforce was organized into three different groups: *contratados* were men from other regions of Angola coercively brought to Lunda with the help of the Portuguese authorities; *voluntários* were from Lunda and could work on mines and then go back to their villages at the end of every day; and *prometidos* were former *contratados* who subsequently stayed on as *voluntários*.[40] One of the first measures taken was the construction of "propaganda villages" for *prometidos* and *ex-contratados*. The intention was that these villages, under the authority of local *sobas* [chiefs], should be made comfortable in a way that the workers could feel "as in their own villages."[41] Just as was the practice at Forminière across the border in the Belgian Congo, the planning of villages in ways similar to native ones was seen as a "stabilization method."[42] The houses in them could furthermore be placed at the disposal of workers, "on the condition that they would bring in more working men; therefore, they were delivered for propaganda purposes."[43]

In 1942 a "Diamang indigenous model village" was built near Dundo **(FIG. 9)**. This settlement was planned in a tight intersection between different urban patterns, bearing in mind native spatial practices. SPAMOI was directed to design it so that villagers

> *. . . should not seek to line their* cubatas *at the roadside without meeting the proper sanitary conditions, water and land for their food crops. One must combine business with pleasure, keeping its typical villages, friendly and graceful areas, which are sometimes natural museums of indigenous art.* Sobas*' houses are large and important; young men live in poor and small dwellings. Despite this apparent material inequality, all are mutually hospitable, a living symbol of harmony, camaraderie and unity.*[44]

On the one hand, it thus seemed that Diamang was keen to keep some African traditional dwellings as a way to respect local preferences; yet the directive to combine "pleasure" with "business" by maintaining native houses instead of building new ones also presented a cheaper alternative for the company.[45] And even if the *soba*'s dwellings were still the structuring element of space, the village would no longer be circular; instead, houses were to be aligned along a forested street.[46] Each house also had a porch around its perimeter, a garden, and an annex, much like the European houses. The result was thus a compromise solution that stemmed from an inevitable cultural clash.

During the Festa Grande, visiting *sobas* were housed in this village with the intention of showing them "beautiful houses with verandas" so they could "appreciate such living conditions."[47] As a "modern and hygienic neighborhood," it was hoped this village could provide "an example of the stan-

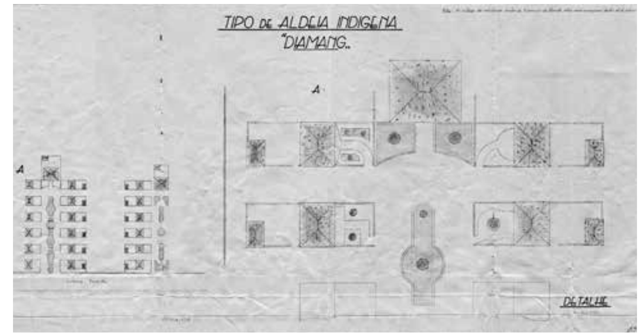


FIGURE 9. *"Diamang indigenous model village," as planned in 1942. Universidade de Coimbra, 2018 (courtesy of the Project Diamang Digital).*

dard of living that indigenous people can achieve through education and work."[48] The village school was another crucial facility in the attempt to create a model settlement. But it also included a playground, sports fields, bathhouses, and experimental vegetable gardens.

A few years later, in December of 1946, the village of Soba Samaugo, near Andrada, received the award for "Best Village" in the Cambulo area. A celebration was subsequently held, and a big ox was given to its population as a prize. The honor and the award were the result of a contest organized by SPAMOI to prompt the native workforce to modify their villages. According to SPAMOI, these "should look cleaner and more hygienic," much like the model village in Dundo (FIG.10).[49] Therefore, as noted by Nuno Porto, "it was the population's ability to conform to the colonial rule which was being recognized and valued at the contest."[50] And this goal could be more readily achieved if houses were made of more substantial materials, like adobe or *pau-a-pique* (cob wall).

The Best Village contest was intended to spur change in the natives' urban imaginary, leading them to "recognize the benefits of a clean and neat village, whitewashed houses, vegetation and fruit trees."[51] And the award ceremony was seen as a great opportunity to spread Diamang's civilizing ideas, which were evident in its urban and housing models.[52] *Sobas* from other villages were invited to be present, and gifts like mirrors, matches and soap were distributed as a symbol of the values to be instilled. However, a mix of traditions was still evident: while the winning village was decorated with little flags, Venetian balloons, and traditional amusement stalls, Africans celebrated with their *muxique* dances all day long. Between the Self and the Other, both European employees and African workers had the experience of being "like but not quite."[53]

FIGURE 10. *In 1957 the* sobeta *Baraca's village, near Maludi, won the "Best Village" Contest promoted by SPAMOI. Universidade de Coimbra, 2018 (courtesy of the Project Diamang Digital).*

## TRADITION IN THE SERVICE OF MODERNITY

Looking back at SPAMOI's roots, it becomes clear that Belgian influence certainly played a role in the organization of the Best Village contest. Gathering a workforce had also been a problem faced by Belgian companies like Forminiére and Union Miniére du Haut Katanga (UMHK), which were operating nearby, just over the border. The compound system, a housing model used at De Beers's mining sites in South Africa, was too harsh to be deployed in regions where a workforce had to be gathered from elsewhere, as in Angola or the Belgian Congo. Therefore, to avoid the high death rates and riots found at De Beers settlements, UMHK understood that "it was advisable to stabilize the African labor force by stabilizing the place of residence of the workers and allowing them to lead a family life in the locality where they were working."[54] Providing good housing and preserving a few African traditions were thus regarded as key strategies to ensure an adequate workforce. To address this challenge, the Service Provincial des Affaires Indigènes et Main-d'oeuvre [Provincial Service of Indigenous Affairs and Manpower] had been organized in the Belgian Congo.

Diamang would replicate many of its ideas.[55] Indeed, SPAMOI was only created after Leopold Mottoulle, the head doctor of both UMHK and Forminiére, visited Diamang's villages. Mottoulle provided Diamang with several suggestions

for ways to improve the living conditions there. For example, from then on, across Lunda, men from the same native village were kept together to "re-create their familiar ambience" and to respect some local traditions.[56] Moreover, just a few months before Diamang's first Best Village contest, Mottoulle presented an *aide-memóire* regarding the Politique Sociale de L'Union Miniére du Haut Katanga and its labor-recruitment practices over twenty years. One of the main strategies suggested by the doctor was the creation of a Foyer Sociale, a service responsible for educational, family and recreational assistance. Specifically, the service should pay attention to "everything that concerns family life," including the "organiz[ation of] contests of the most beautiful houses."[57]

While these Belgian connections recalled Diamang's cross-border inception, the use of traditions as a tool to cope with modernity also increased its alignment with the policies of the Portuguese Estado Novo. Thus, in Lunda, rather than being opposed to modernity, tradition (as Nezar AlSayyad has pointed out) collided and colluded with it.[58] As argued by James Ferguson, "traditional elements [could] fit together with the various elements of an archetypal modern industrial society without any necessary contradiction."[59]

A report from the government administrators at Diamang thus even noted how the SPAMOI's Best Village contest was similar to one organized in Portugal. In 1938 the Estado Novo had promoted a contest to find "The Most Portuguese Village." Specifically, it aimed to find the village that presented "the strongest resistance to alien influences" while holding "intact the purity and natural grace of its local traditions."[60]

The appearance of the Casa do Pessoal also came just two years after the organization in Portugal of the Fundação Nacional para a Alegria no Trabalho (FNAT) [National Institute for the Joy in Work]. The institute was intended to create infrastructure that supported cultural, sportive and recreational activities for workers and their families, in order to "achieve a major physical, intellectual and moral development" (**FIG. 11**).[61] Among its activities, it promoted "athletic demonstrations and sports festivals," gymnastics, professional and general cultural courses, theater sessions, "educational cinema," radio lectures, libraries, and choral singing. In 1938, the same year Diamang organized the Casa do Pessoal in Lunda, FNAT started to build an extensive network of Centros de Recreio Popular [Public Recreation Centers], an initiative similar to the Estado Novo's earlier program of multifunctional Casas do Povo [People's Houses].[62]

Both the Salazarist Secretariado da Propaganda Nacional (SPN) — later renamed the Secretariado Nacional de Informação (SNI) — and FNAT were intended to create a "certain image of what 'being Portuguese' was like, built from references to popular culture . . . without forgetting notions of order, citizenship and society."[63] Celebrating tradition was, therefore, part of an on-going process of modernization. This other kind of "civilizing mission" was often associated with policies to control the poor (the most potentially dissatisfied segment of the population). However, as Vera Marques Alves has pointed out, SNP/SNI initiatives on traditional folklore "did not develop only within the rural and proletarian milieu, but often also target[ed] the upper middle and upper classes of Portuguese society; and to show themselves they chose urban and cosmopolitan environments instead of peripheral areas." This meant that the Estado Novo's propaganda agenda also had an "orientation to the outside world," to define and declare Portuguese "national identity."[64]

From this perspective, Diamang's use of tradition can be seen to take on an additional dimension. It was not only a way to create and bind together a corporate community of European employees and African workers — even if through separate spatial strategies and for different purposes; it was also a way to weave an urban image that could be used as the company's "business card." For instance, the choice of Mucu-

**FIGURE 11.** *Tennis match at one of Diamang's clubs. Courtesy of diamang.com.*

nene as a “model village” because it was “seen in the distance and it was an obligatory visit” reinforced the importance given to these villages as synonymous of civilization. And this was not only true for those living in Lunda but also for outsiders. Diamang towns could thus be considered “representation cities” — which, according to Carlos Fortuna, “corresponds to the classic *theatron*: what was made to be seen.”[65]

As proposed by Porto, company space thus worked as a Foucauldian “benign panopticon,” that guaranteed the power of some and the subalternity of others.[66] Nevertheless, it is important to understand the role of African workers as active agents in the maintenance and re-creation of their own spatial practices. According to Cristina Valentim, tradition and folklore “represented not only the political control of difference but also an encounter with it, allowing processes of negotiation with power that resulted in the expression, even if relative, of the cultural autonomy of those who were subalternized.”[67]

Even if, as noted by Jyoti Hosagrahar, “those in power had declared themselves the only legitimate moderns, [and] those ‘others’ they labeled ‘traditional’ could only aspire [to], seek, adopt, or mimic modern forms in the dominant mold,” African people were still entitled to create “alternative versions of modernity.”[68] In this regard, the celebration of African traditions and their representation in the built environment, not only in day-to-day life but also during the Festas Indígenas, offered a different trajectory to reach “indigenous modernities.”

## POSTCOLONIAL LEGACIES

The independence of Angola in 1975 led to the nationalization of Diamang a few years later. Thus, even if the country’s colonization had come to an end, exploration for diamonds continued, now under the direction of the National Company of Diamonds of Angola (Endiama), created in 1981. And even today the diamond industry remains the driving force in Lunda.

Mining towns in the region also continue to offer a sharp contrast. Thus, the old colonial neighborhoods built by Diamang have been often well kept, while extensive areas of poor and precarious housing have now appeared around them with no electricity, running water, or sewage service.[69] By and large, this scenario is no different than that found at mining sites in South Africa or Australia, where companies maintain nearly total control of local practices and service delivery. Across the world, mining towns seem to be unable to grow independently of mining enterprises and a centralized extraction economy.[70]

While the agents may be different, therefore, Diamang’s former colonial ethos still lingers in Lunda, and some of its facilities have even been reused with no change in function. Thus, Casa do Pessoal in Dundo is now Endiama’s Grémio, and serves as a sports complex for the local football team. And K-18, once the residence of Diamang’s managing director, is now an official state residence, used to welcome important guests to Lunda (FIG.12).[71] Likewise, the structure of a “state within a state” that used to mark Diamang’s labor practices seems to persist, as mining enterprises in Lunda are still expected to provide welfare services to the local population.[72] Companies like Endiama or Sociedade Minieira do Catoca thus have multiple development programs in such areas as education, sports, health, potable water, and farming.

**FIGURE 12.** *Diamang’s Representation House, K-18, is used today by the board of directors of Endiama, the Angola National Mining Company. Courtesy of diamang.com.*

Urban planning also plays a role in these development strategies. As an example, since 2010, Catoca has been promoting the construction of Sagrada Esperança, a village near the city of Saurimo in Lunda Sul, to shelter its workers and their families. The company funded a major part of this village’s infrastructure, land allotment, and legalization. Its guidelines revolve around the creation of a civic center as a “booster of dynamization and socialization.” It is intended to provide administrative, educational and commercial areas; a health center with a maternity ward that can be used by surrounding populations; a block designed for the production of artisanal products; and another reserved for an ethnographic museum. Next to the museum will be a library, described as an “area for quiet and non-festive cultural activities”; and a few blocks away will be a big outdoor auditorium for festive activities. A greenbelt to protect the city and link its two sports areas is also part of the plan.[73] Moreover, its planned 3,000 houses, while having several typologies, will exhibit the same “global language to make the difference as little as possible.” All of these intentions echo what were once Diamang urban practices. These same guidelines could have been used, for instance, by the engineers who reputedly designed Dundo. And, among them, the creation of a new ethnographic museum is perhaps the most suggestive evidence of the persistence of a colonial rationale.

After its renovation according to the policies of revitalization and valorization established by new National Cultural

**FIGURE 13.** *Dundo's museum. Courtesy of diamang.com.*

Heritage laws in Angola, Dundo's Ethnographic Museum is also gaining new attention **(FIG.13)**. The renovation, financed by Endiama, is specifically intended to transform the museum into "a driving force of the growth and diversification of the province's economy, for its contribution in re-launching the local tourism sector, thus opening the way for the city of Dundo and others in Lunda-Norte to be visited by national and foreign citizens attracted by the Lunda *tchokwe* culture."[74] As a consequence, the national authorities have recently designated Lunda "an important collection of the memory and tradition of the Angolan people."[75]

Even if life in the colonial period was a lot different than that presently, both timeframes demonstrate the importance of tradition in the construction of space. Diamang once sought to "imagine" a community — which, as Benedict Anderson has noted, did not necessarily imply a process of fabrication or forgery.[76] It did this largely through a planned built environment and the celebration of traditions that allowed both Europeans and Africans to cope with the colonial project. In just such a way the Ministry of Culture of Angola is today betting on the preservation of local native traditions as the substratum for another process of "imagination."[77] And this effort has now overlapped the previous one in ways that are forging the identity of a modern Angola.[78]

This analysis proposes the existence of a "shared built scenario." Although far from the country's capital, the Lunda region thus continues to be considered a "model" in the Angolan urban context, as revealed in a report on the new Centrality of Dundo, inaugurated in August 2017.[79] As an aspect of recent and growing attention to heritage in Angola, it can provide an important launching pad to discuss the country's postcolonial situation. Through it, it may be possible to question the existence of transits and transitions of urban practices, customs and traditions and the impact of colonial legacies on the configuration of current national urban policies.

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The author is the source of all translations from the Portuguese.