Social life in a Smart Neighborhood The case of K K Nagar, Chennai

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally the neighborhoods in many parts of India grew around religious institutions, commercial centres, or water bodies and the residents thereby shared some common socio-cultural, economic backgrounds. However, post-independence there are some modernist and planned neighborhoods developed which were promoted by the housing boards and other planning authorities where the plots or houses could be bought by anyone irrespective of their caste, class, occupation. The paper studies one such neighborhood called Kalaignar Karunanidhi Nagar in Chennai which was planned and promoted by Tamil Nadu Housing board. The paper attempts to study the performance of this neighborhood which was resided by people with diverse background. In the present-day context, the government is promoting the "Smart City Mission" with the aim of providing the citizens a decent quality of life. The study attempts to evaluate how the neighborhood performs with respect to smartness as defined by India's "Smart City Mission". Opinion and satisfaction level of the residents is considered to be the main tool to test the success of the neighborhood. Results of the study show that the neighborhood which is five decades old fares quite satisfactorily in its smartness even today proving that efficient planning of a neighborhood makes it innately smart and cosmetic changes in the name of smartness may not help.

Introduction

In the 378-year-old city of Chennai, there are many historic neighborhoods like Triplicane, Mylapore, Tiruvanmayur, George Town and Royapettah. Many of them were planned around religious institutions, commercial centres or along the coastline. Historically, residents of these precincts shared values that helped foster socio- cultural life. Though these precincts have densified and grown organically over time, they continue to be regarded as cultural hubs for some or most parts of the year. Along with the historic neighborhoods which developed with people of similar backgrounds, there exist modernist neighborhoods whose residents were not predetermined, meaning their backgrounds, caste, class, occupation was diverse. Many neighborhoods planned in post independent India were charged with secular notions of community living, a pathbreaker from historic neighborhoods in the country. Quite a handful of these were built in Madras as well. But how did planners envisage the social life of future residents in a secular context? This paper examines the social life and cultural networks in one such neighborhood - Kalaignar Karunanidhi Nagar better known as KK Nagar in Chennai. The grid iron layout with wide roads, avenue trees, pavements and parks were designed and built by the Tamil Nadu Housing Board (TNHB). In 1970s, the plots and housing board apartments were allotted through a lottery system as they were in high demand. It was nothing short of a futuristic social experiment, whose physical expressions aspired to connect with the larger world. In the present-day context with the Indian Government's "Smart City Mission", cities are aiming to attain smartness by providing the citizens a decent quality of life. This paper tries to evaluate how a modernist neighborhood fares in smartness, with an assumption that satisfaction of the residents is the best way to evaluate the success of a neighborhood planned for the city dwellers.

How smart are our cities?

Most Indian cities have grown organically over time through the conglomeration of smaller, older neighborhoods. Many of the old neighborhoods in Chennai performed well originally. The problems began when two or more neighborhoods merged and the residual areas were left to grow. Also, with the growing population, the cities expanded randomly with no proper planning in many cases. To improve quality of life in the cities, Indian Government came up with the Smart Cities Mission (Ministry of Urban Development, 2015) where 100 cities were shortlisted for development including Chennai. However, there hasn't been any study to evaluate the prevailing smartness of our cities or to understand whether good planning may automatically improve the quality of life in the cities. The mission admits that there is no universally accepted definition of a Smart City. The objective is "to promote cities that provide core infrastructure and give a decent quality of life to its citizens, a clean and sustainable environment and application of 'Smart' Solutions."

Some typical features of comprehensive development in Smart Cities as described in the smart city guidelines are as follows:

I. **Promoting mixed land use in area-based developments:**
Planning for 'unplanned areas' containing a range of compatible activities and land uses close to one another in order to make land use more efficient. The States will enable some flexibility in land use and building bye-laws to adapt to change.

ii. **Housing and inclusiveness:**
Expand housing opportunities for all.

iii. **Creating walkable localities**:
Reduce congestion, air pollution and resource depletion, boost local economy, promote interactions and ensure security. The road network is created or refurbished not only for vehicles and public transport, but also for pedestrians and cyclists, and necessary administrative services are offered within walking or cycling distance.

iv. **Preserving and developing open spaces**: Parks, playgrounds, and recreational spaces in order to enhance the quality of life of citizens, reduce the urban heat effects in Areas and generally promote eco-balance.

v. **Promoting a variety of transport options**: Transit Oriented Development (TOD), public transport and last mile para - transport connectivity;

vi. **Making governance citizen -friendly and cost effective**:
Increasingly rely on online services to bring about accountability and transparency, especially using mobiles to reduce cost of services and providing services without having to go to municipal offices; form e-groups to listen to people and obtain feedback and use online monitoring of programs

and activities with the aid of cyber tour of worksites;

vii. **Giving an identity to the city**:
Based on its main economic activity, such as local cuisine, health, education, arts and craft, culture, sports goods, furniture, hosiery, textile, dairy, etc;

viii. **Applying Smart Solutions to infrastructure and services in area-based development:** For example, making Areas less vulnerable to disasters, using fewer resources, and providing cheaper services

Methodology

This study explores the quality of life of the people in a neighborhood - KK Nagar and a part of Ashok Nagar, a locality in the west of the city of Chennai. Keeping the above elements of smartness enumerated by the smart city mission, the present study tries to assess whether a planned neighbor-hood of the past is capable of satisfying the smart features of the smart city mission of the present Government. It tries to evaluate the decent quality of life of the residents by studying the satisfaction level of the residents of the neighborhood, after about fifty years of inception.

The study was part of the Urban Design Studio of the students of 4th year of School of Environment Architecture and Design, SRM University, Chennai. It was conducted as an academic exercise in the first quarter of the year 2018. The neighborhood comprises of 5161 plots where 500 residents were randomly interviewed for the study. The questionnaires for the survey were prepared by students and structured by the authors. The interviews were conducted on site where the responses were recorded on Google forms. It was also possible

to undertake surveys, as local people were available on the streets during most times of the day. Almost all the 500 people interviewed were pedestrians. These were important clues for quality of life in this area.

Through surveys, the study attempted to investigate the perception of the people about their own neighborhood based on their sense of belonging, levels of comfort and safety and satisfaction, and finally the physical elements which give the neighborhood its identity.

Background

Social Spaces in Historic Neighbor -hoods in Tamil Nadu

Learning from Tamil colloquialism, designated social spaces were indeed part of all Tamil settlements. The study uses the Tamil language as a reference to understand historic social spaces as the study was based in the city of Chennai. Tamil people socialized in the streets in thinnai or verandahs, specific activities were part of the streetscape such as drawing kolams in the mornings, resting in the afternoons and men sleeping in charpai during summer nights. Women would go to fetch water, bathe or "hang out" near the water bodies known as Kamma-karai (banks of canals), Kollathankarai and natural features. Men would gossip while watching the world go by, sitting on broken walls known Askutti-chevuru. Elderly men typically discuss law and order under the village tree or Maraththadi.

Festivities were entertained in the village and town squares, processions were organised in designa -ted routes or raja veedi around

temples. Cultural sports were condu-cted in playgrounds that were cleared for cultural activities near temples called pottal where young boys could be found playing. Weekly markets or sandai were hosted in temporary structures erected in open areas. Since flowers are an integral part of the Tamil culture, it was used to adorn the Gods every day and worn by women every day. Gardens known as tottham, nandavanam were attached to temples, mosques and homes, planted with fruit bearing and flowering plants for offering the gods.

Modernist Neighborhoods

The Central Public works Department (CPWD) was responsible for planning new neighborhoods in independent India. It faced a quandary given the strong urban design and architectural precedents set by Edward Lutyens, Herbert Baker and importantly Le Corbusier. Many modernist neighborhoods seem to be planned using Clarence Perry's concept of "neighborhood unit" in its design schemes. "A typical neighborhood would consist of a school at the center of the development, a market in the corner. The blocks of housing are organized around large open areas that served as parks and for parking cars." (Lang, 2002).

In KK Nagar, the prospective residents were not predetermined; meaning their backgrounds, caste, class, occupation was extremely diverse. In an attempt to enhance healthy social relationships, parks were allotted in the geometric center of every sector, to allow people to congregate and mingle. This evidently is a modern expression, following the order set by CPWD. Parks, in many ways are a foreign idea to Indian neighborhoods. It came with the English sensibilities of social life, eventually

becoming an urban feature of Indian cities that were colonized.

Gandhinagar, is a neighborhood which planned in the 1950s in the South of Chennai by the City Improvement Trust. Known for its large bungalows, it is located by the banks of the river and is divided into large plots roughly measuring 1000 sq.m and does not show the inclusion of parks. Residents seem to have built their own homes with lush gardens. The state had not taken an initiative towards developing mass housing, resulting in a variety architectural exploration, and is an exclusive

neighborhood that was occupied people from higher economic classes.

Just before KK Nagar was planned, a much larger neighborhood known as Anna Nagar was also being developed in the late 1960's where the World Fair was held (Sitalakshmi, 2015). It was also developed by the Tamil Nadu Housing Board, as a grid iron layout with parks, along modern principles and providing housing for various income groups. The same kind of planning principles have been followed in KK Nagar's Housing built by TNHB as well.
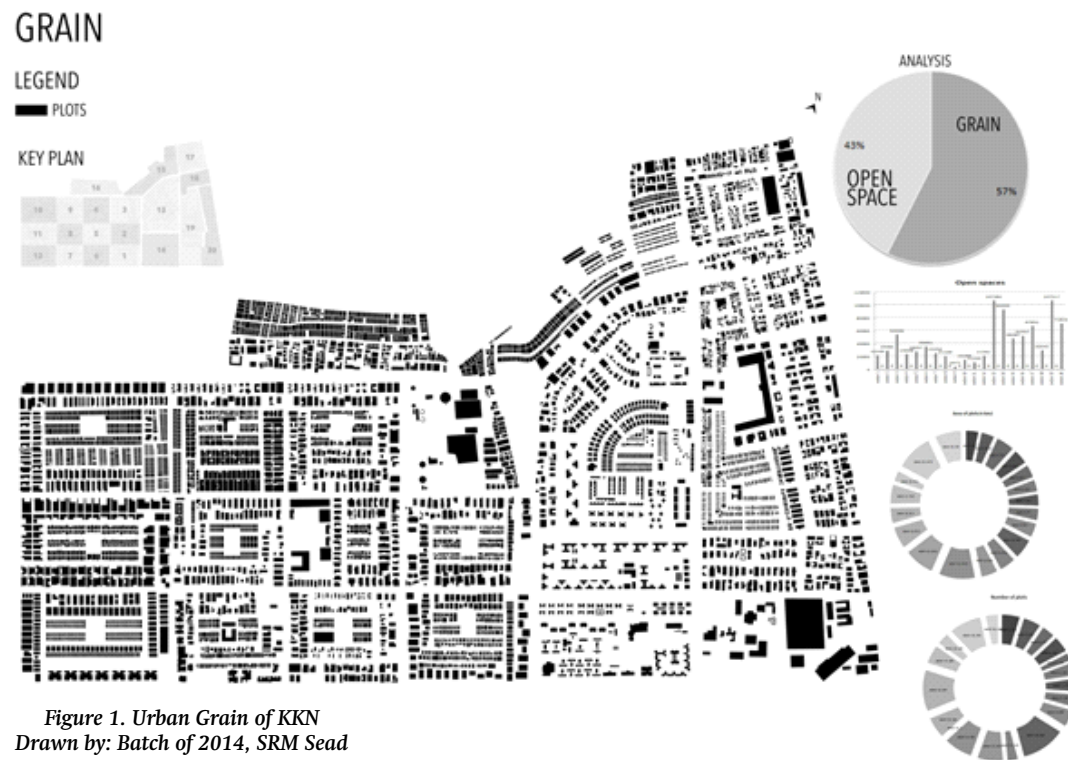

Figure 1. Urban Grain of KKN
Drawn by: Batch of 2014, SRM Sead

KK Nagar - Origin and Planning

There were few other newly planned neighborhoods named as KK Nagars in other cities in Tamil Nadu such as Madurai and Trichy built during the DMK's political rule, but the one in Chennai is said to be the most successful. Interviews imply that the state government acquired lands for this proposal although, written records of the same were not found. It was an initiative by the late former Chief Minister Kalaignar Karunanidhi and was entrusted to the TNHB. The land parcels sold as plots and flats were developed by the state housing board. "These large scale neighborhood developments of TNHB with full infrastructure acted as a catalyst for private developments for residential use around."(Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, 2015)

KK Nagar is a residential area planned on a gridiron network of orthogonal streets, systematically lined with avenue trees. The neighborhood is divided into twelve sectors in three rows. Each sector is roughly sized as 300 x 300 m and are not of equal in area. The study confirms that this scale enabled people to explore and understand their sector thoroughly, and the interviews suggested that men, women and children were found to be extremely familiar with the extent of their locality.

Making and forming a community

The older residents of a building, street, and sector regard each other as family. K S Rajalaksmi, 86, recalls that "in earlier days, auto rickshaw drivers would hardly be willing to drop us in KK Nagar, because it was considered a distant land where they may not get a ride back to the city. So, we would always

travel outside KK Nagar in groups". In the early days of the neighborhood, the residents looked out and helped each other as there were hardly any houses inhabited by families. Interviews suggest that successive generations of the families that lived from the beginning are also thick friends even if they may not reside in the area currently. The tendency for newer residents to move into KK Nagar is mostly because of its schools, parks and wide roads. Schools insist that their students reside with a 2km radius. Making friends and acquaintances here seems easier as one tends to be a part of smaller social circles.

KK Nagar -A Smart Neighborhood?

K K Nagar was tested for the typical features of comprehensive development in Smart Cities as described in the Smart Cities Mission Statement & Guidelines, 2015.

1. Promoting mixed land use in area - based developments

The social infrastructure map and the land use map (**Fig. 2 and Fig. 3**) clearly show a mixed type of land use. The mixed land use with commercial development along the main roads, parks, playgrounds and schools provides the infrastructure required for a self-contained neighborhood. Except for the provision of markets, planners have magnificently contextualized key features of a neighborhood such as parks, playgrounds, schools and income-based housing in the neighborhood. Although formal markets were not included in the original plan of the neighborhood, the main roads have transformed to commercial establishments. It was found that the wide sidewalks and shaded streets in the neighborhood provide a convenient
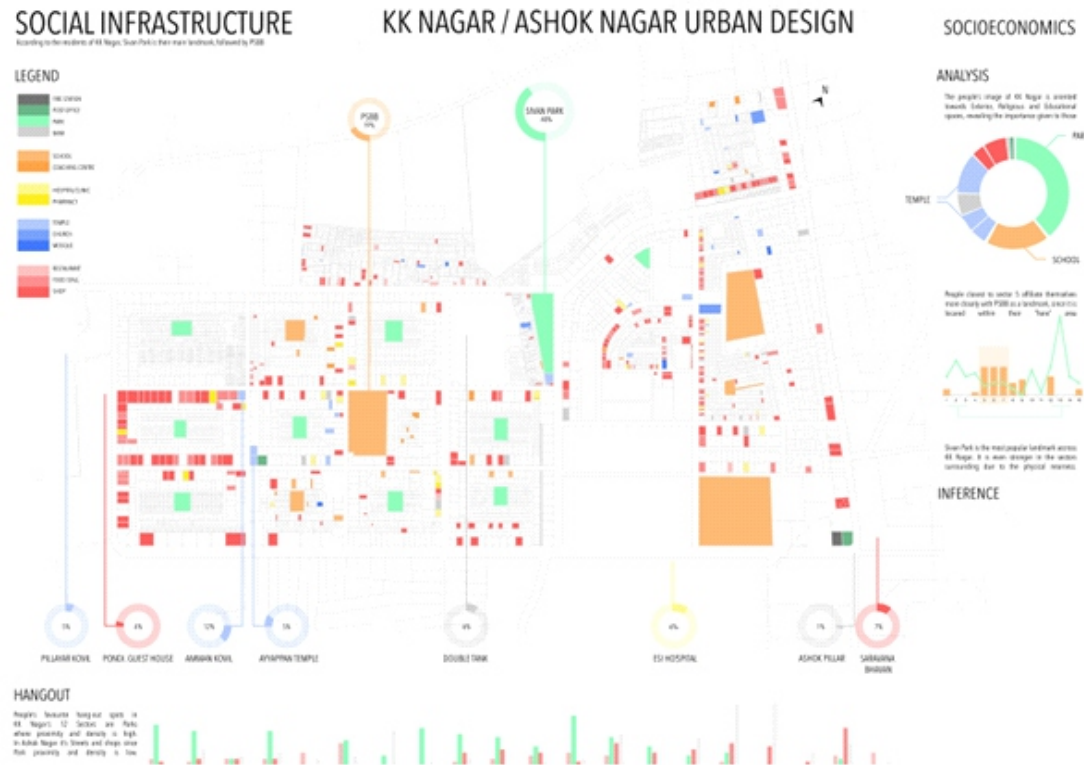
Figure 2 Social Infrastructure of KKN Drawn by: Batch of 2014, SRM SEAD
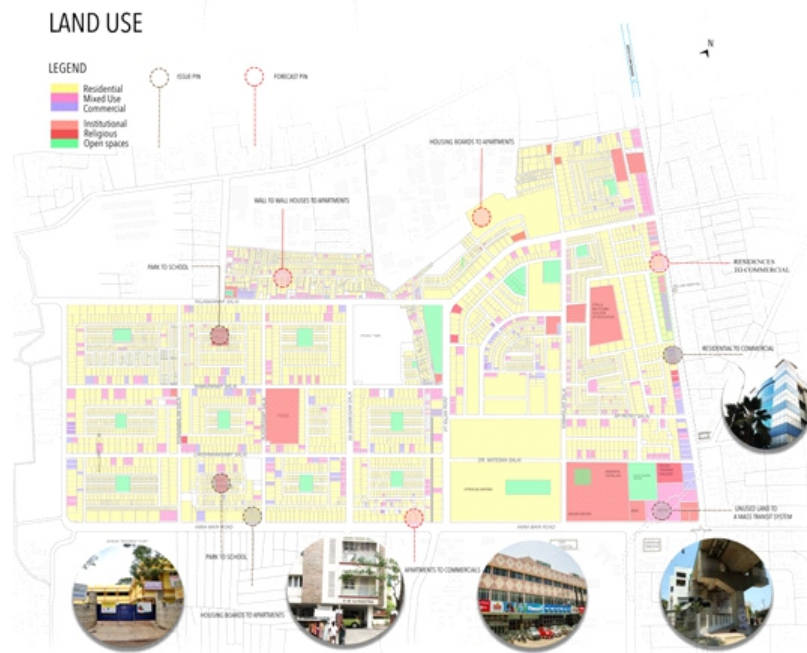

Figure 3 Drawing showing the land use of the neighborhood. Drawn by: Batch of 2014, SRM SEAD

environment for informer shops and a livelihood for a number of hawkers. Although the hawkers encroach on the sidewalks in a number of places, but they do provide safety to the passersby. Interviews reveal that the vendors are happy to use the public amenities like the public toilets, public drinking water taps and the state canteen for subsidized foods. They reside in nearby areas and travel to KKN by walk, tri-cycle or public transport.

Mixed land use comprising of good social infrastructure facilities like schools and health facilities makes the neighborhood complete and satisfactory to the users. The ESIC Hospital that is run by the central government of India abuts the neighborhood and is well visited by the entire city. There are about 60 nursery, primary and secondary schools in the area, the most important being the PSBB school. Along with this network, ancillary spaces like daycare centers, fine art schools, tuition centers, coaching classes, summer camps, eating joints and stationery shops have mushroomed. Hundreds of teachers and school children may be seen walking together and cycling in groups to schools in the area. Students are commonly spotted loitering in their school uniforms in the evenings outside bakeries and printing shops, expressing their social circles actively. Surveys show 19% of the people associate KKN to the school. There are a number of other schools in the locality and 45% of the residents claimed that they moved into this area due to the proximity to the schools.

Figure 4 Drawing showing housing typology.
Drawn by: Batch of 2014, SRM SEAD

2. Housing and inclusiveness

Design of the neighborhood itself had the concept of inclusive housing with Tamil Nadu Housing Board (TNHB) flats allotted according the buyer's income (classified as Lower, Middle- & Higher-Income Group LIG, MIG & HIG Flats). Individual plots were also sold and developed by TNHB. Older residents consider themselves lucky while recollecting that there was so much demand that sale of properties was managed through lottery systems. The study has not identified what was considered to be LIG, MIG or HIG during the sale, but the flat area, common area, number of flats and the setbacks varied according to the typology. Now, most of the HIG flats, some of the MIG flats have been developed into modern apartments by private builders. Owners of the flats get into a joint venture with private builder to get an upgraded apartment perhaps even bigger. Although there is business venture, this shows that the owners (or a group of owners) are willing to share their property with new residents. The builder proposed a new building with a higher footprint, with higher number of floors, minimum setbacks and the additional flats are sold to potential residents of KK Nagar. To put it in simple terms, these are the general

terms of a joint venture here.

The wall to wall typology and the LIG has not been redeveloped into new buildings or apartments and are standing expressions of what was built in the 1970s. The wall to wall houses also known as artisan houses have consumed the maximum FSI, G+2 in height with nearly 100% plot coverage.

In LIG layouts, the number of flats per plot is higher, the setbacks and common area are lesser making it difficult for a private builder to further subdivide the plot to increase the flat size or further subdivide it to make it as a profitable venture.

The study points out that only 3% of the housing typology remain as TNHB buildings whereas apartments built by private builders form 39%. Individual houses form 35% and the remaining 23% are by the wall to wall housing typology that surrounds the parks. The neighborhood has certainly densified over time. The study on the age of the buildings denotes that 23% of the buildings built in the last 10 years. The new buildings are taller, have lesser setbacks and gardens when compared to the older houses, but the parks remain to be untouched. The number of individual houses has also decreased, apartments being the order of the day. Some plots have changed their land use from residential to mixed residential and some plots have changed from residential to commercial. The new buildings are taller with larger footprints and smaller setbacks. Though this wave of commercial buildings is only seen in the

SECTOR MODULE

- PARK
- WALL TO WALL HOUSES
- SURROUNDING RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES

Figure 5 Drawing of a typical sector in KK Nagar. Drawn by: Batch of 2014, SRM SEAD

periphery, it may not take long for the interiors of the neighborhood to witness this change. The study foresees residents to depend on the parks further more than before for leisure and fitness, since the setbacks and open area provided inside the plots in new developments have reduced significantly with the change in building byelaws.

3. Creating Walkable Localities

With growing population and growing number of vehicles on the road, the roads in most parts of Chennai as in most of the cities in India, seem to be primarily serving the needs of the vehicles rather than the needs of people, increasingly making it difficult for people to walk on the roads. As Jane Jacob puts it- "Erosion of cities by automobiles proceeds as a kind of nibbling, small nibbles at first, but eventually hefty bites. A street is widened here, another is straightened there, a wide avenue is converted to one-way flow.....more land goes into parking.....No one step in this process is, in itself, crucial. But cumulatively the effect is enormous.....City character is blurred until every place becomes more like every other place, all adding up to No place" (Jacobs, 1992). In case of KK Nagar, however, the dimension of the Sector (300 x 300m) and the presence of huge trees along the streets allow the residents to enjoy shaded and comfortable walks encouraging them to come outdoors for their daily needs. In addition to this, the walkable atmosphere creates a neighborhood formed by socially and physically healthy people which is highly desirable in this day and age.

Allan Jacob (1993) argues that: "If we can develop and design streets so that they are

wonderful, fulfilling places to be—community building places, attractive for people—then we will have successfully designed about one-third of the city directly and would have an immense impact on the rest." Interviews suggest that women and children feel very safe to walk and cycle on the streets by themselves even in the innermost parts of the neighborhood. Since the land use of the neighborhood is mixed, streets are almost always occupied by people and vibrant with activities. This is also a striking reason for people to form and belong to different communities in the neighborhood. Elders, mothers, working women, men and children are part of one or more communities involving religion, school, tuition, yoga, walking, jogging buddies, laughing clubs, play mates etc.

4. Preserving and Developing Open Spaces

KK Nagar has an admirable network of parks, each one known for its specialty. Parks were a fashionable urban feature back in the days. "When we moved to KK Nagar from Mylapore, I used to take my kids to the parks here as they missed visiting the beach." says Natarajan, 78. The internal sector parks prove as excellent community space for entertainment. The largest being Sivan park attracts residents from all the neighborhood and surrounding areas. Parks play a key role in the social life of the residents even today. "Summer vacations were spent playing cricket in the sector park, we would walk royally into any of the houses to be served water while playing", says Siddharth, 35 a former resident. Most of the people frequently enjoy the use of the parks and have a strong sense of memory towards it, forming a significant part of the public imagination of the area. Also, Sivan park is regarded as an
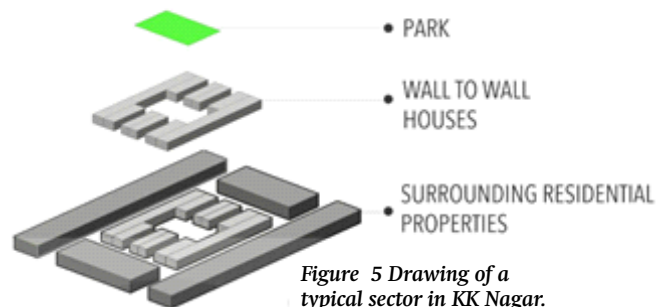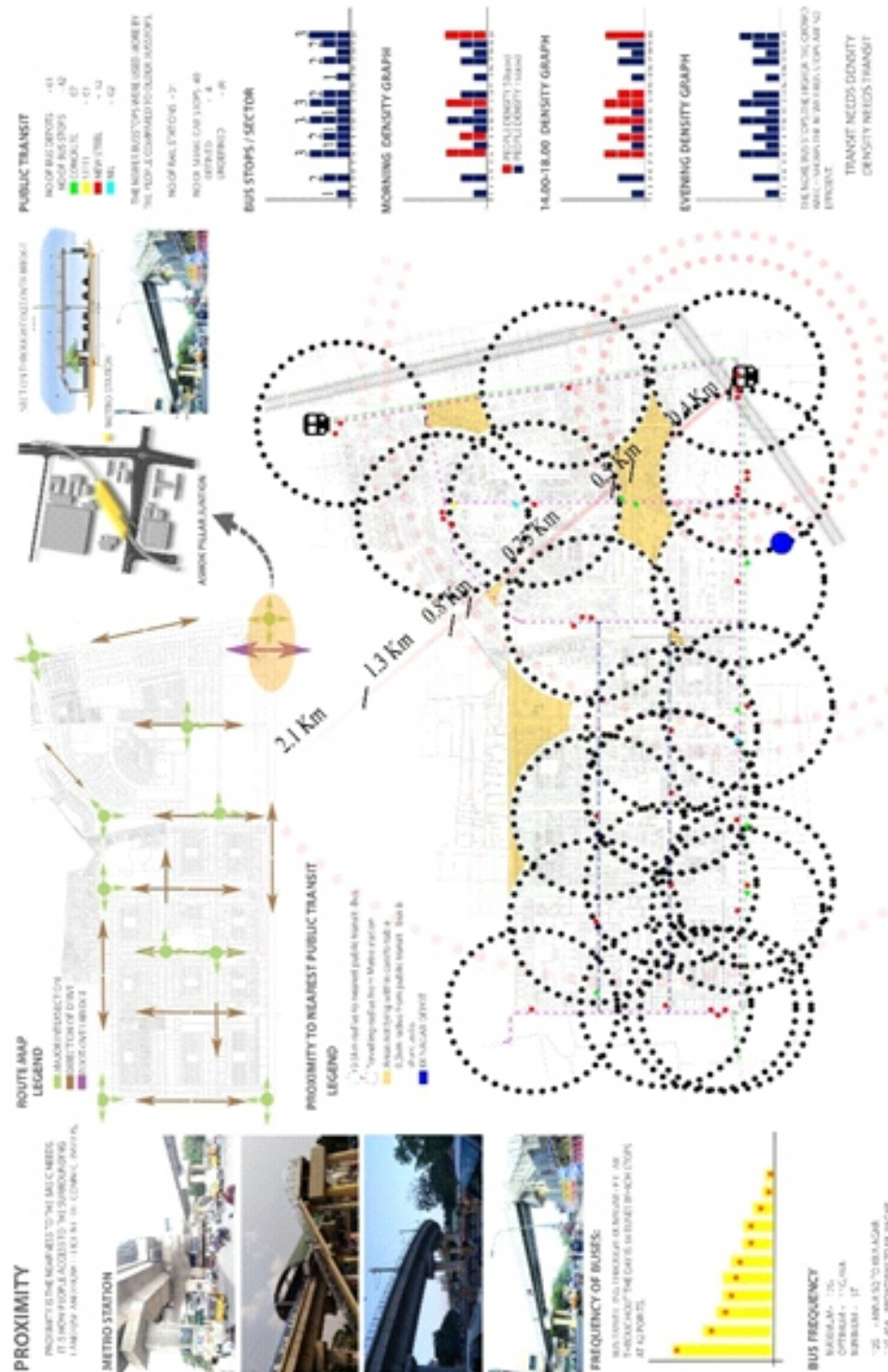
Figure 7 Drawing showing the proximity to the nearest Public Transport Hub in KK Nagar
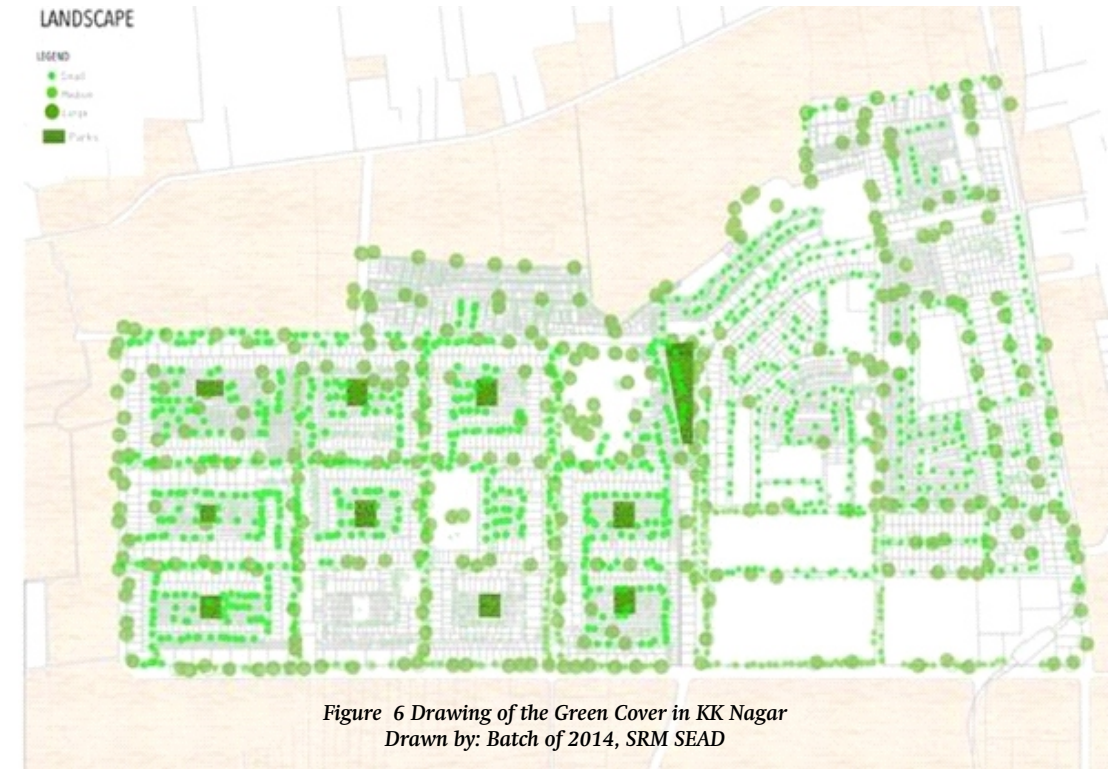*Drawn by: Batch of 2014, SRM SEAD*

Figure 6 Drawing of the Green Cover in KK Nagar
Drawn by: Batch of 2014, SRM SEAD

important landmark in the locality and forty percent of the people associate KK Nagar to it.

5. Promoting a Variety of Transport Options

The physical dimension (300 x 300m) of the sectors is a comfortable grid which enables easy pedestrian movement within the sector and from one to the another. The neighborhood has good accessibility to public transport, such as the elevated metro rail and city bus depots. Residents ride the "share autos" or shuttles to reach the metro station which are para transit systems and quite convenient and affordable. Auto-Rickshaw stands are organically organized in most of the important nodes of the neighborhoods offering additional transport options. Even interior parts of the neighborhood are well connected via public bus network. The hierarchy of road widths varies

from 31m on the periphery of the neighborhood to an intimate 2-4 m in the inner parts of the sector. The innermost streets are wrapped around the parks and are most vibrant with activity throughout the day.

The roads cater to different categories of traffic and vehicles. In 2015, the primary roads were additionally equipped with three-meter-wide pedestrian pathways and bicycle tracks on one side. Avenue trees were planted on either side of the road in the onset of the project, although some of which were not native species of the region. Even today most of the streets in the locality are extremely well shaded and comfortable to use even during hot afternoons. Sadly, the exotic varieties of trees were lost in the cyclone Vardah 2017, but little efforts have been taken to replace the lost trees.

6. Making Governance Citizen-Friendly and Cost Effective

Initiatives taken by government includes an app called "Namma Chennai" (Our Chennai). Our surveys point out that a number of young residents and some tech savvy older residents use this app. The app is basically a public grievance redressal system where residents express their concerns online.
This shows the commitment of the residents towards their surroundings and neighborhood.

7. Giving an Identity to the City

Edensor (1998), in *Images of the Street*, describes the Indian streets as diverse spaces with shops co-existing alongside work places, schools, eating places, transport termini, bathing points, political headquarters, offices, administrative centers, places of worship and temporary and permanent dwellings. He further describes the multifunctional structure of the street providing an admixture of overlapping spaces that merge public and private, work and leisure, and holy and profane activities.

Contrastingly, in K K Nagar there is a strong sense of visual and physical order in comparison to the typical Indian street Edensor (1998) describes. There is hardly any ambiguity and overlapping in public and private spaces and are well designated, a very modernist idea. There is a hierarchy of wide, well shaded roads with sidewalks that encourage walkability. The blocks are planned with residential areas and with adequate public facilities.

The city of Chennai has grown organically over time, within the corporation limits there are only three significant neighborhoods that were planned by the Central Public Works Department - Gandhi Nagar, Anna Nagar and KK Nagar duly named after political leaders. In the context of the city, these three neighborhoods are commonly known for their planning and housing typologies lending it a unique identity within the city. Other organically grown neighborhoods are visually far more chaotic and busier when compared to these planned areas. In comparison to the other neighborhoods of the city, KK Nagar is a self-contained neighborhood with mixed land use equipped with all public amenities and hence remains one of the most sought out planned neighborhoods in Chennai. It is a common joke that if a married couple moves to KK Nagar, the rest of their lives will be convenient.

8. Applying Smart Solutions to Infrastructure and Services in Area-Based Development in order to make them better.

The infrastructure facilities of KK Nagar, were found to be adequate. Corporation supply of water is available in plenty, although there is a shortage of water in some parts such as the LIG housing. Public sewerage system was laid in the very beginning of the project. The storm water drains were designed to the surface run off water to flow into the Adayar river, but didn't function very well. Most parts of the neighborhood were not flooded in the 2016 Chennai floods. Also, the neighborhood has an efficient solid waste management system where segregation of waste is done at the household level and organic waste is converted to biogas and manure through composting. According to (Gehl, 2010), the human body, senses and mobility are the key to good urban planning for the people.

Considering smart solutions to the infrastructure, not many initiatives have been implemented so far. Few initiatives for smart solutions include presence of cctv cameras on all the roads, portal for reporting of parked vehicles in the no-parking zone including pedestrian pathways, Corporation portal for reporting complaints regarding garbage disposal, public health, water stagnation etc.

Inference from the Smart City Aspects

Considering the elements listed by the Smart Cities Mission, KK Nagar satisfies most of the elements required to make a smart neighborhood. Hence, it can be inferred that although the neighborhood is about five decades old and follows the conventional principles of a neighborhood, it is efficient enough even in the present context. The study further probed into the social relationships, the sense of belongingness and satisfaction level of the residents of the neighborhood considering that the users are the best judges to decide on the smartness and the quality of life provided by the design of the neighborhood.

Experience of the Residents
i. Social Relationships

In highly urbanized societies, with the advancement in technology, people can easily connect with one another in the virtual world while being physically disconnected in the real world impacting social relationships. With busy work schedules, long hours of travel to and from work places give very little time for personal engagements making it further difficult to have healthy social lives. The design of common and open areas in both work and residential neighborhoods are crucial in maintaining a healthy social life as humans being social animals. Gehl and Gemzoe (2004) offer a way of looking at environments based on human senses focusing on protection, comfort and enjoyment, and not merely some physical standard. If badly planned, city life could be demanding, making it difficult to spend time with family, catchup with friends, visit parks and pursue hobbies. In the context of this overwhelming trend, the study tries to explore the interpersonal relationships of this society in the study area.

From surveys conducted, it was observed that 59% of the residents of KK Nagar were found to interact effortlessly with each other on a daily basis, some even more than once a day. 24% of the residents made an informal interaction with their neighbors every other day while only 17% interacted only once in a while. The study observed that elderly residents were found plucking flowers from their neighbor's residence, depicting intimacy with them. When tested for level of intimacy with neighbors, 54% claimed that they felt free to pluck flowers from their neighbor's plots, 61% said that they would readily encourage their children to eat in their neighbor's homes and 58% of the people said that they would stop any other activity and help their neighbors in case of need. These salient responses illustrate a healthy and close-knit social relationship amongst the residents.

ii. Sense of Belonging

In *Life between Buildings*, Gehl (2010) explains that living cities are the cities where people have rich experiences from interacting with one another. When social relationships are nurtured and memorable experiences are gained in neighborhoods, people tend to build tangible and intangible associations with the

place. Tangible associations are formed by the distances travelled from and to the area and the mode of transport used. As a result, intangible relationships develop amongst the people. A sense of belonging is formed through the meanings that people make with the place – first with their immediate vicinity, then the neighborhood and finally the larger city. Through the know-hows of these emotions, a mental territory is imagined and its physicality is further strengthened by elements of urban design. Mehta and Bosson (2010) in their research of third places found that the human activity of extension of territorial claim on the street or public space right outside or adjacent to the business has great ability to influence the immediate space on the street.

The survey found that 30% of the people associated themselves with entire neighborhood, 25% identified themselves with their own sectors, 12% with their own street while 13% with their own house. This indicates that the imagined territory of the residents in this neighborhood clearly extends beyond the limitations of their house or streets.

iii. Level of Satisfaction

The study found that 80% of the residents were very satisfied with their neighborhood and claimed that they felt KK Nagar had all the amenities. Interestingly, 46% of the residents were satisfied to such an extent that they did not want any physical change in their neighborhood. With the high percentage of satisfaction level, the study briefly analyzed the physical aspects and infrastructure facilities of the neighborhood.

Conclusion

After nearly five decades, this study examines the quality of social life in KK Nagar with the premise that residents can best evaluate the smartness of their neighborhood in today's context. Through statistics, it was demonstrated and reiterated that collective human intelligence can very well comprehend good urban planning, governance and management. By actively engaging with users of different backgrounds and age groups, the study understands that the residents value good and adequate planning of the neighborhood along with a variety of choices for comfort, amenities, movement, transport etc.

The residents of KK Nagar jointly believed that their neighborhood is "smart" since it has fulfilled their dreams of an ideal neighborhood adequately. At the same time, they were aware that KK Nagar is in the cusp of transformation, and requires attention for larger vision for its "smartness". It is currently serving its residents very well, but this situation may not be sustaining itself in the future.

A city is a sum of its neighborhoods. A smart city should then be a sum of smart neighborhoods. Rather than using cosmetic applications as an alternative to treating smart solutions, our neighborhoods should strive to be innately smart which requires intelligent planning. In a well-developed city, existing neighborhoods should first be evaluated for their smartness, after understanding the user's needs. Before undergoing reckless urban transformations, it has to be verified if all not so smart neighborhoods can be made smart by smart governance and management. In a democratic country aspiring to make 100 smart cities, it's about time that the mission realizes that its approach towards its accomplishment should also be democratic.◼

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