

# **POLITICS AND POWER PLAY AS URBAN DESIGNERS OF DHAKA CITY**

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# **ABSTRACT**

How has a city comprised of open markets and huts morphed into one of the most densely populated and structurally congested areas on the planet? My project examines the socio-political factors that have, over Dhaka's 400 year history, affected and shaped the urban layout of the city. The built environment within the urban layout embodies the physical architecture and public or private spaces, and reflects the government and private sector involvement in the city's urban development. Local and foreign political intervention in Dhaka over the years has also changed the approaches to planning and architectural styles.

From its conception in 1610, Dhaka has evolved from an imperial Mughal provincial capital of India, through British colonization and successive partitions between India and Pakistan, to eventually become a capital city of an independent Bangladesh in 1971. These changes through local and foreign control have left a lasting physical imprint on the city. In turn, foreign occurrences such as European industrialization, the rise in the globalized economy and neo-liberal policies for third-world development by international institutions such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank have shaped the economic developments in Dhaka city.

These economic developments, including rising manufacturing and real estate industries, have affected structural patterns and people's living patterns. While these developments have led to economic growth through increased returns from exports, the effects are far more complex and do not simply abate poverty and improve standards of living for all. Uncontrolled urban vertical growth of apartment buildings and unregulated explosive growth in business activities have brought about major social and environmental problems, as well as the rising population density from greater rural-to-urban migration.

The social dilemmas include segregation, furthering of the gap between the richest and the poorest, and gender discrimination in public spaces. The human induced environmental issues only add to the natural catastrophes of floods and cyclones heightened by Dhaka's flat topography and adjacency to water bodies. Political instability and bureaucratic fragmentation of government agencies involved in urban development within Dhaka hampers the effective addressing of these urban problems. As Dhaka is the central location for economic, political and cultural activity, I have chosen its framework as my point of study and analysis.

I present my argument through analysis of official documents, scholarly articles and books, and will complete it with a site analysis and design proposal for a specific circular intersection within a residential area named Gulshan. My micro-scale, site specific urban design project is an attempt to confront some of the macro-scale socio-political urban issues I have uncovered through my thorough research and analysis of local and global factors.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The cycles of birth, decline and rebirth in Dhaka started two thousand five hundred years ago and have been affected by the surrounding rivers and Indian Ocean. Dhaka received its name during the Sena Dynasty after “Goddess Dhakeshwari’s temple” during the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Centuries later, Turkish and Afghan governors ruled Dhaka before the arrival of the Mughals. The discovery of coins and other artifacts and objects proves the relations through trade between the Mediterranean and Southeast Asian countries<sup>1</sup>. Among the seven divisions in Bangladesh, Dhaka is the economic, political and cultural center of Bangladesh (**FIGURE 1.02**). It consists of one City Corporation and seventeen different districts. The low-lying area of capital Dhaka is located towards the center of Bangladesh above the Bay of Bengal and adjacent to the Buriganga river. It contains an area of 1,463.60 square kilometers (565 square miles) and a total population of 18,305,671 according to the 2012 census<sup>2</sup>.

Within the past 400 years, Dhaka has grown as an urban center in four periods of differing political control. In chronological order, these periods include the establishment of the Mughal Empire between 1608 and 1764, shift to British colonial rule between 1764 and 1947, rule under an independent Pakistani nation between 1947 and 1971 and the post-liberation period of an independent Bangladesh after 1971 (**FIGURE 1.03**). These periods also reflect the changing styles of architecture and changing manners of living (**FIGURE 1.04**).

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<sup>1</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print, p. 400

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bbs.gov.bd/WebTestApplication/userfiles/Image/SY2010/Chapter-01.pdf>

A Master Plan is a practical strategy and a roadmap for organizing a city towards an effective future through structural and spatial changes where necessary. That “practical strategy” and “roadmap” did not exist in Dhaka before 1959 when land and water in the natural environment were utilized by the general population as a means of sustenance; while the built environment comprised of a combination of simple habitats for the general population and limited number of luxurious living spaces for the elite in society. It is with the establishment of the official Master Plan in 1959 by British design firm Minoprio, Spencely and P.W. Macfarlane and new areas of living that a new middle and rich class emerged in Dhaka.

Mughal General Islam Khan Chisti won the battle that led to the capture and founding of Dhaka in 1608, and consequently named Dhaka Jahangirnagar in honor of the Mughal emperor Jahangir at the time. The evolution from a military outpost to a business center and trading hub during the Mughal period was accelerated by instating Dhaka the provincial capital of Bengal. Urban areas during the Mughal period consisted of greater commercial activity through business and trade in bazaars and market places (**FIGURE 1.05**). The city also witnessed greater multicultural and multi-religious interactions as many foreign traders, including French, Armenian, British, Dutch and Iranian merchants, did business in the bazaars of Dhaka<sup>3</sup>. Dhaka remained the Mughal capital between 1610 and 1717, during which period important monuments such as forts, mosques, and tombs, court room, bridges, etc. were built to commemorate the thriving trade and power of the Mughal rulers (**FIGURES 1.06, 1.07 AND 1.08**). The Mughals used Dhaka strategically for settlement, possibility of effective control, exertion of power due to adjacency to water and commercial prospects through textile and handicrafts. While the

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<sup>3</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Economy and Culture*. Volume 2. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, July 2011. Print p.27



population steadily grew between 1610 and 1680, a period of steady decline began after 1715 when the provincial capital was moved to Murshidabad from Dhaka. This was reflected by a dwindling population from approximately 1,000,000 people in 1680s, the most prosperous period of Mughal rule, to 100,000 by 1750<sup>4</sup>.

The beginning of the British rule was marked by the arrival of British Lieutenant Swinton in Dhaka towards the end of 1764. The British formally arrived in Dhaka in 1668 through the East Indian Trading Company, and gained official colonial control in 1765 after the Battle of Plassey and victory over the last Nawab ruler in Dhaka. The British introduced basic urban amenities such as the telegraph system in 1858, tap water in 1878, the telephone system in 1882 and the first higher educational institution in Bangladesh in the form of Dhaka University in 1921<sup>5</sup>.

As a result of the physical transformation from medieval Dhaka to a modern British interpretation, the population in Dhaka slowly increased in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This interpretation involved greater commercial agricultural activities, introduction of many civic amenities and creation of modern European urban layouts in specific areas of Dhaka. The first ever Master Plan for Dhaka was created in 1917 by English urban planner Sir Patrick Geddes. Even though his vision took into account the socio-economic and physical environment of the city, the plan was never implemented<sup>6</sup>. The city-wide possibilities that began to form with the

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<sup>4</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. August 2011. Print. p. 302

<sup>5</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p. 27

<sup>6</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p. 143

British colonial transformation began to fade by the 1905 partition of Bengal and diminished by the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan. These divisions shifted the dominating Muslim and Hindi populations within the region due to religious tensions, and resulted in an increased Muslim population in Dhaka (**FIGURE 1.09**).

Modern architecture in the period of development succeeding British rule arrived through local architects educated and influenced by ideas outside of Bangladesh, such as local architect and visionary Muzharul Islam, as well as foreign architects such as Paul Rudolph, Richard Neutra, Stanley Tigerman, Constantin Doxiadis and Louis Kahn. However these architects were able to influence the building of limited institutional buildings such as university buildings and government buildings without affecting the standard of architecture for residents on a city-wide scale.

A new phase began for Dhaka as a provincial capital of East Pakistan after the 1947 partition with emerging economic production and growth and structural city wide development on the one hand and rising ethnic tensions between Urdu speaking and Bengali speaking Muslims on the other hand. Even though the official 1959 Master Plan of Dhaka was created and implemented following the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, it shortly became ineffective due to unexpected population increase as an after effect of the 1971 Liberation War. The metamorphosis of Dhaka from a provincial capital to a national capital and the resulting drastic physical, economic, social and environmental changes following the Pakistani period of rule made the 1959 master plan an obsolete tool for controlled management of development.

Dhaka became the capital of Bangladesh and began its most current phase of modernization after its 1971 independence. Dhaka received a ranking of the 9<sup>th</sup> largest megacity and the most densely populated city in the world by the World Bank<sup>7</sup>. While this ranking reflects its urban population growth and economic activity, it does not reflect the rising political mismanagement and socio-economic disparities between large sections of the population defined by social class. Dhaka experienced a population growth from 1.8 million to 16 million between 1974 and 2011 within a period of thirty-seven years, while the greatest annual increase in population was recorded in 2001 as being 37.4%<sup>8</sup>. Greater job opportunities, more social amenities and increase in administrative, industrial and service establishments have been elements of social appeal and core causes of the rapid rural to urban migration. With the explosion in population, there has also been a surge in the number of motor vehicles in Dhaka, from approximately 65,000 in 1985 to 300,000<sup>9</sup>.

Eventually, a master plan titled the Dhaka metropolitan Area Integrated Urban Development Project was created in 1981 by the government Planning Commission of Dhaka as a way of addressing previous development issues. Major disasters such as two catastrophic floods in 1987 and 1988 even led to separate National Flood Action Plans funded by the Asian Development Bank. The most recent plan is the Dhaka metropolitan Development Plan (1995-2015) project

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<sup>7</sup> [http://data.worldbank.org/country/bangladesh#cp\\_wdi](http://data.worldbank.org/country/bangladesh#cp_wdi)

<sup>8</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p. 137, 238

<sup>9</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.105

that includes 3 subdivisions: The Structure Plan, The Urban Area Plan and the Detailed Area Plan<sup>10</sup>.

The post-independence period evolved according to massive economic, physical and social transformation as commercial activities through manufacturing industries and real-estate development companies and reflected directly in the public spaces and buildings through investments in apartments, shopping malls and office buildings (**FIGURE 1.10**). In the process of catering to the increasing population, increased building density through vertical, uncontrolled expansion through the cramming of as many plots as possible within limited land space has been taking place with the heightened prospects of profit making from real estate development. A resulting issue has been the concentration of business centers in a few places and subsequent large concentrations of slums in adjacent areas of Dhaka (**FIGURE 1.11**). Large scale clearance of slums through eviction of people from certain government owned areas has been carried out by various local government departments between 1975 and 2002 with the aim of reducing dire physical living conditions within urban slums<sup>11</sup>. Yet slums have continued to exist due to the continued migration of poor people from villages and replacement of the previous slum dwellers in the city. This in turn has led to an increased disparity between slum inhabitants and private land owners.

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<sup>10</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. pgs. 145-148

<sup>11</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. P. 138

The drastic political changes as well as the continued attempt at modernization throughout the 400 years of Dhaka's history has shaped Dhaka city's urban layout. "Capital" is politically defined as the central point for state politics, central administration and political movements, economically defined as the convergence of traffic and transportation, production, trade and consumption and socially defined as the center of religion, culture, education, art, literature and law<sup>12</sup>. Dhaka as the capital of Bangladesh links the powers of administrative functions and private industries with culture and lifestyles. The interchange between these factors determines, affects or manages the built environment of the urban megacity. *I will address the political changes and the consequent physical changes to the built environment within Dhaka over the past 400 years in chapters two and three to analyze the similarities, differences and turning points in each of the four defining periods.*

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<sup>12</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, and Abdul Momin Chowdhury. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Politics, Society, Administration*. Volume 1. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, May 2011. Print p. 103-105

## **A DYSFUNCTIONAL SYSTEM**

The government of Bangladesh inherited a bureaucratic system from British colonial rule and has not made adequate reforms and changes in policies over the years to address the increasing urban challenges. This system has bounced between supposed democratic and military rule over a period of nearly forty-two years. Lack of political consensus, mismanagement and continued lack in efforts to fix previous mismanagement by the newly elected government has resulted in unresolved urban dilemmas. Lack of a variety of social rights and true democracy for different demographics of people, lack of an independent judiciary system and a lack in participation of society in urban development efforts has been some of these dilemmas.

Lack of dedicated government officials in the planning, financing, development, and management of urban areas within Dhaka has left no base for accountability of their actions to inhabitants of the city. Recent policy papers such as the 2010 National Urban Sector Policy are generic set of goals and policies without a conceptual framework based on social urban experiences particular to Dhaka<sup>13</sup>. The problem of corruption is also an important reflection of the failure to uphold social and environmental responsibilities. An example is the Dhaka Metropolitan Plan (DAP) benefiting the privileged classes in Dhaka by allowing conversion of flood plains and agricultural lands for real-estate speculation while continuing to make empty

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<sup>13</sup> [http://aihr.info/library/category/10-Materials-of-Workshop-on-Economic,-Social,-Cultural-Rights-in-Bangladesh,-November-2011.html?download=65%3ANational-Urban-Sector-Policy%2C-2011-Bangladesh-\(Draft\)](http://aihr.info/library/category/10-Materials-of-Workshop-on-Economic,-Social,-Cultural-Rights-in-Bangladesh,-November-2011.html?download=65%3ANational-Urban-Sector-Policy%2C-2011-Bangladesh-(Draft))

promises to the poor<sup>14</sup>.

The failure in planning efforts is illustrated by the evolution of the housing pattern in post-independent Dhaka through two dominant spatial developments: the “historic core of old Dhaka” and the “new Dhaka”. Elite residential areas have expanded on the lowest-lying areas in the western, eastern, and most recently, the northern parts of Dhaka following the rapid growth and rush towards constructing apartment buildings within a span of 30 years. In contrast, the southern parts of Dhaka still remain the oldest and least developed part of Dhaka until today (**FIGURE 1.12**). Researchers and planners have also identified a lack in Emergency Rescue Plans in preparation for imminent environmental hazards such as cyclones, floods and earthquakes that could have catastrophic consequences on the already low-lying and fragile urban layout of Dhaka, and in turn wipe out thousands of lives and turn the numerous high-rise buildings into a plane of rubble<sup>15</sup>.

By the year 2000, Dhaka was transformed into a crowded metropolis catering to transnational activity for greater economic growth. As a result, hundreds of garments and textile factories emerged in the urban landscape, simultaneously offering economic and social opportunities but leading to widespread income inequality, environmental degradation and an obstruction to effective urban development. This is apparent in the dichotomy of segregation of social classes

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<sup>14</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p. 151

<sup>15</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. pgs. 219-220

and adjacency of modern apartment buildings and slums areas. Shopping plazas have also become a major endeavor of real estate developers in traditionally residential areas to accommodate the growing demand for commercial products and changing lifestyles. A neighborhood has been defined by most scientists as limited territory within a larger urban area where people inhabit and interact socially within the perspective of social and ecological aspects<sup>16</sup>. Within Dhaka, the definition of a neighborhood has evolved over time with changing groups of social classes. Many original residential neighborhoods have been transformed into disorganized and dense multi-use areas which end up primarily being used for commercial purposes. This is explicitly apparent in the residential area of Gulshan, my focus of site for my design intervention, through its ever increasing commercial buildings such as banks, shopping centers and offices overshadowing living space. *I will address the effectiveness of local urban development policies, economic policies and the effect of the involvement of international institutions and agencies on these policies in the fourth chapter.*

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<sup>16</sup> Hallman, Howard W. *Neighborhoods: Their place in urban life*. Volume 154. Beverly Hills, California. Sage Publications, 1984. Print



## **SOCIAL DILEMMAS**

Dhaka consists of an ethnically and religiously homogeneous population with 98% Bengalis and 94% Muslims<sup>17</sup>. The combination of Dhaka's topographical elements – adjacency to a large body of water, an overall flat plane and humid tropical climate – and enhanced business and trade further deteriorates public health and quality of life through greater susceptibility to natural and man-made dilemmas.

The violation of physical regulations by the private sector and inefficient urban regulation by the various incompatible government sectors within an overall dysfunctional system have led to major urban problems and public health hazards including: lack of adequate infrastructure; improper handling of informal living spaces such as slums, lack of accessible spaces for pedestrians; gendered space, i.e. underrepresentation of women in public and semi-public spaces; disputed spaces that pits business owners against street vendors, small shop owners against government officials. Illegal negotiated spaces through land grabbing and encroachment further complicate the already present social issues and add to the ethical dilemmas already faced by government officials.

The varied changes in the built environment in turn affect the urban population. Yet factors not within the control of government officials or business owners, such as social habits, affect the planning and designing of an urban space just as importantly as the natural topography, transportation and structural presence therefore needs to be taken into account by urban planners

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<sup>17</sup> [http://www.bbs.gov.bd/WebTestApplication/userfiles/Image/Census2011/Dhaka/Dhaka/Dhaka\\_C13.pdf](http://www.bbs.gov.bd/WebTestApplication/userfiles/Image/Census2011/Dhaka/Dhaka/Dhaka_C13.pdf)

and designers.

The history of urban development in Dhaka reflects the changing prospects for workers. It transformed from a center for the wholesale production and local trade of fabrics and other items in the seventeenth century to agricultural production as a means of self-sustenance and provision for the colonizers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Today machines have replaced the weavers and spinners from the Mughal period and farmers from the colonial period, while the global consumerist enterprise has replaced trade in the local bazaars. The sharp rise in manufacturing industries has helped boost the economy and bring new commercial prospects on one hand, but has created a new wave of the disadvantaged class on the other hand through increased unequal distribution of income.

Dhaka city fosters cultural, commercial and political contacts between urban spaces and people dwelling in and using those spaces. It played the pivotal role of staging national movements towards democratization, yet is also a site of prolonged local socio-political struggles. With the 1952 language movement, 1971 liberation war, fluctuating political ideologies from 1971 till today, public spaces continuously represent people's struggle towards attaining true democracy. Corrupt bureaucrats and unethical private industrialists inhibit city dwellers from attaining true democracy through their own opinions not shaped by ideology or fear.

I will discuss the consequent social outcomes from governmental and economic policies in the fifth chapter. In the final two chapters, I will present my proposed design intervention to address some of the major issues of excessive commercialization of Dhaka city, and consequent social issues such as public safety and social class and gender based disparities. I will discuss these

issues in further detail in the following chapters and well as present a design intervention to address those issues in the final chapter.

## **HISTORY OF POLITICAL CHANGES**

*Evolving economic and political forces have shaped society in Dhaka through four different periods of change over the past 400 years and four different periods of rule by affecting its spatial layout and structure formation. These forces, including commercial enterprise and government administration, have survived throughout history by either influencing or invoking criticism from the next round of economic and political forces to create structural, spatial and social imprints. The complexity exists in the simultaneously divided and combined influences of local and foreign factions in bringing about changes in the urban layout of Dhaka, and in the process, creating clashes between cultures, interests and ways of life. I will identify what these local and foreign factions are and examine how they influenced the urban structure of Dhaka by looking at the dominant modes of development in each of the four periods, whether political, commercial or a combination of the two.*

The conquest of Dhaka by Mughal general Islam Khan Chisti allowed the empire to strategically make it the capital of the Bengal province. While the two defining factors of the Mughal period were “political leadership” and “commerce”, political leadership was the dominant method of control of society through imperial rule. The administration of the Mughal Empire used their political aspirations to create spatial orders that served their interests, while merchants and traders used commercial enterprise to serve their business interests and cater to the Mughal Empire. This was done by establishing a number of provinces, known as “subahs”, in East Bengal as a way of maintaining authority over the subjugated population and efficiently collecting revenue through seats of administration and military presence<sup>18</sup>. The adjacency of Dhaka to water also allowed efficient command and vigilance over enemies through naval routes.

Dhaka also served as a site for manufacture, trade and commerce during the Mughal period. The growth of commercial activity took place close to riverbanks with physical extensions of markets along streets and consequent road extensions, and enhanced supply of goods from waterways. These commercial hubs also served the purpose of communal gatherings for various leisure and business activities and were navigated by foot, boat and horses as the three modes of transportation<sup>19</sup>. The largest section of the population was involved in handicraft industries such as weaving, pottery, carpentry, etc., while cotton textile production was prominently carried out by foreign factory owners<sup>20</sup>. The presence of Dutch, Armenian, French, Portuguese and English merchants in Dhaka at certain points throughout the imperial rule highlights the commercial

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<sup>18</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p. 155

<sup>19</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p. 103

<sup>20</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Economy and Culture*. Volume 2. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, July 2011. Print. p. 25

importance given to the city and symbolized by the open marketplaces<sup>21</sup>. The setting up of European Companies that started to take advantage of the prosperous agricultural land in Dhaka began the transformation of Dhaka from a suburban town to a city.

The Mughal rule of law was designed to keep a social segregation between the profit-making and revenue collecting traders, merchants and aristocrats and the artisan families with meager savings and no scope for upward mobility<sup>22</sup>. Traders and merchants were essentially catering to the Empire in order to receive these benefits in addition to land, goods and profits. The enhanced scope of business and trade in turn allowed the administrators of the Mughal Empire to receive greater prominence through the city within the whole region.

The imperial rule of the Mughal Empire established a system of government that gave the Empire full control over its citizens as well as the land and space inhabited and used by them. This transition was visible through the structural dichotomy between the lavish palaces and straw huts inhabited respectively by Mughal administrators and general people. The Mughal period then symbolizes political development as the primary source of influence on society and their surrounding environment.

The arrival of the British East India Company in Bengal paved the way for the British colonization of the region in 1765, and consequently Dhaka in East Bengal, after victory in the battle of Plassey over the last Muslim leader in East Bengal. The economic exploits of the British

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<sup>21</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Economy and Culture*. Volume 2. Dhaka , Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, July 2011. Print. p. 27

<sup>22</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka , Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.299

colonizers changed Dhaka's previous military purpose from the Mughal period to a commercial purpose<sup>23</sup>.

The *provision* of basic urban services such as sanitation, clean drinking water, electricity and roads improved the living conditions of inhabitants of Dhaka and reduced the contraction and spread of diseases<sup>24</sup>. While these services might have improved local livelihoods, they also allowed strategic control and *taxation* of the city for extraction of resources and use of land for the construction of specific structures to cater their own needs without the distrust or disobedience of local inhabitants of Dhaka<sup>25</sup>. This process of provision-pacification-taxation evolved in Dhaka at a time when industrialization in European cities led to the search for materials in new markets for industrial production<sup>26</sup>.

Even though the European settlements and British East India Company furthered textile production, British commercial policies instigated by the Industrial revolution in the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century eventually led to the decline in trade and relocation of the remaining commercial activities to the north of Bangladesh, which in turn drastically reduced the population in Dhaka. The social core of Dhaka was dramatically changed from centers of congregation to business centers requiring greater production when market places shifted from retail to wholesale centers. There was a reversal in trade policy from selling of finished products for exports to selling raw

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<sup>23</sup> Riaz, Ali. *South Asia's Weak States: Understanding the Regional Insecurity Predicament*. Stanford, California. Stanford University Press, Chapter 11. p. 241-265. 2010. Print. p.31

<sup>24</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka , Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.156

<sup>25</sup> Riaz, Ali. *South Asia's Weak States: Understanding the Regional Insecurity Predicament*. Stanford, California. Stanford University Press, Chapter 11. p. 241-265. 2010. Print. p.11

<sup>26</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka , Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.156

materials for processing in Kolkata when the Company introduced the Permanent Settlement Act in 1793 as a way of increasing revenue and capital by cultivating more land for agricultural production<sup>27</sup>. This decline continued throughout the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and reflects the shift of headquarters of the British governor, economic activity and people away from the city **(FIGURE 2.01)**. In essence, Dhaka was used for the consumption and distribution of foreign imports to cater to the foreigners and rising local middle class, and as a transit point for export of agricultural raw materials between other parts of Bengal and Great Britain for use in the British industrial process. This introduced the pattern of international trade in Dhaka under the assumption that division of labor would be mutually beneficial to both countries. The indirect rule of Dhaka by British governors through local elite and therefore creation of particular commercial policies led to primary commercial influence on society and the surrounding environment. The British colonial policies and control of the capitalist forms of production underpinned the neglect of local potential of growth of Dhaka city.

Dhaka became a part of East Pakistan following the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 and inherited inadequate urban infrastructure from the British colonial regime as well as a large influx of displaced people from India. It reflects a period of transition and transfer of political leadership to local Muslim leaders in Pakistan, as well as major administrative and commercial developments. While commercial activity continued to grow in this period as an important factor in social development, political leadership again became a dominant factor that affected particular groups within Pakistan differently. While the movement of people was not directly

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<sup>27</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka , Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.156



controlled as in the Mughal period, Bengali peoples' rising awareness of the biased treatment of people from their ethnic division led to cautious, measured and imposing actions by the ruling military regimes.

The ruling government under the Muslim League leadership (1947-1954) took responsibility for providing housing and expanding industry through the Dhaka Improvement Trust (DIT), and urban amenities through establishments such as the Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority<sup>28</sup>. The 1959 Master Plan was the first official attempt to adopt European design techniques in Dhaka to initiate local people's transition from traditional ways of living to a modern method of living through greater home facilities, urban amenities and physical space<sup>29</sup>. The expanding industrial sectors also led to a rapid population increase between 1947 and 1961 from 250,000 to 550,000 with the increase in the labor market as well as the emergence of high-rise apartment buildings<sup>30</sup>.

Even though modern building schemes aiming to expand horizontally and growing urban facilities were used as tools for addressing the increased necessity of housing in Dhaka under the ruling government of West Pakistan, the continued growth of the urban population added to the shortage and unequal opportunity in housing<sup>31</sup>. In response to inequality in opportunities, the

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<sup>28</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka , Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.159

<sup>29</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka , Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.160

<sup>30</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka , Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.104

<sup>31</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Economy and Culture*. Volume 2. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, July 2011. Print. p.49

communist-influenced left wing party named Awami League emerged with ideas of secular rule and was briefly in power from 1954-1958. That period was followed by the military regime ruled by General Ayub Khan between 1958-1971, which was ultimately defined by a period of repression and neglect of the predominantly Bengali-speaking civilians in East Pakistan. This ultimately defeated the purpose of development in Dhaka as a great divide arose between East and West Pakistan, and eventually led to the complete physical alteration of spaces and structures and livelihoods of people. This occurred through destruction and temporary use of public and private spaces and structures as battle grounds and violent repercussions in the form of mass killings and rape of the educated class and countless Bengali women respectively.

Transfer of power from foreign control to local control after the 1947 partition did end the colonial exploitation but paved the way for neo-liberal approaches to modernization in order to adapt to changing economic and geopolitical circumstances<sup>32</sup>. This period then represents the emergence of a middle-class as an outcome of commercial advances, and in turn began a gap between the emerging rich who reaped the greatest benefits and the rising influx of the poorest earners from outside Dhaka. It simultaneously represents the overpowering ethnic tensions that culminated between all social classes.

While the 1971 Liberation War brought the scope of political and civilian freedom, it created a daunting path to rehabilitation for Dhaka as a new capital of an independent nation. It brought even more complex national political issues as well as a defining shift from a nationalized to a

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<sup>32</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka , Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.158

capitalistic economic system four years after the liberation. The new capitalistic mode of production under neo-liberal policies allowed the private-sector commercial activity to have the dominant effect on society and its surrounding environment, while government leadership shifted from one unsatisfactory political party to another and eventually lost faith of the civilian population.

High interest rates on debts, decline in foreign capital inflows and declining foreign investment rates reduced local growth rates in the 1980s, and further resulted in declining standard of living, worsening levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality<sup>33</sup>. The resulting structural deterioration was apparent through the emergence of a large number of slums. As a result a new macroeconomic development strategy based on a neo-liberal theory of development emerged in the form of the Structural Adjustment Policies<sup>34</sup>. The basic goals were to restore the country's balance of payment situation, increase debt-service capacity, attract foreign investment, and achieve economic growth by restructuring trade and financial flows. Transnational corporations and their local agents engaged production and labor in Dhaka for more efficient export of manufactured goods to the west<sup>35</sup>.

The late 80s and mid 90s were the periods during which private sector real estate and manufacturing industries emerged as a reaction to the burst in population density. It was brought

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<sup>33</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka , Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.163

<sup>34</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka , Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.164

<sup>35</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka , Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.164

about through initiatives by specific local construction companies to provide adequate housing who took advantage of the rising population<sup>36</sup>. Private real estate developers gained momentum and increased their scale of operation, when their largest clients, middle and higher income groups, started to form nuclear families with changing generations, needs, attitudes and social demands. This capitalistic system of production catered to new housing demands from laborers and middle/higher income groups alike through informal and formal sector housing respectively<sup>37</sup>.

The multi-story housing typology that emerged in Dhaka permanently transformed its urban layout in a way that will affect the city and its future inhabitants for decades. Between 1997 and 2008, there has been an increase of apartment development from 1000 units to 7000 units (600%), as well as a hike in the price of construction materials such as brick, sand, cement and rods, and land prices over a period of 34 years<sup>38</sup>. These factors have increased the overall apartment costs but also made the purchasing of an apartment a sign of social upward movement. The rising number of retail hubs and business districts in residential areas also became lucrative due to this new increase in population from rural areas and abroad, as well as the increasing number of wealthy groups of people<sup>39</sup>. Yet these booming market complexes were developed without proper planning and design in terms of lack of parking facilities, and began to take the form of unplanned mixed development spaces and mixed-use buildings. There were also greater

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<sup>36</sup> Seraj, Toufiq M. *Private Sector Housing*. Dhaka, Bangladesh. Pearl Publications, July 2012. Print. p.70-77

<sup>37</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka , Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.83

<sup>38</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka , Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.91-93

<sup>39</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka , Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.283

imports of foreign building materials and therefore lack in efforts to innovatively use local or indigenous building materials<sup>40</sup>.

One of the prime reasons for the uncontrolled boom in real-estate development was lack of government regulation from the early stages. Another issue that emerged was the catering of the housing market to the demands of middle and higher income groups and simultaneous failure of the government to provide adequate housing through resettlement programs for the lower income groups that couldn't afford apartments. This led to the formation of informal housing in the form of slums as a mechanism of adjustment by the poorest class of inhabitants in Dhaka, and consequent government-initiated evictions<sup>41</sup>. The major national economic growth incurred through private sector developments represent a primary commercial influence on society, the built environment and in turn manipulation of government policy.

The secular Awami League that had emerged during the East Pakistan period came back to take a committed stance and declare independence in February 1971. This left wing political party took power following the independence from 1971-1975 and nationalized the economy in Bangladesh<sup>42</sup>. However they were overthrown in 1977 as a result of economic inconsistency and complete mismanagement by the right-wing Bangladesh National Party (BNP) headed by major general Ziaur Rahman of the Armed Forces, who stayed in power from 1977-1980 and turned Bangladesh into a military regime once more. That was followed by a period of temporary rule

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<sup>40</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka , Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.276

<sup>41</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka , Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.168

<sup>42</sup> Ahamed, Emajuddin and D. Nazneen. *Islam in Bangladesh: Revivalism or Power Politics?* Asian Survey. Volume 30. (August 1990). p. 404-406

by the acting president between 1981 and 1982.

Eventually, a new political party known as Jatiya party led by military Chief President Ershad emerged and ruled from 1983-1990 with the promise of fair politics. This also led to massive corruption and use of Martial Law and military oppression. The consequential overthrow by the previous Bangladesh National Party started the trend of alternating power between the Bangladesh National Party and Awami League from 1991 until today<sup>43</sup>. This reflects rapidly changing politics that led to mismanagement and corruption from within each ruling party towards the end of their leadership. The largest burden fell on societal development when space became politicized for party-based propaganda aimed at young students and the poorest in society. This eventually led to the “disconnect” between the crumbling government politics and the uncontrolled rise in industrial production by the private sector.

Political and economic developments throughout Dhaka’s history have brought about drastic changes in the built environment, land use and lifestyles. It is reflected through the demographic changes in population in each of the four changing periods of rule. While new methods of adjustment in tune with the current situation in Dhaka is necessary, the previous modes of adjustment to sudden or evolving changes in political leadership are important perspectives for planning and design in Dhaka city in order to propose and implement effective changes.

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<sup>43</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, and Abdul Momin Chowdhury. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Politics, Society, Administration*. Volume 1. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, May 2011. Print. pgs.88-100

## **PHYSICAL CHANGES WITHIN URBAN LAYOUT**

*While the political significance of Dhaka has been influenced by its geographic location, it has explicitly influenced the built environment in Dhaka over the past 400 years. The historic core of Dhaka has remnants from the Mughal period, which include the traditional features of residential neighborhoods organized in the form of enclaves and divided in terms of caste groups. The rest of Dhaka however reflects new advancements and failures by growing and morphing into a megacity since the British period of rule. I will examine how these physical changes to the built environment have occurred during each period of rule.*

Before the Mughal period, Dhaka was confined between the Dholai canal and the Buriganga river and consisted of a few markets<sup>44</sup>. The start of the Mughal period in 1608 involved a rise to prominence as the capital of Bengal through the conquest of general Islam Khan and rule of emperor Jahangir<sup>45</sup>. This paved the way for the transformation of Dhaka from a suburban town to a metropolis until 1717. However, the glory of imperial Dhaka ended when the capital shifted to Murshidabad in 1717 as a result of declining economy, population and administrative importance by 1707. Houses, neighborhoods and markets provided the basic socio-spatial order within Dhaka as these three physical elements of the built environment were mediated by local culture, climate and geographic context<sup>46</sup>.

The Lalbagh Fort was established in 1679 and served as the heart of the city and central point of control, while the riverfront served as a method for guarding the Mughal kingdom as well as the main source of commercial activity<sup>47</sup>. Mughal strategies introduced the use of environmental sources within Dhaka for functions other than natural sustenance and living. The important core connecting the ruling administration and commercial activity shifted towards the river when the river was considered a route and connection to the street system through ports. Water became a source of connection and movement with routes set up for ships that transported foreign traders as well as goods. The growth of commercial activities was apparent in the growth of physical

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<sup>44</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.194

<sup>45</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.195

<sup>46</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p.155

<sup>47</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p. 195



market places along streets and consequent road extensions. The use of natural environmental elements then became a source of stamping the Empire's power and establishment in society.

There was a hierarchical layering between spaces used by merchants and Mughal officials and the civilian population. While green luscious open spaces and water used for aesthetic purposes encompassed the imperial palaces, mansions and houses as part of royal Mughal culture, these aesthetic elements were not a part of the habitats or bazaar surroundings used by common folk<sup>48</sup>.

The English East Indian trading company gained political domination and took control of Dhaka city in 1764 and continued their control until 1857 when the Colonial period officially began. This shift reduced not only the population but also the area of Dhaka city. The social core of Dhaka was dramatically transformed through the shift from the military goals during the Mughal reign to commercial goals during the British reign<sup>49</sup>. This transformed traditional market places and retail centers into wholesale centers. The introduction of paved roads, wider spaces, street lights and piped water supply were distinctive physical changes during this period<sup>50</sup>.

Like the Mughals before them, the British also realized the importance of water as a tool for commercial efficiency and success. However, the water system slowly declined as a commercial

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<sup>48</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p. 155

<sup>49</sup> Riaz, Ali. *South Asia's Weak States: Understanding the Regional Insecurity Predicament*. Stanford, California. Stanford University Press, Chapter 11. p. 241-265. 2010. Print. p.31

<sup>50</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p. 195

spine with the introduction of the rail line to create connections within the city<sup>51</sup>. The purposeful planning of certain areas in contrast to unplanned growth in other areas in Dhaka served British interests rather than improving the built environment throughout Dhaka. As an example, grid patterns and open spaces were introduced in certain areas of the city in prized locations for high class residents, while the more historic areas still had the old patterns (**FIGURE 3.01**). The business areas also extended northwards to serve the British bureaucrats living there. While specific area plans are efficient and make greater sense than attempting to re-do an entire city all at once, the issue is the establishment of government in a specific section of Dhaka that allowed much greater development in that section and adjacent areas. This has not only created a disparity, but a source of dysfunction for those living and working in the more developed areas of Dhaka.

The British rule began the process of changing the importance of Dhaka when the administrative seat was relocating to Kolkata. This was a backwards step for the once flourishing city in terms of reduced life, habitation and movement. A further issue was the provision of amenities and commerce on a pre-existing spatial layout from the Mughal period without adjustment<sup>52</sup>. This is reflected in the fact that a systemized area plan for Dhaka city was not made until 1919, while the actual implementation did not occur until 1959 through another master plan. The British attitude towards Dhaka as a temporal space for utilization of resources was an obstacle to its legitimate prospects for growth as an entire city.

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<sup>51</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p. 403

<sup>52</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p. 157

Dhaka became provincial capital of East Pakistan after the region of Bengal gained independence after two hundred years of British rule. This post-colonial development period simultaneously reflects rising modernism and rising political tensions: there was a massive influx of people attracted by the commercial and residential opportunities, while continued political tension and imbalance built through four different changes in government control within a period of twenty three years. The equal destruction of the natural environmental and distortion of the built environment reflected this intense political struggle. The use of public and private spaces for both political activism and propaganda created disparities in space in terms of temporal use, complete lack of use and use of certain spaces by certain groups of people.

The resulting bitterly fought war of independence of 1971 caused the most severe damage to buildings and spaces and public spaces that became battlegrounds. The trend of environmentally insensitive developments that began with the expansion of Dhaka away from the Buriganga river in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by the British continued into the East Pakistan period with the growth of industrial suburbs and the inaction towards a decaying city core. Changing environmental relations during the East Pakistan period were determined by new security concerns from political struggles, new technology and prospects of growth and the new pace of international trade. The ecological setting of the Bengal delta no longer informed the spatial growth, emergence or shifting of Dhaka.

Organic morphological patterns involving confused urban sprawl and spontaneous development without any rigid planning proposal occurred all over Dhaka. Yet the organic spatial homogeneity was interrupted by patches of grid patterns in certain residential

neighborhoods inhabited by the British and local elite. The physical embodiment of rising modernism was reflected in the erection of the first three-story apartment buildings in Dhaka, while in contrast, many residential areas on the periphery were developed in an unplanned manner.

No serious undertaking to create an overall planned city was made until 1959. A detailed study was made in 1981, while a structure Plan was finally formulated in 1995 and a Detailed Area Plan was in process till 2010<sup>53</sup>. Nevertheless, the grid pattern introduced in 1885 during the British period was followed for the comprehensively planned residential areas catering to the higher middle and high classes of people in Dhaka during the Pakistan period. These state-sponsored planned extensions for the upper classes were in contrast to unsanctioned spontaneous developments in the old city. This clearly depicts the lesser importance given by government and private institutions to city-wide renewal and greater importance given to development and enhancement of specific areas that only cater to their interests. The lack of environmental consciousness through these biased developments is reflected in the lack of environmental management. An important example is the cutting out of some green belts by the Dhaka Improvement Trust's (DIT) chairman Abul Khair that were originally designated in the first master plan in 1959 by British firm Minoprio and Spencely<sup>54</sup>.

The creation of the Dhaka Improvement Trust (DIT) in 1956 was an attempt in systemizing public planning by giving the government agency responsibility for planning residential,

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<sup>53</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p. 138-142

<sup>54</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p. 406

industrial and commercial districts. A British planning firm eventually prepared a detailed Master Plan for the city in 1959 on behalf of the Dhaka Improvement Trust. The 1959 Master Plan was the first official attempt to tap into western design techniques to initiate local people's transition from traditional to modern housing. That Master Plan was implemented by government agencies for a number of residential projects to build townships by employing a neighborhood concept with residential plots, roads with setbacks for footpaths and trees, open community spaces and non-residential needs like stores, etc.<sup>55</sup>. Yet squatter settlements in the form of slums started to spring up all over Dhaka due to the disparities of increased modernization. City authorities initially tolerated these settlements to ensure the continued supply of cheap construction labor, without addressing the provision of basic urban services for them<sup>56</sup>.

After independence, Dhaka transformed from a city with a single political center to a city organized around several political, social and financial modes<sup>57</sup>. This is apparent in the presence of varying political parties, and even changing factions within the same political party, varying social outcomes and expectations for different groups of people and varying financial ventures in the modern and old parts of Dhaka. The post-independence period reflects the attempt at revival through economic growth as well as a redefinition of a changing urban layout through the increased erection of numerous apartment complexes. The style and speed of change is then

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<sup>55</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p.159

<sup>56</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p.160-163

<sup>57</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p.276

reflected in the changing built environment, but the fragile natural environment has little effect on the styles and speed of growth. Even though specific flood protection plans have been created over the years, the impacts of environmental disasters are massive as environmental regulations are primarily ignored by the private sector and not seriously regulated by government agencies <sup>58</sup>.

Booming prospects for quick lucrative profits in the form of real estate development and investments in mix-used buildings such as shopping complexes with office spaces has created greater traffic through congestion of people and vehicles around inefficient space for movement.

Inefficient transportation routes, the combination of automobiles and rickshaws in traffic and inadequate parking space not only hamper efficient movement of people and vehicles but also have wider implications in terms of loss of productive hours and environmental pollution. The private sector has also been responsible for taking away the availability of clean water for private gains through corrupt acts of land-filling and dumping of industrial wastes into water bodies. On the other hand, lack of public initiative and lack of a feeling of obligation by most people to not dump garbage into clean water further water and land pollution.

Four different types of urban arrangements are apparent in Dhaka today within the two dominant urban patterns of the “historic core” and “new Dhaka”. These urban arrangements are the old civil lines reflecting colonial intervention but serving as current army bases, indigenous or informal settlements and modern developments. The old city is characterized by densely built areas with a winding, narrow and intricate street network inherited from the Mughal period. The

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<sup>58</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p.240-243

previous civil lines represent an attempt at modernizing Dhaka through a general European grid pattern with broad streets and rectangular blocks; apparent in transformed European cities such as Paris and Barcelona during the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>59</sup>. It was characterized by low-density, horizontal development and broad tree-lined roads. The most modern developments that began from 1947 include vertical expansion of structures, the introduction of varying types of structures for more diverse purposes and increased globalized interactions through expansions in business. The informal settlements reflect temporary uses of space by the poorest economic class in Dhaka. All four types of urban management policies affected the built environment in ways that created breakthrough improvements but also led to further problems.

The pace of growth and expansion in Dhaka started gradually in the 50s, picked up in the 60s and reached a phenomenal level after independence of Bangladesh. The planned and organic spatial patterns within Dhaka exist side by side as new structural additions took both a planned grand geometric form as well as an unplanned organic pattern<sup>60</sup>. The shift of the center of business from the old commercial areas to the newly developed residential areas by the mid-90s reflects the emerging global dependency.

The distinctive characteristic of the densely built areas of the old city in comparison to the looseness of later developments reflect a more controlled and directed imperial period, while the later periods reflect different types of spatial expansion for particular purposes such as: natural resource utilization for export by British colonizers, economic growth as an extension of biased

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<sup>59</sup> Lees, Andrew and Lynn Hollen Lees. *Cities and the Making of Modern Europe 1750-1914*. Cambridge, UK. Cambridge University Press, 2007. Print. p. 129-244

<sup>60</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p.205

social outcomes between East and West Pakistan, and economic growth in response to global demands. The changes in streetscape, land use, lifestyles of people over the past 400 years then have been reactions to changing political and economic forces.



## **EFFECTIVENESS OF POLICIES**

*The Mughal period, British colonial period, East Pakistan Period and post-independent period each contributed to the subjugation of inhabitants of Dhaka city in varying ways. The Mughal and British colonial periods included direct social subjugation by the imperial court and indirect subjugation by the colonizers respectively, while the East Pakistan period included direct social subjugation in the form of ethnic discrimination and indirect economic subjugation through centralized control of economic resources by the ruling military body. The post-independent period in Dhaka is a reflection of indirect social and economic subjugation of people by the powerful business owners and government bureaucrats through disconnected political and economic goals and approaches to achieving those goals. While improved means of living and methods of production in each period did create some physical improvements and enhancements in peoples' lives, these improvements were not in sync with the capabilities or interests of the ensuing political leadership. I will examine the reasons behind the failure to sustain positive effects on the built environment and curb negative effects on the built environment through the analysis of the effectiveness of policies.*

The imperial policies of the Mughal period involved complete control of all activity and production by the Mughal administration. While the Mughal encouragement of commerce in marketplaces did allow Dhaka to thrive as a city, it paved the way for social disparities that formed during the British rule and spilled over during the East Pakistan period. The end of British rule and start of Pakistani military rule resulting from the divide between India and Pakistan marked a transition period for Bengalis in Dhaka who were struggling to have their identities recognized through language within Pakistan. The ensuing war of independence in 1971 marked a remarkable social achievement and battle for socio-political justice and freedom for Bangladeshis.

Yet it was apparent towards the end of Awami League's rule by 1975 that the objectives of modernization theory had failed in Bangladesh as the benefits of growth from industrialization did not trickle down to the poor rural migrants who continued to pour into the squatter settlements in Dhaka<sup>61</sup>. A deteriorating economy and political unbalance led to a desperate call for assistance from international institutions<sup>62</sup>. A new Policy of Redistribution with Growth (RWG) formulated by international organizations such as the World Bank focused attention on pressing problems of poverty, unemployment and inequality in order to improve the absolute income of the poor and provide improved access to essential goods and services. These new policies aimed to: balance growth with redistributive measures, stimulating small-scale businesses, deregulate the informal urban sector and introduce transfer strategies for public

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<sup>61</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p.158

<sup>62</sup> Ahamed, Emajuddin and D. Nazneen. *Islam in Bangladesh: Revivalism or Power Politics?* Asian Survey. Volume 30. (August 1990). p. 406

service expenditure<sup>63</sup>. The point of introducing this redistributive policy was to allow the shift from direct housing provision by the government to assisted housing initiatives. As a result, global development policy systems expected the underdeveloped countries to pursue economic growth through industrialization in their efforts to proceed towards advanced “developed” stages by emulating the experiences of the Western industrialized countries<sup>64</sup>.

Bangladesh’s involvement in the new development paradigm was disrupted and delayed due to financial constraints from the war reconstruction efforts. The adoption of a socialist economy by Awami League in the first five year plan (1973-1978) led to nationalization of economic activities<sup>65</sup>. Change in political leadership by 1975 from the left-wing Awami League to the right-wing Bangladesh Nationalist Party led to the shift in national economic policy. This was through a structural transformation of the economy from a nationalized system to a privatized system of production. The failure of the previous closed economic model then provided the basis for the renewal of urban policies through a neo-liberal analysis, and a greater significance of institutional and managerial reform in the 1990s<sup>66</sup>. There was a shift from site-specific projects to city-wide programs that eventually came into place with the help of international lending institutions such as the United Nations Development Program and World Bank.

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<sup>63</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p.160-163

<sup>64</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p.158

<sup>65</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p.160-163

<sup>66</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Economy and Culture*. Volume 2. Dhaka Bangladesh., Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, July 2011. Print. 55-60

Neo-liberal economic policies adopted by the government during the 1980s led to increased production and revenue accumulation that is continuing till today through increased exports and the supply of booming amounts of consumer goods through imports in markets (**FIGURE 4.01**). While tremendous growth through exports has been achieved through manufacturing industries<sup>67</sup>, the negative social and environmental effects of those industries require international intervention to make up for the lack in local government intervention. The advent of economic globalization as well as local government mismanagement on two opposite spectrums has subjected capital Dhaka to the policies of international institutions as an underdeveloped nation.

Private sector housing land development rules were established in 2004 to provide a guideline for efficient business initiatives by private land developers. Once the developers seek permission from authorities in charge of transportation, water supply, electricity, phone lines etc. they are sent to RAJUK, the largest urban city corporation in Dhaka, for final approval<sup>68</sup>. However, current building construction issues include the tendency to expand vertically on inadequate foundations of buildings resulting in building collapses, fires, mass deaths and damage of property, as well as the forceful addition of new structures and modes of transport on an originally pedestrian area not adjusted for these new requirements. This reflects a major violation of building codes by the private sector today, which are in turn overlooked by regulators and building inspectors who are either manipulated or paid off<sup>69</sup>. Since the 1990s,

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<sup>67</sup> Riaz, Ali. *South Asia's Weak States: Understanding the Regional Insecurity Predicament*. Stanford, California. Stanford University Press, Chapter 11. p. 241-265. 2010. Print. p.248

<sup>68</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Economy and Culture*. Volume 2. Dhaka Bangladesh., Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, July 2011. Print. 99

there have also been continuous squatter evictions without rehabilitation by the government. As a result, the urban poor have been pushed to the peripheral areas of Dhaka either in floating homelessness or over-crowding in inner-city slums and squatters. This is comparable to the overcrowding of European factory workers in apartments during the Industrial period in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>70</sup>.

Even though a lack of adequate funds prevents the Bangladeshi government from providing housing, they have a regulatory role through the National Housing Authority Policy created in 1993 and amended in 2004<sup>71</sup>, which in turn consolidated the neo-liberal housing policy. The policies are categorized according to separate aspects of housing such as land, infrastructure, building materials, housing finance, etc. Objectives include ensuring housing for all social groups, reducing necessity of slums, rehabilitating disaster affected areas, etc.<sup>72</sup>.

The underlying reason for the failure of local policies is the lack of proper implementation as a follow up to the planning process. This occurs due to lack of organization and coordination among the eighteen government ministries and 42 organizations involved in the urban

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<sup>69</sup> Riaz, Ali. *South Asia's Weak States: Understanding the Regional Insecurity Predicament*. Stanford, California. Stanford University Press, Chapter 11. Print. p.261-262

<sup>70</sup> Hunt, Lynn, et. al. *The Making of the West: Peoples and Cultures*. Volume 2. Since 1500. 3rd Edition. Bedford, St.Martins, 2009. Print. p.251-278

<sup>71</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Economy and Culture*. Volume 2. Dhaka Bangladesh., Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, July 2011. Print. 95-97

<sup>72</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Economy and Culture*. Volume 2. Dhaka Bangladesh., Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, July 2011. Print. 98-102

development of Dhaka city<sup>73</sup>. Even though at least ten different official development Plans have been made between 1917 and 2006<sup>74</sup>, most of them have not been appropriately implemented to a maximum efficiency level. This is due to the fact that the two main government bodies responsible for planning and urban development, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and Capital Development Authority of the Government of Bangladesh (RAJUK) have both been involved in illegal private practices through political pressure<sup>75</sup>. In turn, these two agencies do not have accountability and transparency when enforcing their own laws. Therefore there is a social disorganization among local government agencies and inadequate financial distribution towards urban planning within Dhaka city to solve these issues.

Dhaka as the nation's capital became an agent of indirect hegemonic control when lacking local leadership and initiative allowed the international institutions to experiment their idealized methods of achieving poverty reduction goals. Reducing confidence and lack of trust in local state institutions in turn have led to a shift in trust to the international institutions by government agencies and citizens and stamped through economic growth<sup>76</sup>, and increases the costs of

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<sup>73</sup> 1) Various Ministries; 2) LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES: a) Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), b) Paurashavas, c) Union Parishads; 3) Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (RAJUK); 4) Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (DWASA); 5) SPECIAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS: a) National Housing Authority (NHA); b) Urban Development Directorate (UDD), c) Department of Environment, d) Department of Public Health Engineering, e) Local Government Engineering Department, f) Roads and Highways Department, g) Bangladesh Water Development Board

<sup>74</sup> Master Plan of Dhaka, 1917; Re-Planning of Dhaka, 1948, Dhaka Master Plan, 1959; Dhaka Metropolitan Area Urban Integrated Project, 1981; Flood Action Plans, 1988; Task force reports on Bangladesh-Development Strategies for 1990s; Land Development Controls and procedures for Dhaka City, 1993; Greater Dhaka Metropolitan Area Integrated Transport Study; Strategic Transport Plan, 2006; Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP) 1995-2015;

<sup>75</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Economy and Culture*. Volume 2. Dhaka Bangladesh., Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, July 2011. Print. 221-225

<sup>76</sup> Riaz, Ali. *South Asia's Weak States: Understanding the Regional Insecurity Predicament*. Stanford, California. Stanford University Press, Chapter 11. p. 241-265. 2010. Print. p.242

transactions and unpredictability. Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) stand as an alternative to the state in terms of direct social intervention.

The criteria set for the “failed state index” by international agencies and non-governmental organizations concludes that if a state lacks capacity and is failing to perform at optimum level, then it is failing at its job. Bangladesh is included in the list by the Foreign Policy magazine<sup>77</sup> due to corruption, poor governance, confrontational politics, violence, weakening law enforcement, violation of human rights, etc. While five-year planning documents show an attempt by local government agencies to implement welfare programs in order to address poverty<sup>78</sup>, the lack in effectiveness of that implementation is an important reason why Bangladesh currently is listed on the “failed state index”.

The World Bank emerged as a major lending agency in the mid-twentieth century and began to expand from its traditional sector loans for basic economic infrastructure to address the strategies of redistribution. The World Bank became the dominant actor in Dhaka with lending programs for housing and infrastructure projects. The model followed by World Bank was “affordability-cost-recovery-replication”<sup>79</sup>. Initiatives that developed from these policy objectives are: self-help housing projects, the stimulation of informal sector activities, access to financial, managerial and technical assistance, regularization of tenure and extended provision of services.

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<sup>77</sup> Riaz, Ali. *South Asia's Weak States: Understanding the Regional Insecurity Predicament*. Stanford, California. Stanford University Press, Chapter 11. p. 241-265. 2010. Print. p.243

<sup>78</sup> Riaz, Ali. *South Asia's Weak States: Understanding the Regional Insecurity Predicament*. Stanford, California. Stanford University Press, Chapter 11. p. 241-265. 2010. Print. p.247

<sup>79</sup> <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/pdf/c20.pdf>

The positive outcomes of the adopted neo-liberal policies by financial institutions like the World Bank include increased national export earnings in Bangladesh. Yet economic success of from profitable business ventures benefited particularly those with greater capital and wealth. Greater investment in real estate mainly catered to the demands of middle and higher income groups. This demand also contributed to the re-organization and redefinition of the urban environment. However, distortions in the form of environmental externalities have been created by defying existing regulatory laws. There has been distortion of land supply by the private sector through illegal intrusion of areas in the form of land piracy, forcing small land owners to sell off their land in the form of land poaching and illegal wetland filling. Water body conservation rules 2000 allows urban authorities like RAJUK, City Corporation, etc. to restrict environmental insensitive development. This has not been implemented due to corruption and real estate developers as stakeholders in RAJUK.

International financial institutions such as the World Bank, United Nations Development Program, etc. essentially highlight the need for good governance to get desired political, economic and social results in developing countries. Yet good-governance agendas such as those towards gender equality are not fully effective as establishing the rule of law does not automatically translate into the legal recognition of violence against women as a crime in the local milieu, and therefore further complicates the issue of gender equality in space<sup>80</sup>.

The United Nations Development Program's five major development goals for Bangladesh are highlighted as democratic governance and human rights, sustainable environmental and energy

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<sup>80</sup> Mukhopadhyay, Maitrayee. *Creating Citizens who Demand Just Governance: gender and development in the twenty-first century*. Volume 11 (November 2003). p.45-47



management, economic growth and poverty alleviation, reduction of social and economic vulnerability and gender equality and the advancement of women. While these specific focus areas are important socio-economic development policies, there is a lack of institutional policies on urban planning and design of specific areas within the city as well as wide-scale areas such as entire towns<sup>81</sup>. The involvement of non-profit design firms is also limited, as branches for international non-profit organizations such as Architecture for Humanity were only established in 2009<sup>82</sup>.

Bangladesh has a conflicting scenario of severe government weaknesses in maintaining law and order while having significant success in achieving economic growth through increased private sector activities. In effect, the government simultaneously acts as an agent for the elitist powerful local private sector business owners and the international institutions involved in indirect hegemony through their policies for third world development. While public-private partnerships have led to strengthening of the state through the transition of the provision of housing, it has also led to major weaknesses including combined corruption and neglect in the form of insufficient provision of services by the government and lack of environmental sensibility of private sector firms; which in turn have adverse effects on civilians.

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<sup>81</sup> <http://www.undp.org.bd/keydoc/UNSystemPrinciples.pdf>

<sup>82</sup> <http://chapters.architectureforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/AFH-Dhaka%20newsletter%20Feb-2009.pdf>

## **SOCIAL OUTCOMES**

*The effects on society are reflected in the urban setting of the city through the architecture as well as public, private, or semi-private spaces that are either a part of, adjacent to or separate from built structures as it is the means through which people live and carry out their day to day activities. It is also a setting that serves symbolic purposes not visible to the naked eye such as prestige and class placement. The current battle for land in Dhaka is ruthless due its scarcity and is causing land prices to skyrocket<sup>83</sup>.*

*Architecture and the built urban space are the visual evidence of governmental and private involvement in the city's urban structure, and a combined imagery that reflects those who hold power. Currently in Dhaka, the most powerful people are those who finance and own large businesses as well as people involved with the current political party representing the government. Private developers finance new and continuing development of apartment complexes, while the government carries out regulations and inspection of the development. Urban planners, designers, architects, engineers and environmentalists also join the ranks of the powerful in society if they are able to adhere to the private goals of developers and corrupt government agencies. The least powerful in society then are the poorest economic class of people, including domestic workers, factory workers, street vendors, beggars, the unemployed, etc. I will broadly discuss the historical social outcomes, current social predicaments and theoretical approaches to understanding spaces in Dhaka city as a consequence of evolving political decisions.*

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<sup>83</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.147-150

## **HISTORICAL SOCIAL OUTCOMES**

Over its 400 year history, society in Dhaka has evolved tremendously in the way day to day activities have been conducted. That evolution took place with changing rule of law and political leadership and is reflected in the changing uses of space. After the liberation war, global economic demands and local issues have hugely impacted society in capital Dhaka and Bangladesh as a nation. The uncontrolled and unregulated growth of businesses and vertical growth of apartment buildings in Dhaka conducted by the wealthy private developers and industrialists have created dire social and environmental conditions for the built and natural environment and in turn the lives of people using those environments. This kind of growth also reflects the failed regulations and implementation of effective solutions by government sectors involved in urban development of Dhaka city. I will examine the social impact of political control on users of urban space throughout this section.

During the Mughal period, half of the urban residents were the military and administrative people in the Mughal entourage. The other half included the indigenous local population and foreign traders servicing the Mughal Empire<sup>84</sup>. Urban space for most of the population comprised small neighborhoods and marketplaces, while people who served the royal court directly lived in segregated lavish surroundings. Urban spaces were compact and densely built with narrow and irregular street patterns connecting neighborhoods and market places and therefore encouraging spontaneous participation, aspirations and socialization of city people<sup>85</sup>.

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<sup>84</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka, Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.299

<sup>85</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.264-265

While bazaars were spaces for commercial enterprise for merchants and traders and mosques congregational religious spaces, both served the social purpose for informal gatherings and meeting points for political power and religious patronage. The residential quarters of the common people were mixed with retail and wholesale outlets, workshops and warehouses. The population rose from 100,000 to 1,000,000 between 1610 and 1688, and fell from 1,000,000 to 450,000 between 1688 and 1765<sup>86</sup>. This reflected a thriving city with its Mughal controlled expansions and commercial endeavors up until 1688 which was the highest point in Mughal domination, and eventual contraction with the transfer of the administrative establishment away from Dhaka.

The ruling class of Mughals deliberately created a hierarchy of open space networks in the form of the vast garden houses for high civil officers and landlords to live at a distance from the indigenous urban core. Another creation was the “specialized areas” of rent-free land for artisans, craftsmen and manufacturers to settle in Dhaka to conduct their business<sup>87</sup>. While commerce and business increased the population, that population remained in their distinct social positions throughout imperial rule without an opportunity to move up the social ladder. This period then defined the controlled social hierarchy of people in fixed social standings by the ruling power that was reflected in the spatial configuration of the city.

Colonial control and manipulation of spaces after the fall of the Mughal empire eventually

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<sup>86</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.300

<sup>87</sup> Glove, William J. *Constructing an Imagining a Colonial City*. Mineapolis, Minnesota. University of Minnesota Press, 2008. Print p.17-25

destroyed the bazaar culture and link between political, economic and religious life. The restructuring of these open spaces reflected not only British concepts of urban planning and functional zoning but also the local agency's involvement in the appropriation of those spaces. Max Weber described the historical development of the Western city as "a history of domination based on political organization, and thereby producing static models of urban society"<sup>88</sup>. These very models were applied to areas that were colonized like the region of Bengal. The fall in population in Dhaka between 1765 and 1868 approximately from 450,000 to 60,000 (**FIGURE 5.01**) reflects the consolidation of power by the English colonizers by restructuring of space in the region of Bengal during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

European doctrine was applied to architectural and spatial development, informally through the modernization of certain parts of Dhaka and increased extraction of raw materials through primary industries, and in 1959 with the development of the first official Master Plan. While these changes in rules and spatial layout were accompanied by beneficial modern amenities such as electricity and modern medicine and ideally served as a source of hope and method of improving life for the local inhabitants, they have been overshadowed by the long-lasting effects of colonial exploitation.

The first step of British colonization included laying out colonial settlements in newly designated residential areas rather than taking native culture into account. Spaces were restructured according to changing commercial activities from retail to wholesale selling. The Jute industry which started in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in Dhaka was highly advantageous to the

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<sup>88</sup> Weber, Max. *Economy and Society*. 2nd Edition. Berkeley, California. University of California Press, 1978. Print. p.212-250

British for use in mechanical processing. Yet this primary industry involved greater exploitation of natural resources in Dhaka, amongst other regions in Bengal, as well as exploitation of laborers to create a monopoly of trade<sup>89</sup>. In effect, these policies reduced local thriving industries such as the cotton industry as well as livelihoods for employees in industries benefited the city's space rather than catering to the industrial needs of the colonial nations.

The population rose again approximately from 60,000 to 280,000 between 1868 and 1952 with the introduction of modern public health and measures of hygiene<sup>90</sup>. Another practice of the British colonial system was “indirect rule” that used local elite and existing institutions of power, rather than directly imposed European authority of management and control<sup>91</sup>. This was facilitated by providing the local elite with special benefits such as property and capital.

Architecture showed the contrasting lifestyles between the few colonizers and local elite and rising number of local people. As an example, the British invention and design of bungalows in Bangladesh was inspired by village huts, but designed with modern facilities for only British occupation for a feel of luxury “away from home”. Dhaka during the British colonial period then reflected separation of residential and commercial spaces through the creation of spacious streets, green space and independent houses that emphatically contrasted with the undeveloped areas of “Old Dhaka”. This period defined indirect control of the social hierarchy of people by changing methods of economic production and patterns of livelihoods through segregated structural

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<sup>89</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Economy and Culture*. Volume 2. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, July 2011. Print. p. 136-144

<sup>90</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.300-303

<sup>91</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.265

development.

The logic of space shifted in the East Pakistan period from determination of space by the powerful through class differentiation to the creation of contested spaces by the powerful as a result of clash of ethnicities and language. The tense political struggles between Bengali speaking and Urdu speaking citizens after the independence of Pakistan from India in 1947 led to the use of previous colonial spaces as battlefields and sites for political struggle<sup>92</sup>. The deliberate creation of space was what sparked movements from Bengali-speaking people led by the Bengali socialist political party Awami league. The Bengali language movement in 1952 was the starting point of these struggles. The struggles eventually culminated in war between the two large ethnic groups; kidnap, rape and murder destroyed the sanctity of public and even some private spaces<sup>93</sup>. The building of the Shahid Minar in 1973 after the independence of Bangladesh is a structural symbol commemorating those killed in the 1952 uprising against the curbing of rights and cultural assertion by the leaders of West Pakistan.

The post-independent period from 1971-1990 involved the most rapid growth in the urban population, a rising number of manufacturing industries all over Dhaka, dense use of space for structural expansions and the rise and fall of three different political parties<sup>94</sup>. This rapid growth has led to rare open public spaces in Dhaka today used sparingly for daily activities, sometimes

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<sup>92</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.267

<sup>93</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, and Abdul Momin Chowdhury. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Politics, Society, Administration*. Volume 1. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, May 2011. Print. p.350-362

<sup>94</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, and Abdul Momin Chowdhury. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Politics, Society, Administration*. Volume 1. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, May 2011. Print p. 245-250

for cultural events and regularly as sites for transition and movement between buildings. Public spaces are again also being used as sites for political activism by political parties and politically-charged citizens. This period ushered in a chapter in Dhaka's history that defined spaces as symbols of opportunity. But these symbols of opportunity also represented a social struggle through scarcity of physical space and limitations on what could be done in that space.

Fast-paced modernization has taken place through the liberal ideals of international lending institutions such the World Bank and United Nations Development Program, under the local rule of law of governments, and production and expansion of powerful private industries. The contemporary urban aesthetics of Dhaka reflects disorientation and chaos from overwhelming and disproportionate urban growth and inefficient government response through improper implementation of urban planning and design techniques. It is also a reflection of the larger impact on current Dhaka and its people by the biased planning of specific residential areas during British colonial role. The application of western theories of planning in Dhaka reflects a lack of dynamic, cross-cultural models for understanding city life, which in actuality is affected by and a reflection of separate cultures and ways of life<sup>95</sup>.

Similar to indigenous Dhaka, modern Dhaka has multiple land uses, but within a wider and denser scale. Another similarity is the clash between the interests of the upper and middle class groups and "marginalized" groups of people. The battle for urban land and exclusion of the least powerful in society is apparent through the rise in the number of plot developments, apartment

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<sup>95</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.182-184



buildings and vertical growth of apartment buildings alongside growth of slums in adjacent areas, as apparent in **Figure 1.11**. Urban space is then a place of dreams and aspirations but also a place that can shatter those very dreams or worsen living conditions.

American urban planner Kevin Lynch argued that open spaces seem free and less structured to the human eye because it is a place of relaxation and stimulus release in contrast to the intensity of the remainder of the city. In contrast, French philosopher Henri Lefebvre argued that there is a presence of inclusion and exclusion in public spaces not apparent to the naked eye<sup>96</sup>. Public spaces in Dhaka are divided spaces through ownership and use of land. Local government politics and expression of power by private builders, business owners and developers create these changing spaces that determine people's place in society. This is enhanced by rural-urban migration, inadequate infrastructure and services, pressure on land, security concerns and poor urban management.

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<sup>96</sup> Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Oxford, UK. Blackwell Publishers.1991. Print p.26-45

## **CURRENT SOCIAL PREDICAMENTS**

In order to address the current predicaments in society such as unequal livelihoods and rights to land and government mismanagement related to urban policy making and regulation, development programs has been set up by international institutions such as the World Bank, United Nations Development Program and the Asian Development bank, with local agents in Dhaka coordinating the programs. Scrutiny of the levels of effectiveness and credibility is necessary as these development programs aimed at urban renewal become bureaucratic and generalized in their operations.

### **1) INEFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNATIONAL LENDING INSTITUTIONS**

The ineffectiveness of international lending institutions from ridding poverty from Bangladeshi society stems from a disregard of the social outcomes of forced modernity and reflects the grip of global hegemonic demands on the actual aims of international lending institutions. Social scientist Robert Sampson identifies “disorganization theory” as a description of the presence of socially disorganization, the lack of social control and incapability of attaining “social capital” as arising from a lack of structural and cultural conditions of a neighborhood<sup>97</sup>. He critiques the theory by citing its weakness as a failure to recognize that what appears disorganized from the outside or according to certain scholarly sociological criteria could be an internal working organization of a society. He argues that disorganization theory is implemented by international

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<sup>97</sup> Sampson, Robert J. *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect*. Chicago. The University of Chicago Press, 2012. Print. p.38-40

lending institutions such as the World Bank through the adoption of the same concepts and methods to alleviate poverty around the world<sup>98</sup>. Even though aiming at getting people out of poverty as soon as possible is altruistic, it poses greater social consequences such as social divisions and mismanagement of government resources. For instance, when slums are cleared in the city for redevelopment of modern apartment buildings without providing adequate support or an efficient alternative for the slum dwellers, it becomes an instigator of further divisions in society<sup>99</sup>.

## 2) MANIPULATION BY ELITES

“Elite” is defined by anthropologists as an association given to social groups holding positions of power and prestige as well as controlling resources, social mobility and procedures of inclusion and exclusion<sup>100</sup>. The political process is manipulated by powerful elites in Dhaka such as private developers and owners of businesses by influencing decisions of committees, clubs, boards, planning commissions, civic organizations, etc. For instance, private real estate developers are able to infiltrate and directly influence the urban development process in their favor through their membership in RAJUK<sup>101</sup>, the primary government urban development authority in Dhaka. Yet they misuse that power when they obstruct government public initiatives towards equal housing opportunities through their control of the supply and collection of capital, materials and land.

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<sup>98</sup> <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/pdf/c20.pdf>

<sup>99</sup> Davis, Mike. *Planet of Slums: Urban Involution and the Informal Proletariat*. New Left Review. Volume 26. (March/April 2004). p.19-21

<sup>100</sup> Abbink, Jon and Tijo Salverda. *Anthropology of Elites: Power, cultures and complexities of distinction*. New York, NY. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 29-42, 115

<sup>101</sup> *Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha*, literally translating to urban development authority

Encroachment is the illegal or semi-illegal takeover and occupation of certain city areas by those involved in powerful industries, such as real estate developers or stakeholders. In the context of Dhaka, it occurs in the pursuit of more business owners seek greater ventures and become uneasy with the influx of new city dwellers from poor villages outside Dhaka such as street vendors and self-made shop owners. This further escalates due to government corruption and payoffs by businessmen as well as inadequate government solutions for these street side activities<sup>102</sup>. Private industries justify encroachment as a means of restoring value to modernity. This reflects a rejection of boundaries to modernism while enhancing class disparity.

Social scientist David Lehmann defined “cosmopolitanism” as the rejection of strict cultural boundaries and disregard for rigid cultural categorization in order to cultivate an urban lifestyle that will not be threatened by the influx of too many people who are unfamiliar with such a lifestyle<sup>103</sup>. The neo-liberal argument influenced by the current capitalistic system of economic production by private investors in Dhaka encourages greater production, profits and resulting economic growth from business ventures in order to reach a “cosmopolitanism” and change in urban lifestyles that are up to par with established modern cities around the world. As part of this system, the government is held responsible for poverty alleviation in conjunction with international organizations and non-governmental organizations. Private investors argue that many of the illiterate urban population find it difficult to adopt urban customs and shed rural

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<sup>102</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.182-184

<sup>103</sup> Lehmann, David. *Peasants, Landlords, and Governments: Agrarian Reform in the Third World*. Holmes & Meier Pub, 1974. Print

habits<sup>104</sup>. They therefore get left behind in terms of skill accumulation and access to education, and the ultimate goal of moving up the social ladder. While this argument is plausible, it is important to point out the lack of appropriate action and cooperation arises as either the private sector or the government agencies expects the other to carry out its responsibilities while avoiding their own. Underlying corruption makes it difficult to determine whether public initiatives by government agencies are honest attempts by government policy makers or initiated for the sake of formality without a concrete vision.

The actions of the elite in Bangladeshi society then calls into question the psychological satisfaction in exerting power. While people from the same social background and power do not share the same opinions, the control of social mobility is carried out by the most powerful social groups when their projects start involving a wider spectrum of society. Even though the private real estate industry in Dhaka is one of the most profitable and rapidly expanding sectors in Dhaka due to the skyrocketing demands in housing, not all private developers in Dhaka manipulate government policies and take advantage of the poorest in society. Yet some of the most successful private developers have set a trend of overriding government policies and the rights of poorer classes in society in order to maximize their profits<sup>105</sup>. This in turn may signal to other private developers who are honest to eventually take that approach as well to maximize their own profits and expand businesses. Global elites are the chief beneficiaries of globalization and the technological revolution through transnational networks and industrial corporations. In

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<sup>104</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print. p.115

<sup>105</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Economy and Culture*. Volume 2. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, July 2011. Print p. 255-257

the face of changes in global demand and the rise in manufacturing industries in Dhaka city, elites in Dhaka have defended their interests and privileged control and therefore structural congestion as a reaction to external challenges to their positions<sup>106</sup>.

### 3) UNEQUAL GENDERED OUTCOMES

French philosopher Lefebvre's notion that social space is itself an outcome of past actions but also permits and prohibits fresh actions to occur is important to the notion of gendered space in Dhaka. Gendered space is a space where greater exclusion of one gender in a spatial setting occurs through direct and indirect social practices or outcomes. In the context of Dhaka, it involves the exclusion of women from certain public spaces. It is affected by local discourse between religion and secularism in government and society, and the international development paradigms on women and development. Gendered separation in public spaces is not a religious mandate through government law, as may be apparent in some other Muslim nations, but a cultural and social construct brought about by societal expectations and attitudes on what women should do and how they should do it based on "where they can be". In essence it is a socialization of an idealized hegemonic masculinity.

The importance of gender sensitive development strategies can be brought to the attention of the local government as they contribute to economic growth and equity objectives<sup>107</sup>. The 1997 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women defines gender-

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<sup>106</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Economy and Culture*. Volume 2. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, July 2011. Print p.242-252

<sup>107</sup> <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/pdf/c20.pdf>

based violence as physical, sexual and psychological harm or threat of such acts to women and results from an unequal private or public environment. Gendered space is an important point of discussion due to the reflection of class differences and gender inequality within the built environment. Class differences are reflected in the greater number of unemployed men in the streets, while giving women from higher and middle social status an opportunity to seek more options of safety due to the availability of private transport for them in contrast to women from lower social status. Gender inequality is reflected in the socially constructed male-hierarchy that in turn creates unsafe environments for women of all classes given that more men are professionally employed in Dhaka.

“Geography of fear” is the gendered power relations through these spatial connections and the consequent avoidance of space to increase individual safety otherwise not provided within the space<sup>108</sup>. Extensive research by social scientists has led to the conclusion that “the geography of fear” is a consequence of women’s unequal status in society and a factor in further perpetuating gendered inequalities in public spaces<sup>109</sup>. The exclusion is expanded through experience as well as fear of experiencing physical harassment by discouraging women from being in certain social spaces. It is the fear of that possibility that leads women in Dhaka to take spatial precautions such as avoiding certain parts of a city or not going out after dark. Women end up distancing themselves from public life in space and time in order to avoid potential attackers or problem

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<sup>108</sup> Wesely, Jennifer K. *The gendered Nature of the Urban Outdoors: Women Negotiating Fear of Violence*. Gender and Society. Volume 18. (October2004). p. 645-663

<sup>109</sup> Koskela, Hille. *Gendered Exclusions: Women’s Fear of Violence and Changing Relations to Space*. Geografiska Annaler. Volume 2. (1999). p.111-124

creators.

In the exclusion of women from public spaces, the space itself serves as a metaphor due to the existence of an invisible excluded space within the visible space that is not physically apparent in the form of walls, wires or chains<sup>110</sup>. Even though women in Bangladeshi society are not exclusively the victims of violence in public space, they are especially vulnerable due to their given place in society as the more vulnerable among the two genders. Access to public space for women has varied throughout Dhaka's history through each form of political control. There is a distinction of participation in Bangladeshi society in terms of participation as entitlement and participation as empowerment. This reflects the presence of differing opportunities not only between men and women but also between women of different economic classes.

Most women from middle and upper strata of society in Dhaka have retained social and familial privileges as long as they did not transgress social norms<sup>111</sup>. Gender is at times taken as a natural and biological way of ranked cultural differences and a hierarchical ordering of different sections of the population. The establishment of a democratic state does not necessarily erase gender inequality but on the other hand reinforces it on a daily basis on the grounds that there are other more important national issues to deal with<sup>112</sup>. Indian political scientist and anthropologist Partha Chatterjee argued that the reason the issue of female emancipation disappeared from the public agenda of national discourse in Dhaka in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is because

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<sup>110</sup> Koskela, Hille. *Gendered Exclusions: Women's Fear of Violence and Changing Relations to Space*. Geografiska Annaler. Volume 2. (1999). p.111-124

<sup>111</sup> Khan, Farida C. *Gender violence and development discourse in Bangladesh*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd. (2005) p. 219-230

<sup>112</sup> Khan, Farida C. *Gender violence and development discourse in Bangladesh*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd. (2005) p. 242-250



of national refusal to negotiate with the colonial power on the rights of women. The presence of other issues such as religious struggles between the Muslims and Hindus, struggles of identity between Bengali speaking and Urdu-speaking inhabitants of Pakistan and class struggles starting from the British colonial period and continuously present today were thought of as greater issues above and beyond the rights of women<sup>113</sup>.

Bengali nationalists sought to close domestic space to colonial penetration by constructing the categories of home represented by spirituality and culture, and the world through modern science, materialism and technology. In the nineteenth century, a secular Urdu-speaking novelist named Nazir Ahmed stressed the importance of practicality and reason over superstition as proper behavior as embodied in the progress and practicality of the British<sup>114</sup>. He had a partial opinion on the differences between “women from respectable households” versus “women from lower classes” and even emphasized the dangerous influence of lower class women in society. This highlights the varied histories and ability of women from different socio-economic backgrounds to negotiate state imposed and social restrictions.

Following these disparities among women from different ethnic and social backgrounds, the poorest women in society in Dhaka who have migrated from rural areas often work as factory laborers, domestic servants, sweepers and prostitutes<sup>115</sup>. Between 1950 and 2000, While Bangladesh’s urban population rose from 4% to 25% of the total population, Dhaka consisting of

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<sup>113</sup> Beall, Jo. *Participation in the city: where do women fit in?* Gender and Development. Volume 4 (February 1996). p. 9-15

<sup>114</sup> Beall, Jo. *Participation in the city: where do women fit in?* Gender and Development. Volume 4 (February 1996). p.40-46

<sup>115</sup> Koehlmoos, Tracy Perez, et al. *Homeless in Dhaka: Violence, Sexual Harassment, and Drug-Abuse*. Health, Population, Nutrition. International Center for Diarrhoeal Disease Research. Volume 4, (August 2009). p.452-461

more than one-third of the urban population<sup>116</sup>. As a megacity going through fast-paced and uncontrolled development, Dhaka city has become a focal point for technical and technological developments with greater networks of exchange and interdependency. Even though there is greater employment for women from poor backgrounds in the booming manufacturing factories, the streets and public spaces in Dhaka are hostile and restrictive to poor women who have to brave public transportation without the social protection that class bestows on women from elite or higher middle income backgrounds<sup>117</sup>.

The problem is further exacerbated when authority figures such as police officers and station masters do not respond to concern or reports of harassment or are themselves responsible for assault and harassment. As a result, there is a great requirement of “community-friendly” policing where people using space and police can hold each other accountable and in turn prevent the manipulation of power towards the vulnerable. Yet the “geography of fear” does not necessarily translate into only exclusion from public space or stem from fear of public harassment, but may also stem from fear in private spaces, and therefore further avoidance of public spaces<sup>118</sup>.

Certain places may naturally be avoided by women during nighttime compared to day time. In essence, planning interventions can provide a range of “social spaces” such as schools, community health centers or neighborhood centers, promote social inclusion and cohesion such

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<sup>116</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p.114

<sup>117</sup> Khan, Farida C. *Gender violence and development discourse in Bangladesh*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd. (2005) p. 219-230

<sup>118</sup> Whitzman, Carolyn. *Stuck at the front door: gender, fear of crime and the challenge of creating safer space*. Environmental and Planning. Volume 39. (March 2007). p. 2715-2732

as activities in parks and walking spaces, provide opportunities for public discussion of safety concerns related to spaces and services, and provide a platform for partnerships with police, public health and civil society at the local level. Women themselves need to be able to discuss, define and redefine “safe space” through their own efforts as with or without planners, people are bound to create and organize their surroundings in a variety of ways.

# **THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING**

## **DHAKA**

*This section involves a discussion of three urban theories that highlight the importance of experiencing space through socially conflicting, psychological and physical means and to what extent each theory can be used to describe the urban state of Dhaka.*

American sociologist and urban theorist Lewis Mumford argued that “The flawless regularity of traditionally strong social bonds, although constructs and empowers the individual, also constrains him” highlights the need for conflict and change as both are crucial to aesthetic experiences in life and achieving human growth. He emphasized the need for an organic relationship between people and their living spaces as a way of addressing social problems brought about by structured modern cities<sup>119</sup>. This was supported by his distrust of the growing finance industry, political structures and the resulting alienation of people.

Throughout Dhaka’s history, conflict and change through varying political leadership has constructed social ties and movements in society and even shaped the importance of the city in the national, continental and global context over time. There has been a lack of long-term investment by any one political entity for the future of the city. International development organizations make an effort to address problems created by this lack in investment in the city by utilizing fundamental concepts of modern-liberal thought to fix poverty and get intended

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<sup>119</sup> Mumford, Lewis. *The City in History*. Orlando, Florida. 1961. Print. p. 410-446

outcomes. Yet these intended outcomes are quite different from the actual outcomes due to the changing and unpredictable reactions and adjustments to these policies aimed at greater economic growth.

While effective knowledge-based efforts are made by personnel at the grass roots level by non-governmental organizations and various divisions from international organizations who experience Dhaka as a resident, these efforts are not in tune with the driving goals of the larger system under which money is lent to Bangladesh as a developing nation. Conflict and change were in fact necessary for empowering individuals and society as a whole in Dhaka. Yet a pattern of conflict and change has been created which in turn has created the detriments of uncontrolled economic growth such as social disintegration and environmental depletion.

In his comprehensive work in “The Image of the city”, American urban planner Kevin Lynch focuses on the importance of mental maps as tools for reflecting values, judgments, prejudices and emotions within society; and therefore an expression of cultural cognitive categories within the built environment in understanding of cities as opposed to traditional understanding through professional maps and plans. Mental maps are representations of public ideas and aspirations that show transformation of territoriality, familiar space and unfamiliar space. He highlights the issue of comprehensible size of a city as metropolitan regions began growing in the 60s, expressing that “it is hopelessly beyond our grasp”<sup>120</sup>. This situation is apparent in the uncontrolled and fast-paced growth of Dhaka as a megacity within the last four decades.

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<sup>120</sup> Lynch, Kevin. *Image of the City*. Cambridge, Massachusetts. Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1960. Print. p.14-50

A survey asking 100 respondents from varying backgrounds and genders to make mental maps was taken in Dhaka in 2007 to understand the psyche of inhabitants of Dhaka. The results reflect the levels and types of social segregation caused between different sexes, religious and ethnic backgrounds as well as between classes<sup>121</sup>. The rich (10%) higher class mental maps reflect strong personal identification and awareness of one's high status in society. The middle-aged to older women's (non working perspective) acknowledgement of space as only what they encounter when travelling by car reflects a detachment from her chaotic surrounding environment and tolerant neglect of it<sup>122</sup>.

Like many of the others from different ethnic backgrounds, a middle class perspective from a person who associated themselves as a "Bihari", the Indo-Aryan ethnic group, looked at their "territory" or safe space as a consequence of ethnic segregation. The camp he lives is an emotional bond and strong identification with that safe haven, as something that he does not feel in general society among the majority of Bengalis in Dhaka's society. Another middle class perspective is of a Hindu man's mental map that reflects religious segregation and the politics behind it<sup>123</sup>.

The perspectives of lower class men and women reflect temporal rather than spatial connotations, and are drawn exclusively on the basis of daily routines and the functionality and

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<sup>121</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p.120-130

<sup>122</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p.121-125

<sup>123</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p.127-128

mobility of his/her job<sup>124</sup>.

The study reflects an influence on people's perspectives of their surroundings based on personal experience and symbolic association rather than existing physical or geographical features. It also highlights the present forms of social exclusion based on gender, religion or ethnic background rather than through physical structural barriers. The different educational backgrounds of the respondents did not affect their abilities to draw a mental map, while the attitudes towards life in Dhaka were similar among people from the same class<sup>125</sup>.

Modern urban planning methods only provide limited explanations of urban life if they are not adjusted to the local variations in backgrounds and classes. The techniques of mental mapping are significant in determining particular experiences of city dwellers not involved in design, building, financial or regulatory matters. The results are less informed by theoretical practices and functions than an instinctive method of representation. It gives important perspectives into the kinds of values given to spaces by people.

While this study is effective in identifying social disparities through experimental examples, the results are determined without considering scenarios of overlapping social factors. For instance, the perspective of a higher class Bihari man or woman wouldn't necessarily include seeing space as a means of segregation due to his/her privileges even with their relatively

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<sup>124</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p.129-130

<sup>125</sup> Ahmed, Sharif uddin, et al. *400 Years of Capital and Beyond: Urbanization and Urban Development*. Volume 3. Dhaka Bangladesh. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, August 2011. Print p.125-131

different ethnic background. Another issue is that these “identified spaces” themselves may perpetuate or promote certain experiences. As an example, the higher and middle class women’s perspectives of their spaces as experienced through a car is perpetuated by the unsafe street environment for women from all backgrounds. In essence, this perspective has been perpetuated by socially constructed gendered spaces that have come about due to class disparities, that is, the presence of more unemployed men in the streets, as well as a patriarchal system where men of all backgrounds are expected to “handle” the streets while women should do so only if absolutely necessary. Women with a higher social status have the option of choosing a safer way of experiencing public spaces, while women of lower economic status do not.

French philosopher Henri Lefebvre theorized a body-space relationship through a historical and political dimension. He argues that people are “generative and creative social bodies in space” as the body simultaneously experiences departure and destination in physical space<sup>126</sup>. Even though he was a Marxist philosopher, he resisted systemization and ideological justification of his theories by treating Marxism as a moment in development of his theory rather than letting it define his theory. This is reflected in “knowledge must replace ideology as ideology is characterized by rhetoric rather than philosophical and metaphysical analysis”<sup>127</sup>. He rather extended the Marxist theory of alienation by adding a historical and utopian dimension to his conception of body and space. This is reflected in the fact that space is created today by planners through the application of theories that are a combination of ideology and specific knowledge of

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<sup>126</sup> Simonsen, Kirsten. *Bodies, sensations, space and time: The contributions from Henri Lefebvre*. Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography. (2005) p. 1-4

<sup>127</sup> Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Oxford, UK. Blackwell Publishers.. 1991. Print. p. 44-45



a particular place.

To Lefebvre, the inhabited space rather than the imagined space was central to understanding the body as a mediator of relations within different spaces. Even though he did not disregard the importance of imaginary and symbolic spaces, he criticized the use of mental maps as lacking material description of social and political forces in social space<sup>128</sup>. He discussed three main elements of social space as being: 1) A sum of everyday practices through social production and use of the built environment; 2) Representation of spaces, that is a conceived space constructed by the media, politicians, businessmen, designers, scientists and engineers; 3) Imagination and recreation of spaces by professionals and non-professionals as complex symbolisms linked to social life.

He specified social space as being a social product and means of holding power and control that is both distinct from yet affected by global processes<sup>129</sup>. His focus on everyday life practices reflects his recognition of the impact of urbanization on lives and the implications of historical transformation as each society “secretes its own space”. The political history of Dhaka reflects the change in spaces and consequent social outcomes particular to each period of rule. Therefore Lefebvre’s theory among the three discussed is most reflective of Dhaka as society in Dhaka did indeed create its own space through direct and indirect impact by people in power even though they do not necessarily represent most of society. I argue that space in Dhaka is a historic product of changing societies resulting from changing political control, and is now influenced by

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<sup>128</sup> Simonsen, Kirsten. *Bodies, sensations, space and time: The contributions from Henri Lefebvre*. Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography. (2005) p. 5-7

<sup>129</sup> Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Oxford, UK. Blackwell Publishers.. 1991. Print. p. 26

how the powerful in society react to global demands and prospects and to what extent the positive and negative effects of those decisions affect society.

## **DESIGN INTERVENTION**

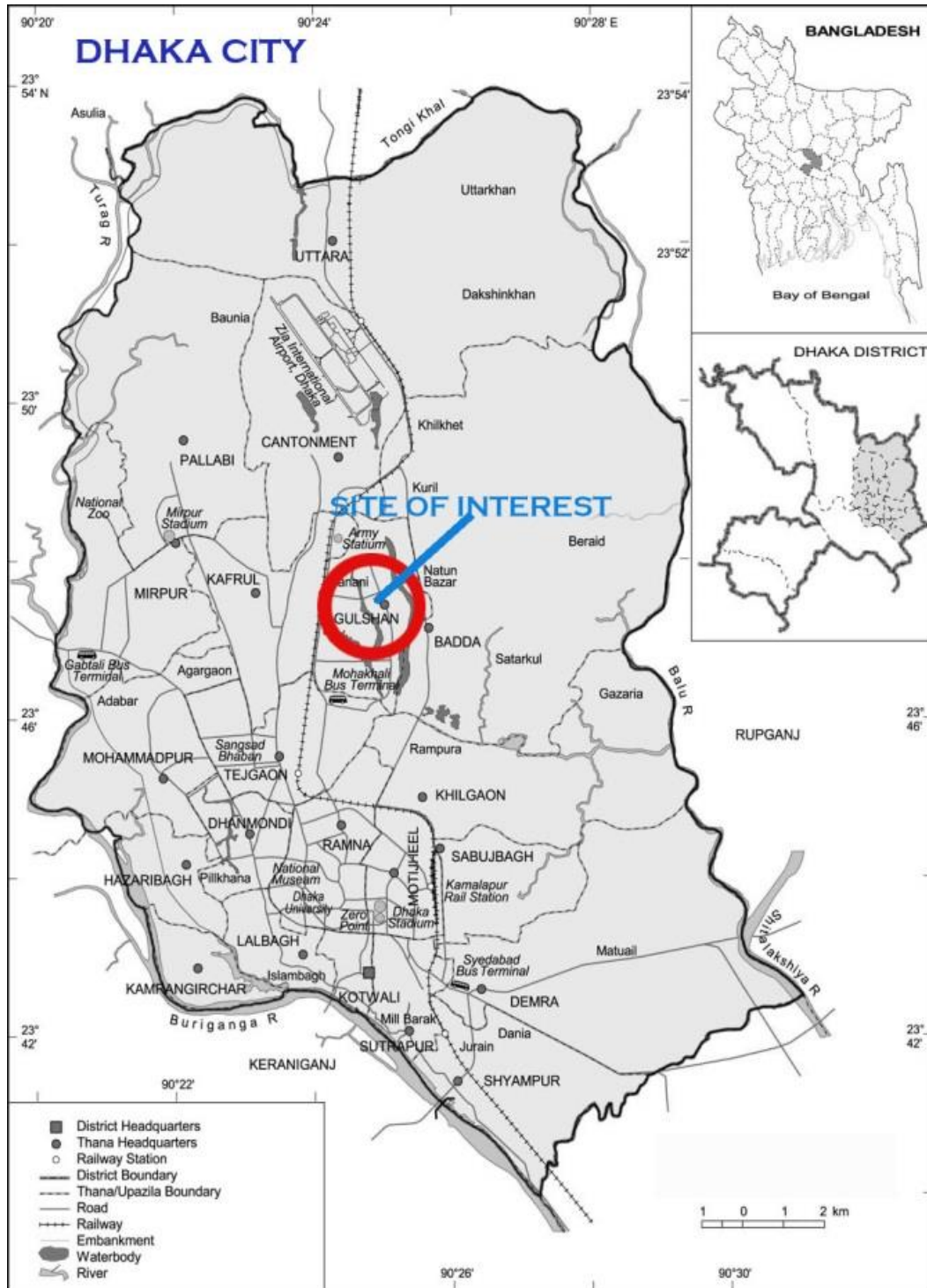
*The objective of my research has been to analyze the effects of Dhaka's political history on the built environment including space and architecture, the changing lifestyles of people and the way space is utilized by people. My design has developed based on this analysis. As my site of focus, I chose a circular intersection of a residential area known as Gulshan 2, built during the 1960s and located towards the center of Dhaka, as it represents a dense mixed-use space primarily used for commercial purposes. My objective for the purpose of my design has been to analyze this space according to who uses the space and buildings, how they use the space and buildings and how that has in turn affected patterns in society. I will present my design philosophy, site analysis and design proposal through diagrams in the following pages.*

## **DESIGN PHILOSOPHY**

My design philosophy has been to create an accessible yet exciting space primarily for pedestrians, people using different kinds of vehicles and well as disabled people. This space is meant to be a simultaneous transitory and stagnant through greater and easy opportunities of movement as well as a central space that can be used for leisure activities. I will highlight the specific goals of the particular elements of design below:

- 1) This design aims to provide greater pedestrian safety and reduce congestion of people and vehicles by providing greater accessibility through ramps/walkways leading directly into the space and adequate parking space for vehicles.
  
- 2) The existing building uses have been repurposed without changing the building dimensions to reduce the commercial importance of the area and subsequently reduce vehicular congestion.
  
- 3) I have taken an indirect approach through this design to create accessibility for both men and women from all ages. I believe it would be difficult to create effective change within the current social milieu in Dhaka in relation to issues of gendered inequality in space just by creating direct awareness through displays of art and literature and provision of awareness programs. I therefore chose to provide a safe place of interaction that would allow men and women to equally experience the space and value private and shared space, stopping and continuing to move, and appreciate the importance of opportunity to experience a space that is not usually available in a busy place like Gulshan.

# SITE: ZOOMING IN

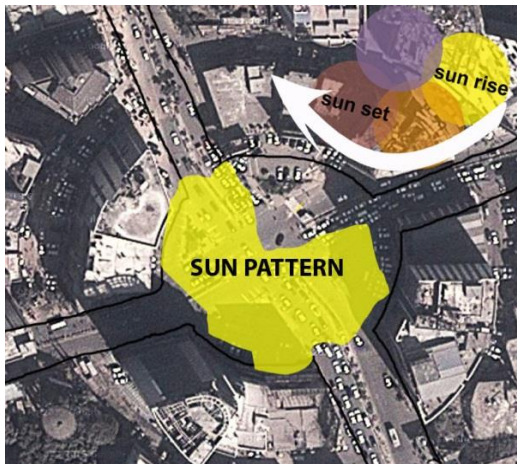
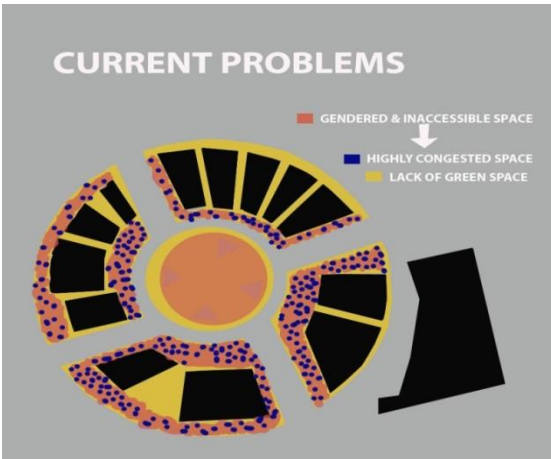
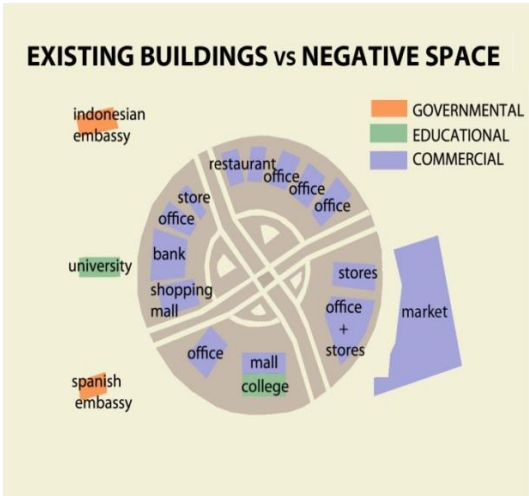
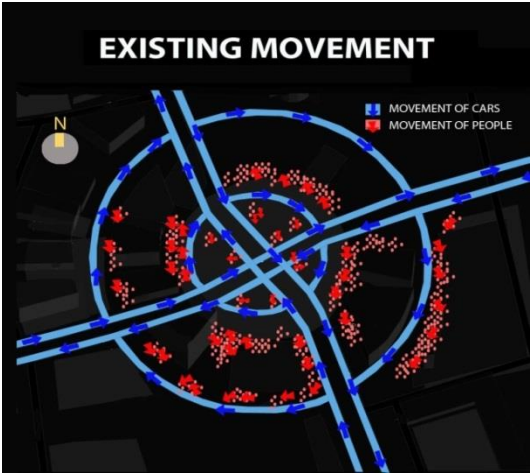
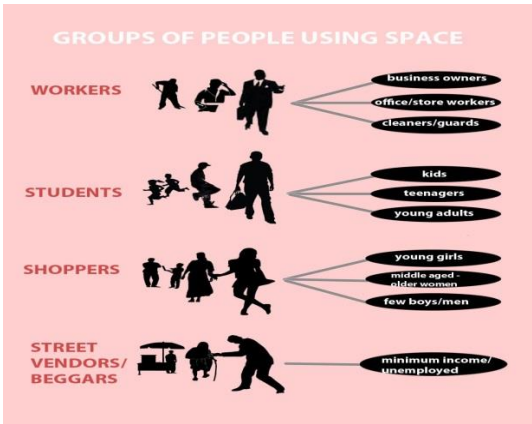


# CIRCULAR INTERSECTION: GULSHAN 2





# SITE ANALYSIS



# GROUPS OF PEOPLE USING SPACE

## WORKERS



business owners

office/store workers

cleaners/guards

## STUDENTS



kids

teenagers

young adults

## SHOPPERS



young girls

middle aged -  
older women

few boys/men

## STREET VENDORS/ BEGGARS



minimum income/  
unemployed



# EXISTING MOVEMENT



# EXISTING BUILDINGS vs NEGATIVE SPACE



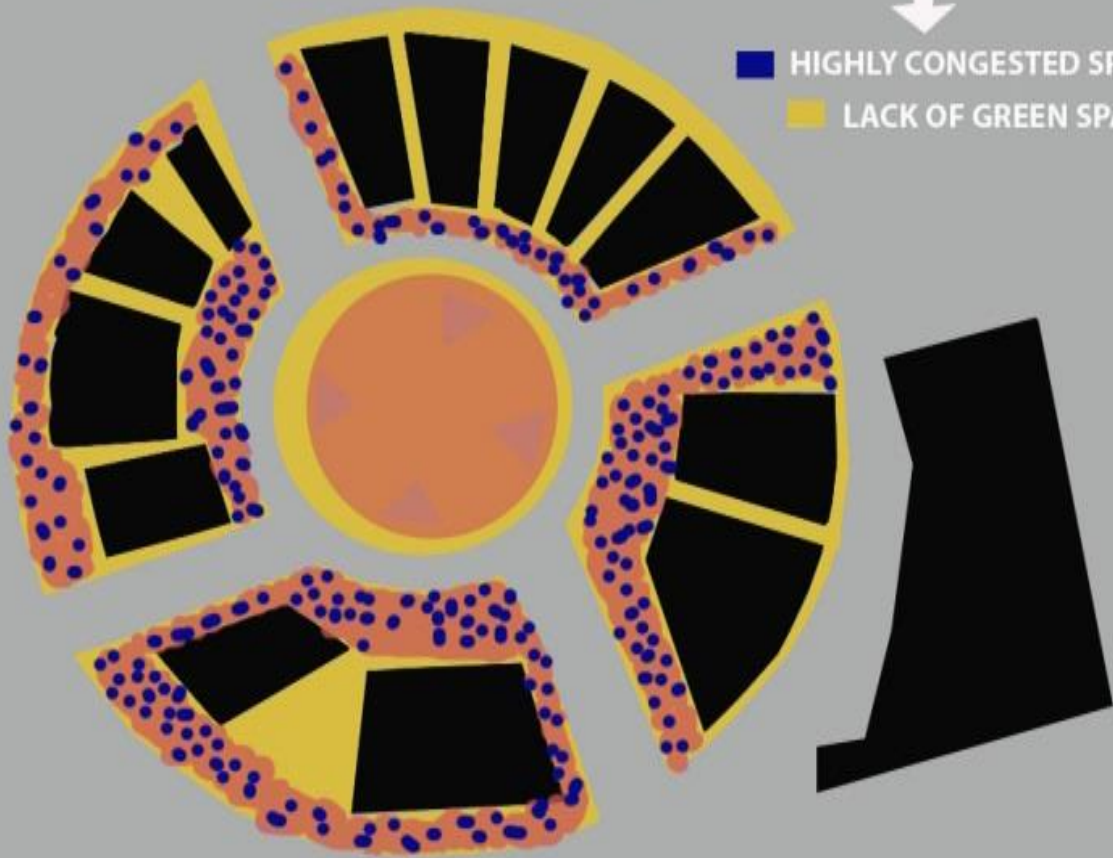
# CURRENT PROBLEMS

■ GENDERED & INACCESSIBLE SPACE

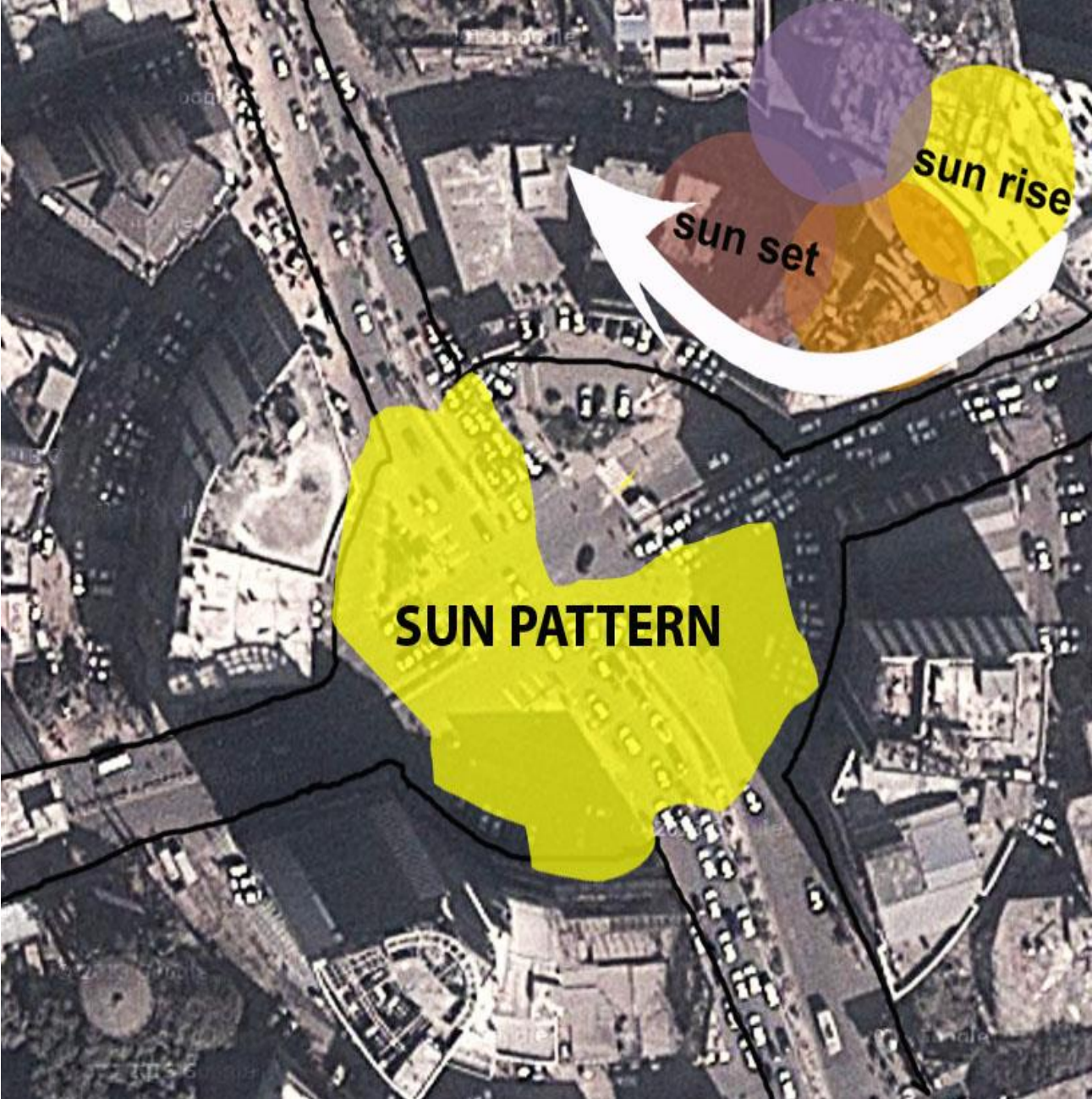


■ HIGHLY CONGESTED SPACE

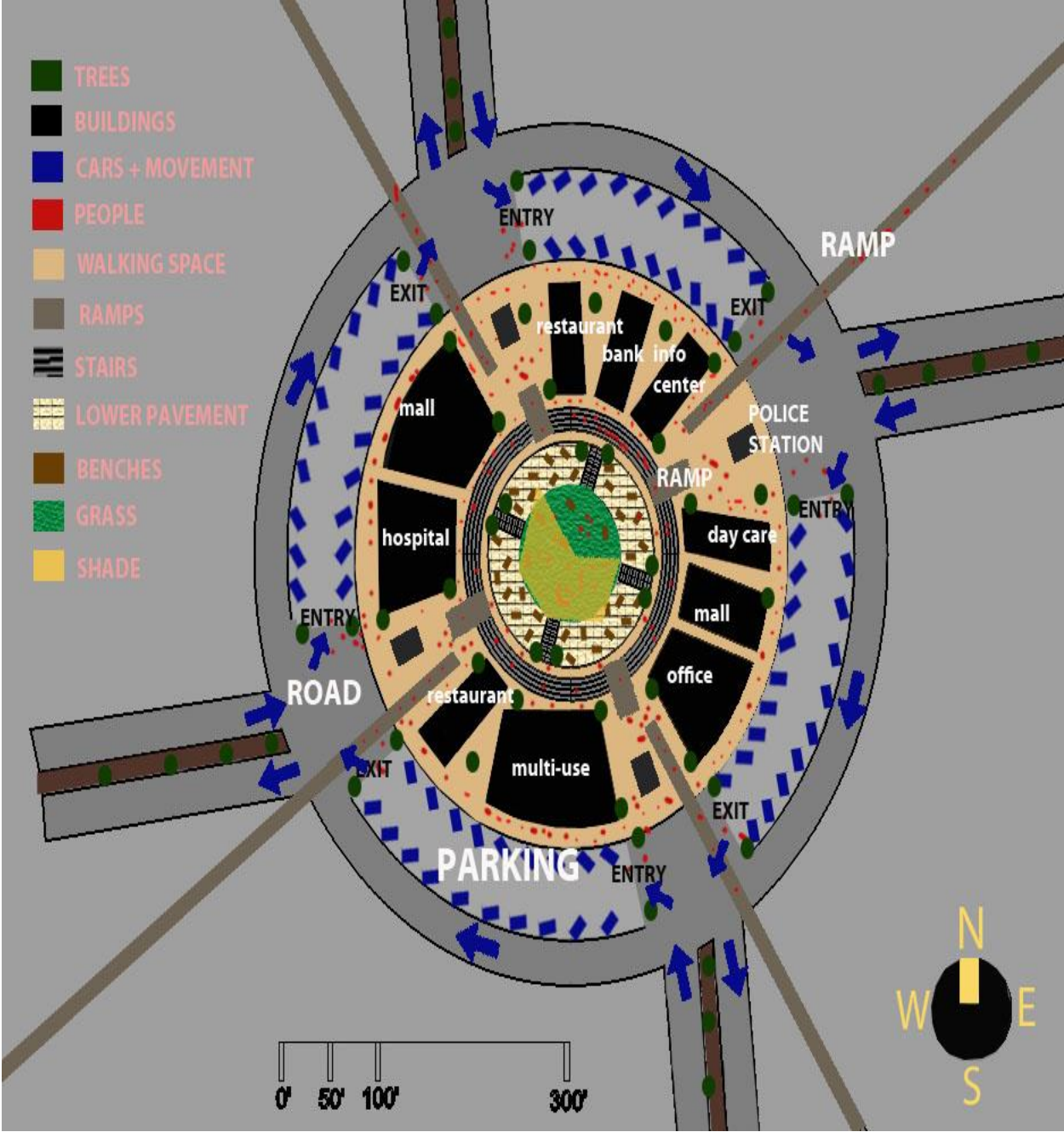
■ LACK OF GREEN SPACE





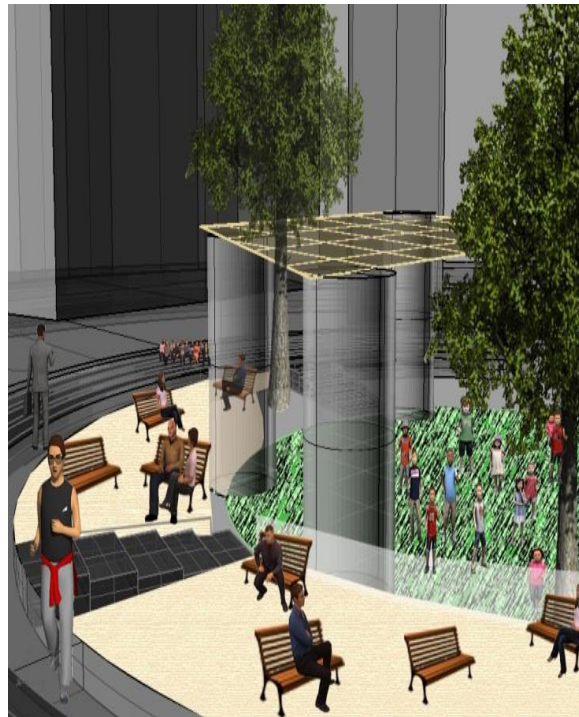
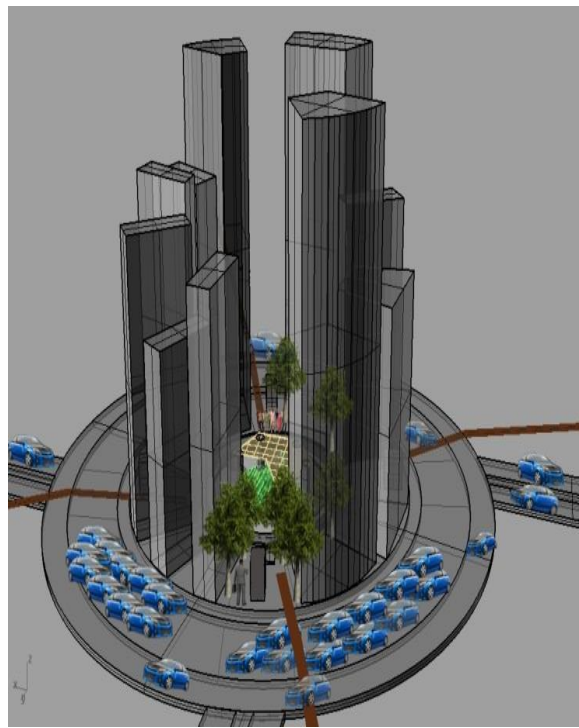
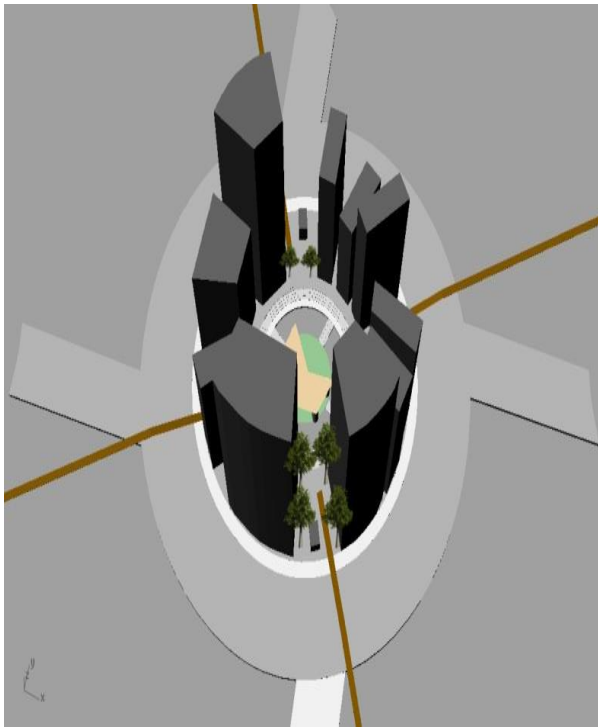


# FINAL PLAN

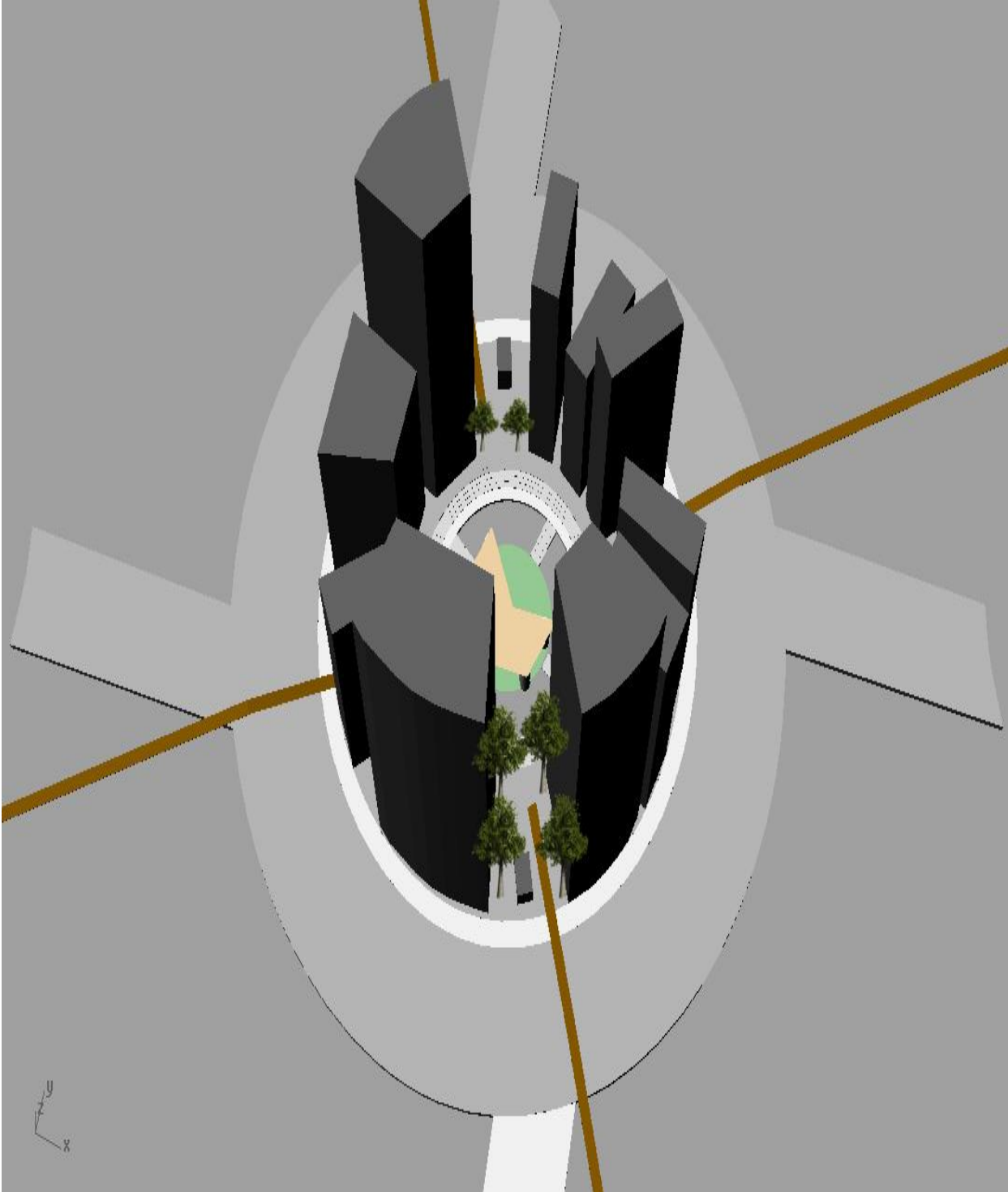




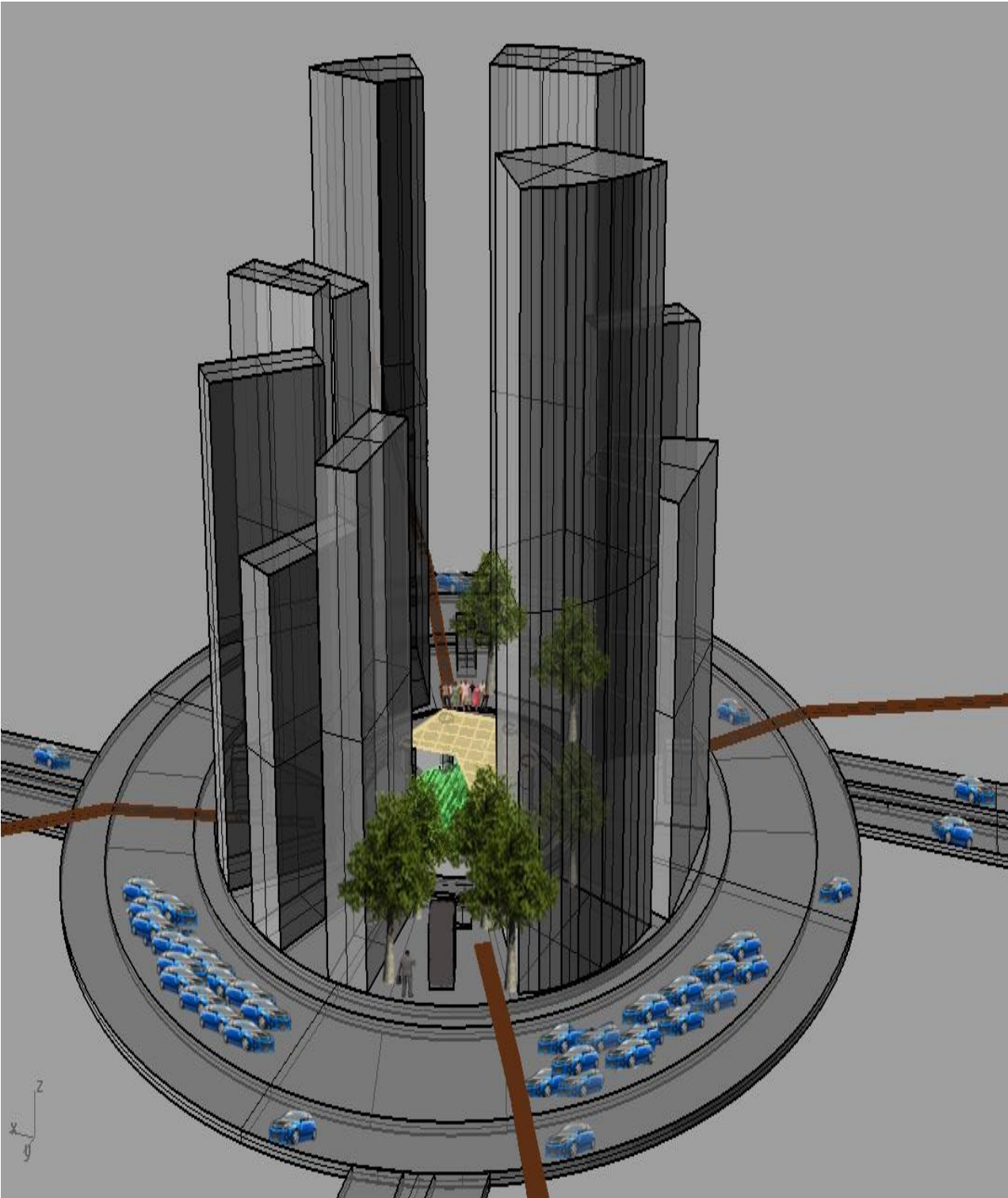
# 3D-MODEL PERSPECTIVES



# GREATER PEDESTRIAN ACCESSIBILITY



# REDUCED CONGESTION IN LIMITED AREAS



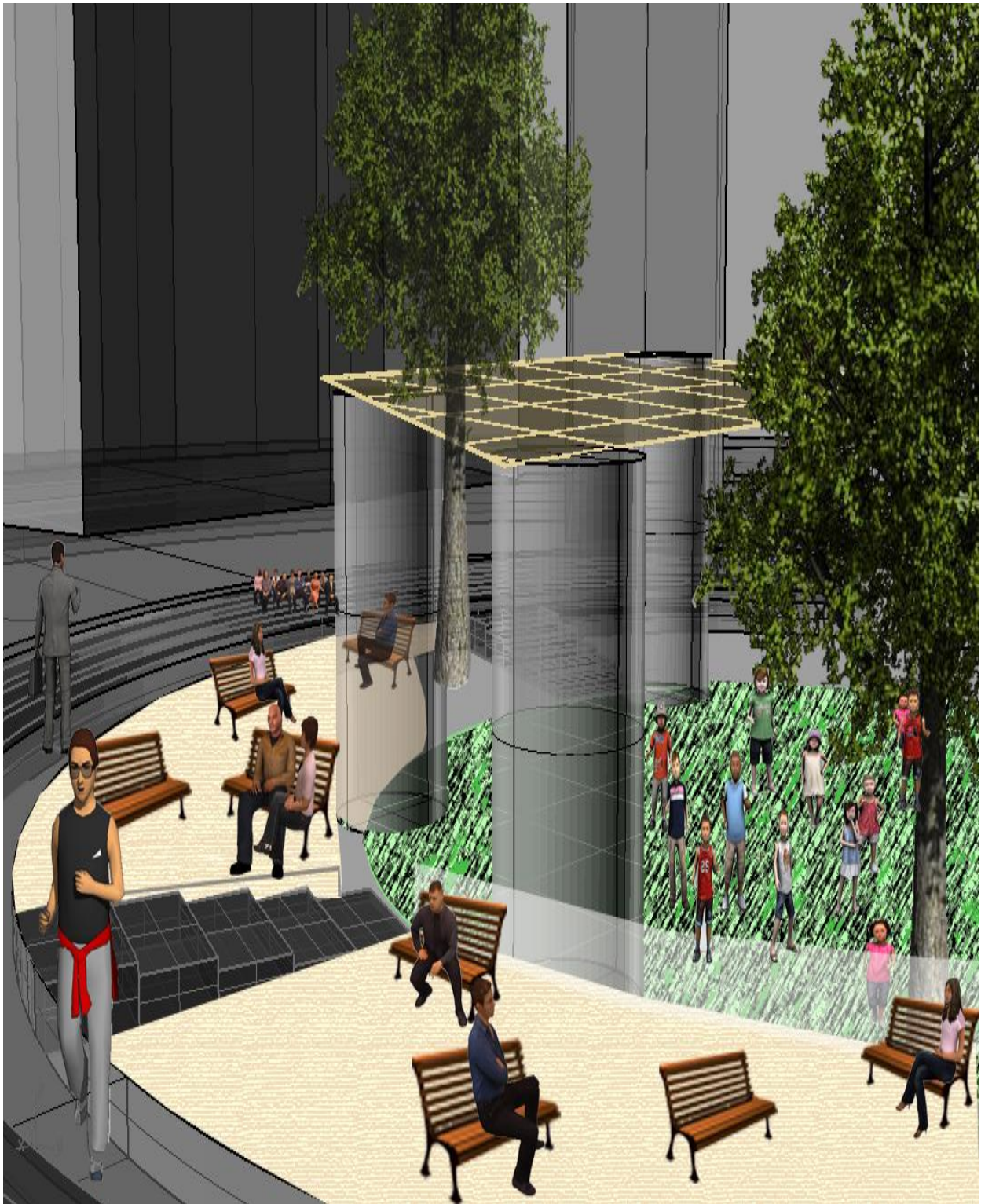


# SAFER CENTRAL SPACE FOR EQUAL ACCESS





# DIVERSE USE OF SPACE



## **IMAGINING DESIGN FEASIBILITY**

If I were to analyze the feasibility and consequences of my design approach within the actual context of Gulshan, the impracticality of removing one of the important means of vehicular movement through this major intersection would not only lead to certain negative social outcomes but also political impasses. The inefficient access to some office buildings located near the intersection, immense governmental and private-sector disapproval on the grounds that reducing commercial activity would hamper prospects for furthering national economic growth and the creation of more diverse social costs not in the designer's or government's control such as littering and pollution by users of the space are some of the possible negative outcomes. Nonetheless, this recreation was an important way of understanding the different elements that make up an urban space and what factors need to be taken into consideration to achieve certain goals through the design.

A continuing social dilemma includes the disparities between how women of different social backgrounds and economic classes experience space differently. This in turn leads to varying levels of experiencing inequality in space by women in Dhaka given the varied levels of access to public and private transportation. While the fact remains that safety in a public space is an issue for both men and women in general in Dhaka, it also reveals a hierarchy of being prone to negative social consequences. It is a greater issue for women compared to men due to the social characterizations and stereotype towards Bangladeshi women's place in society; and more so for women from the poorest economic class compared to middle or higher class women who have more resources at their disposal. The social consequences on the lives of the poorest women in

Dhaka and other cities within Bangladesh in terms of having the least political, social and economic power, is a reflection of the deepest gender, class and political inequalities that currently exist in Dhaka and all over Bangladesh today.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Mughal and British colonial periods reflect dominating effect of control by the ruling political entity, while the East Pakistan period and post-liberation period reflects a dominating effect of local and global economic factors. The dominant economic factors represent a disconnection between the effects of actions by the private sector and actions by government agencies due to limited effective negotiation regarding urban development in Dhaka. Ironically, the only feasible form of negotiation that takes place is corruption through agreements that provide monetary benefits for both parties.

My historical analysis has been important for understanding what worked and what didn't work in the development process that shaped Dhaka as a city. While each of the four distinct periods led to some kind of improvements or positive change, they also invoked numerous new issues in the process. Historical analysis explains these outcomes from planned and unplanned growth of the city encompassing people, structures and space. While outcomes such as natural environmental occurrences and global economic changes historically were not and still aren't in the control of local planners, designers, politicians, businessmen, etc., adjusting to new local and global demands and avoiding past mistakes through concrete actions is in control of those in power at the local level. This would in turn allow the residents of Dhaka to witness and experience their civilian benefits as part of a democratic nation-state. This can be achieved through a superior focus on organized urban design that allows fruitful cooperation between the private owners of businesses and various structures and effective implementation of regulation by government agencies.

**FIGURE 1.01 – BANGLADESH ON WORLD MAP**

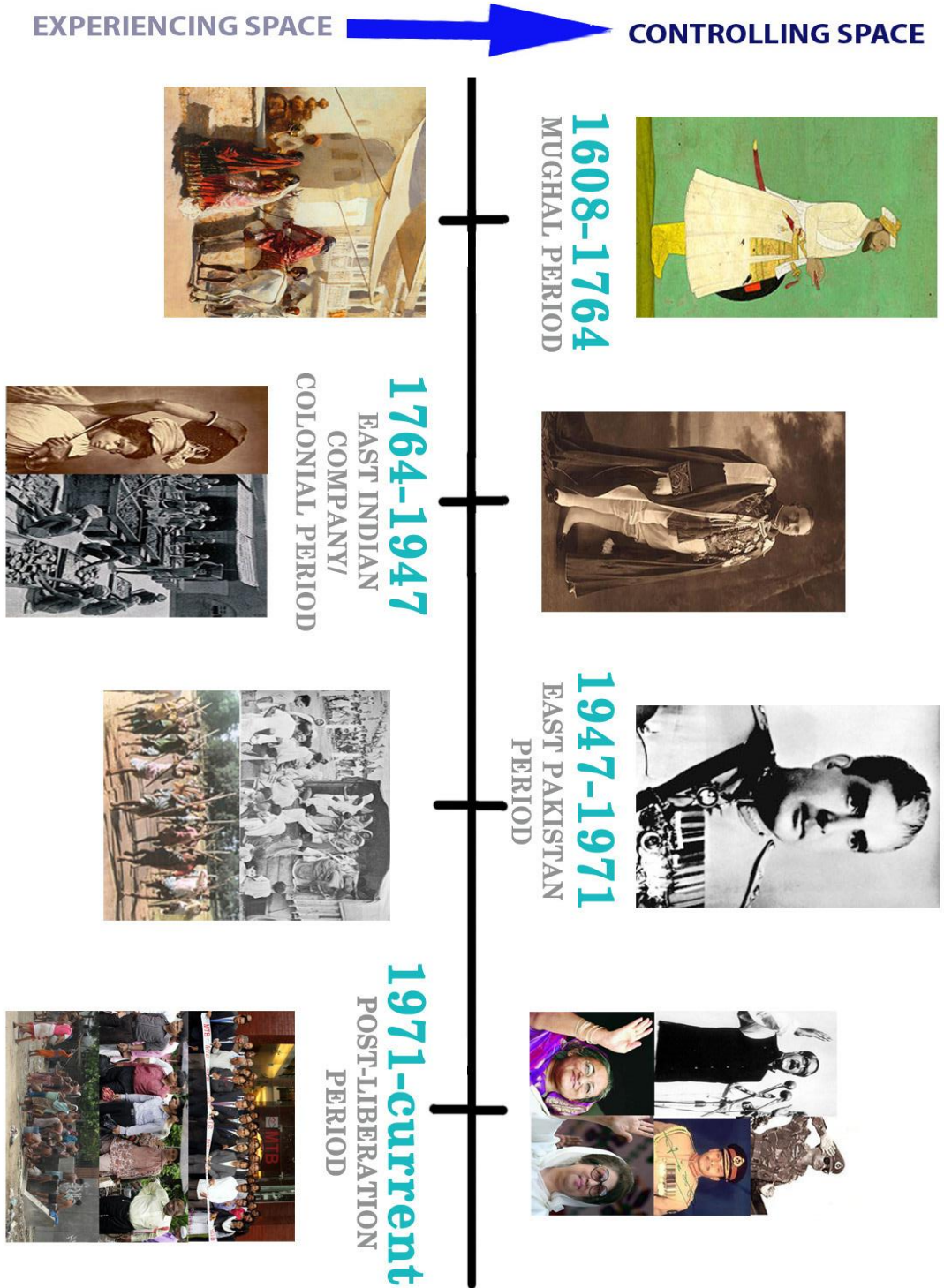




**FIGURE 1.02 – MAP OF DISTRICT DIVISIONS**

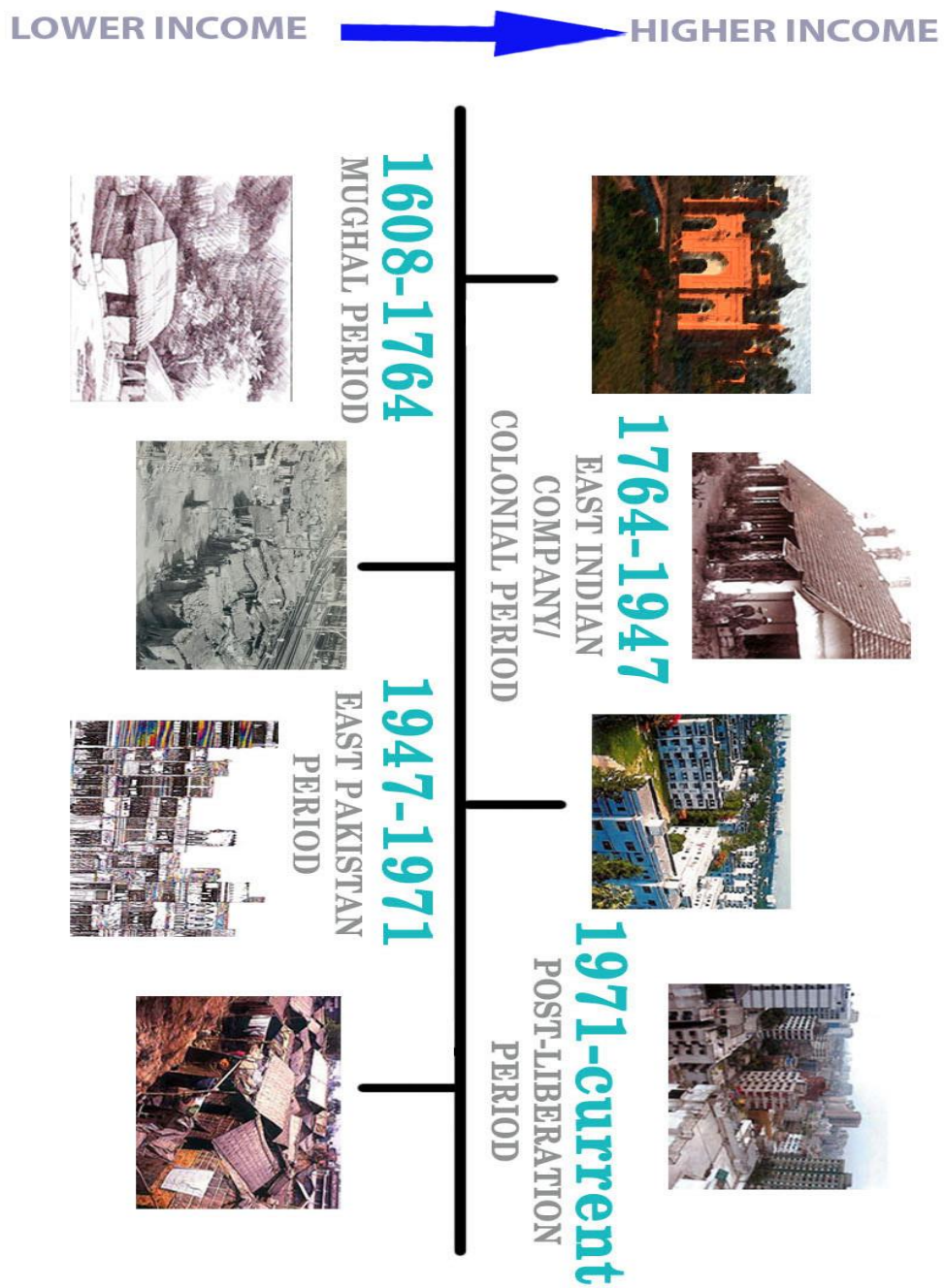


**FIGURE 1.03 – POLITICAL/LIFE TIMELINE**

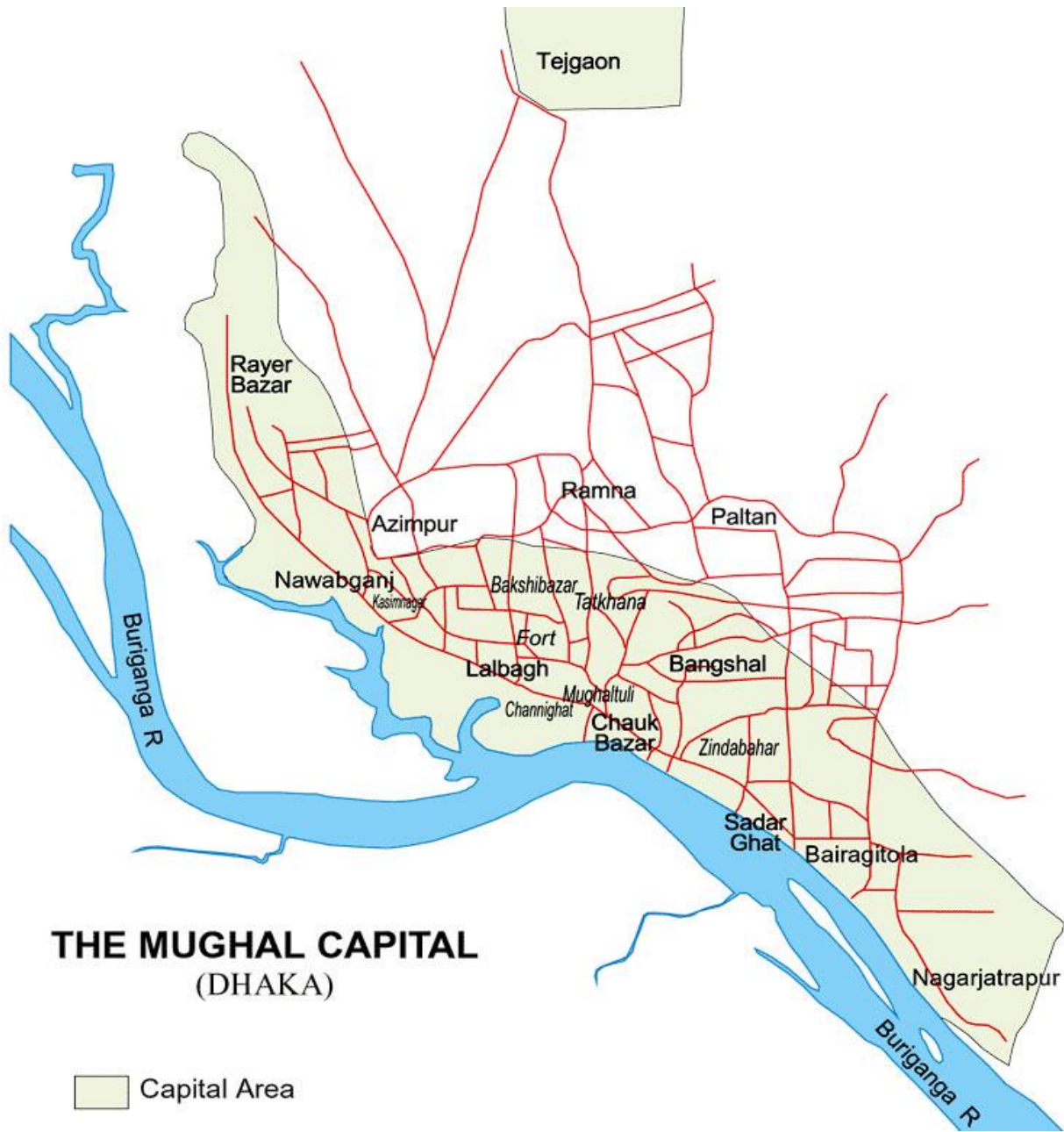




**FIGURE 1.04 –ARCHITECTURAL/HOUSING TIMELINE**



**FIGURE 1.05 – MAP OF MUGHAL CAPITAL**

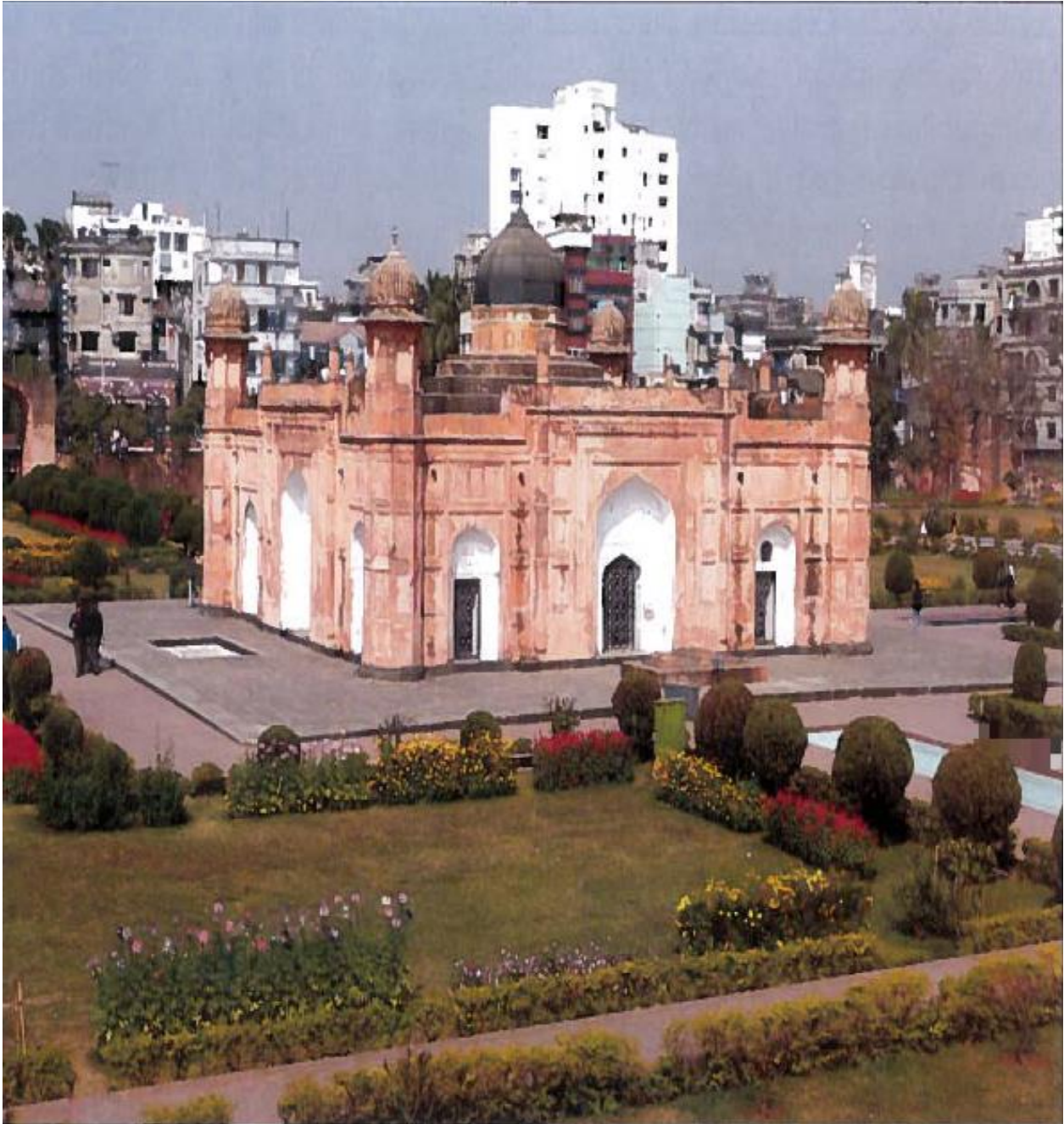


**FIGURE 1.06 – LALBAGH FORT**





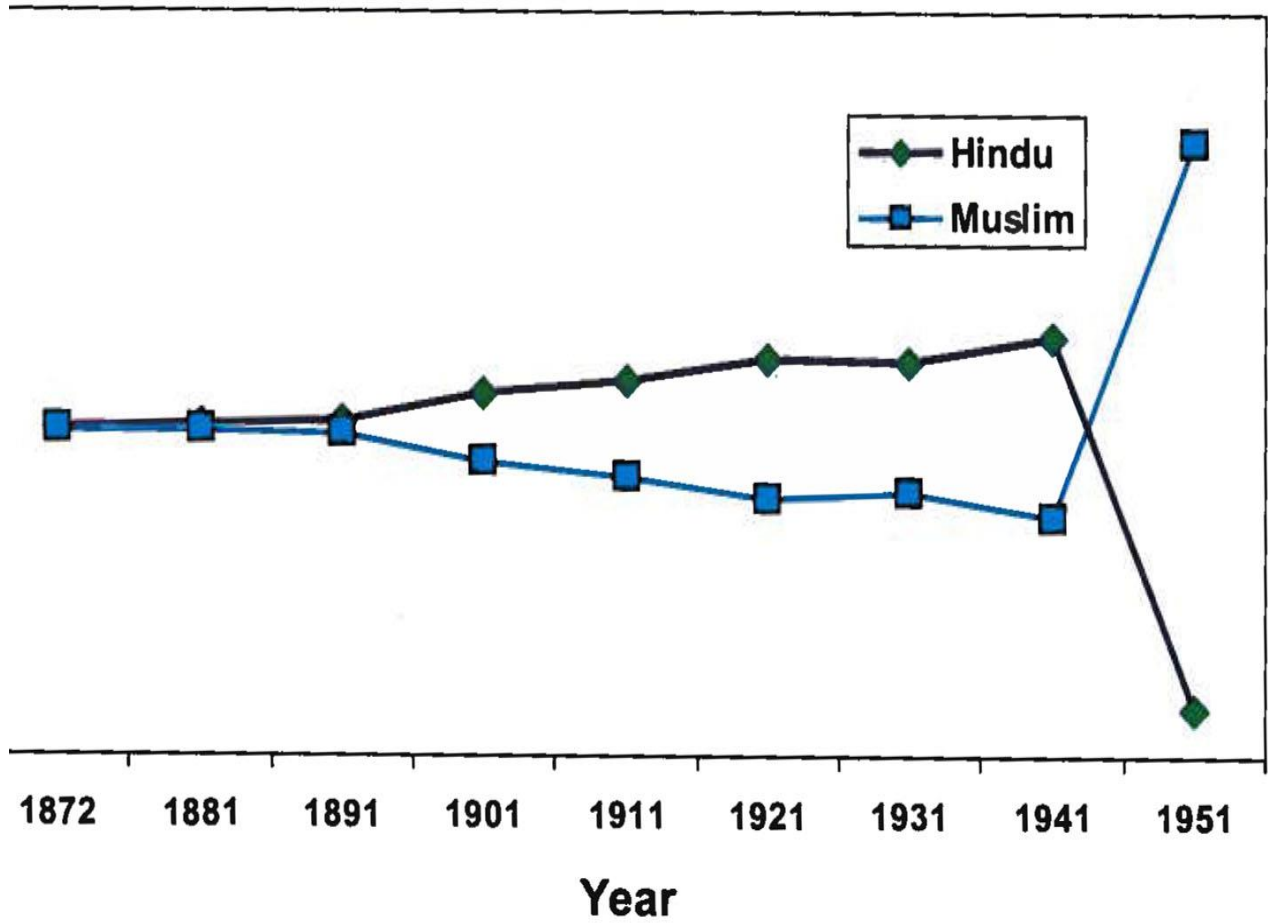
**FIGURE 1.07 – TOMB OF BIBI PARI (WIFE OF JAHANGIR)**



**FIGURE 1.08 –LALBAGH MOSQUE**



**FIGURE 1.09 – HINDU-MUSLIM PERCENTAGE CHANGES IN DHAKA  
1872-1951**





**FIGURE 1.10 – RISING COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS**

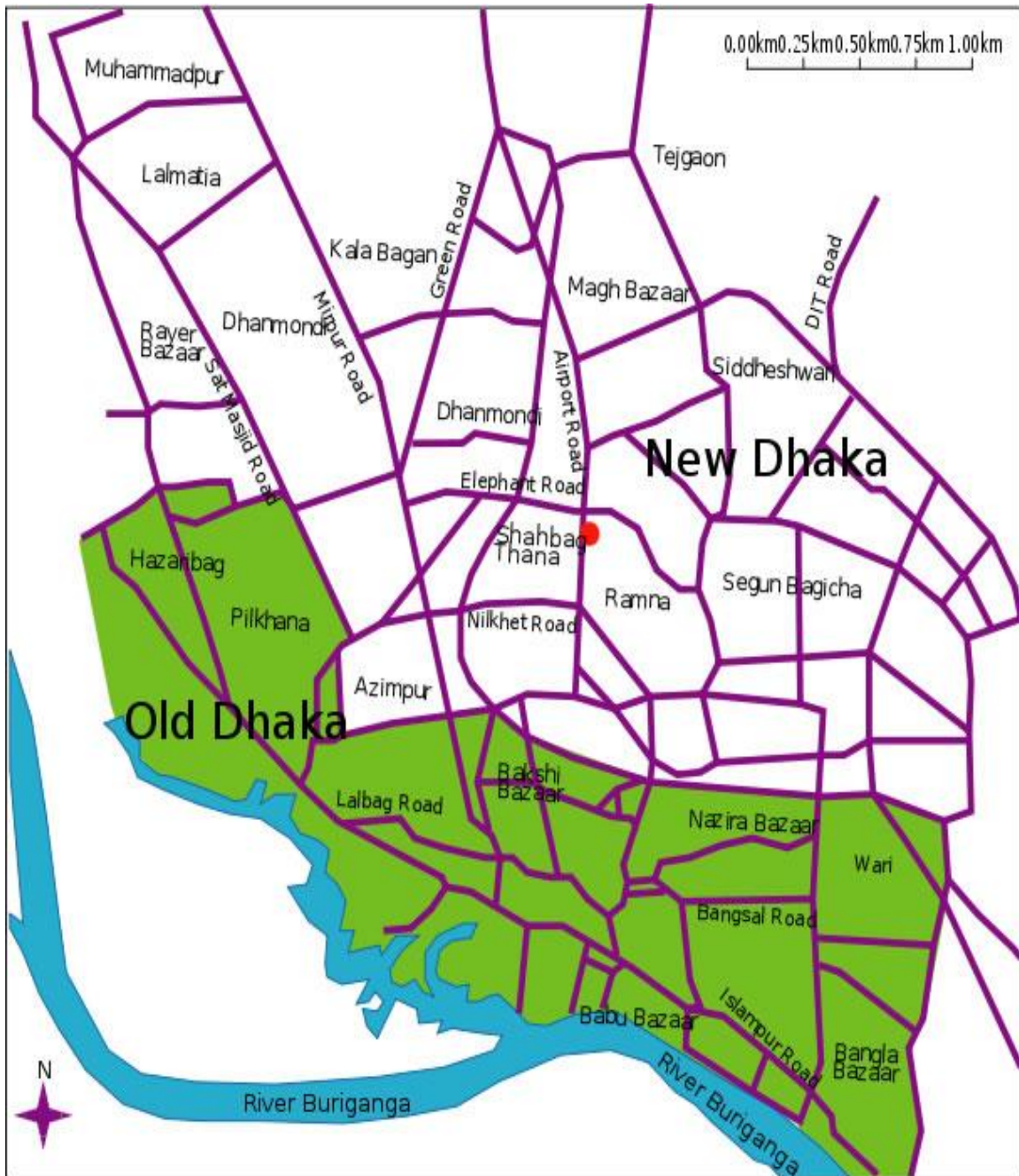


**FIGURE 1.11 – ADJACENCY OF APARTMENTS AND SLUMS**





**FIGURE 1.12 – MAP OF OLD AND NEW CORE OF DHAKA**

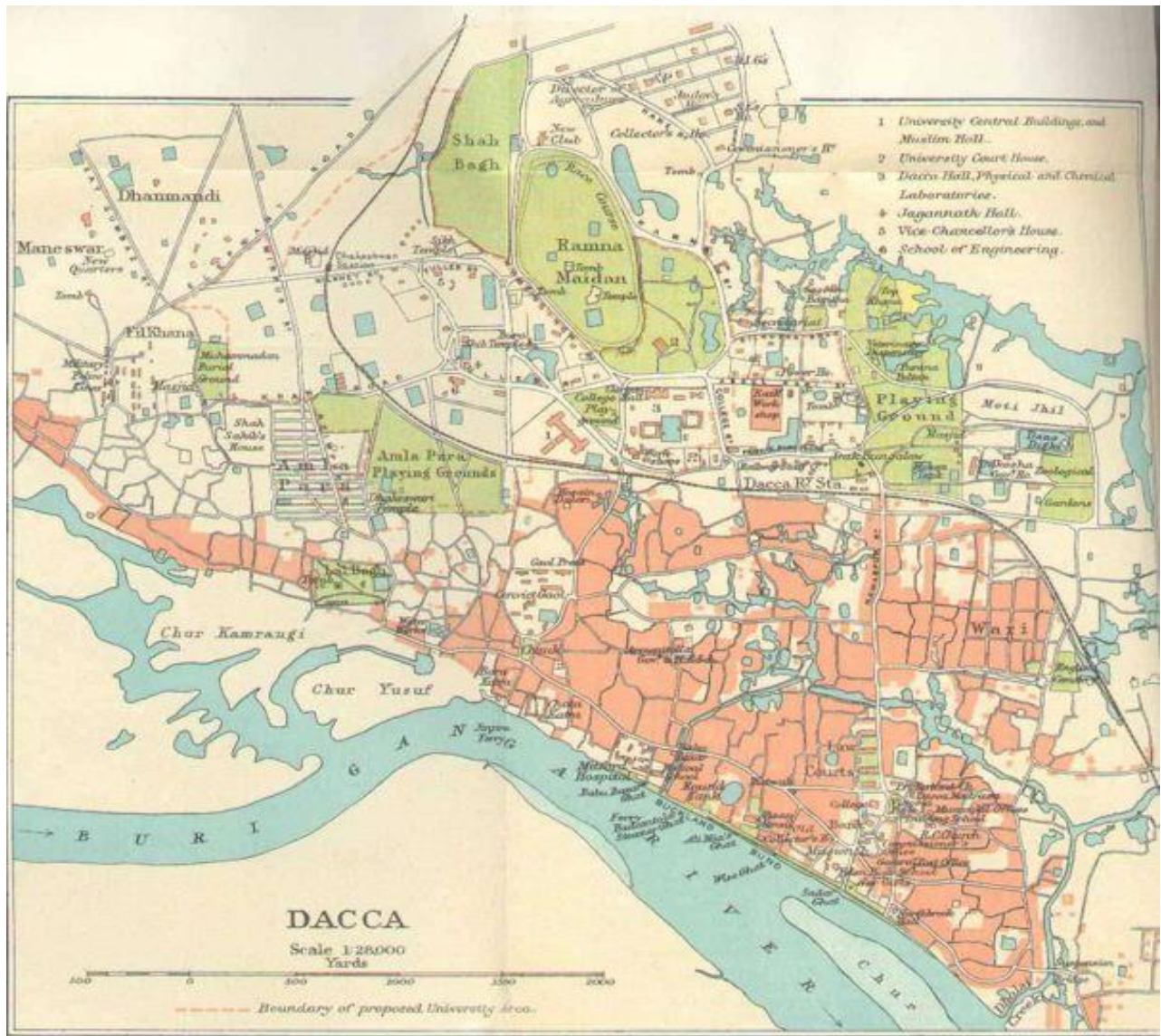


**FIGURE 2.01 – MAP OF COLONIAL CITY 1859**





FIGURE 3.01 – MAP OF COLONIAL DHAKA 1924



**FIGURE 4.01 – ECONOMIC GROWTH IN DHAKA**

<b>Economic<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011<sup>b</sup></b>
GDP (\$ billion, current)	68.4	79.6	89.4	100.4	110.6
GDP per capita (\$, current)	486.8	558.7	620.0	687.0	748.0
GDP growth (% in constant prices)	6.4	6.2	5.7	6.1	6.7
Agriculture	4.6	3.2	4.1	5.2	5.0
Industry	8.4	6.8	6.5	6.5	8.2
Services	6.9	6.5	6.3	6.5	6.6
Gross domestic investment (% of GDP)	24.5	24.2	24.4	24.4	24.7
Gross domestic saving (% of GDP)	20.4	20.3	20.1	20.1	19.6
Consumer price index (annual % change)	7.2	9.9	6.7	7.3	8.8
Liquidity (M2) (annual % change)	17.1	17.6	19.2	22.4	21.3
Overall fiscal surplus (deficit) (% of GDP)	(2.7)	(3.9)	(3.6)	(3.2)	(3.9)
Merchandise trade balance (% of GDP)	(5.1)	(6.7)	(5.3)	(5.1)	(6.6)
Current account balance (% of GDP)	1.4	0.9	2.7	3.7	0.9
External debt service (% of exports of goods and services)	5.3	4.8	4.9	4.7	...
External debt (% of GDP)	28.3	25.5	23.3	20.3	...

**FIGURE 5.01 – POPULATION DATA OVER 1610-1868**

Year	Estimated /Enumerated Population*	Source	Estimated/ Enumerated Male	Estimated/ Enumerated Female	Estimated Sex Ratio
<b>1610-1765 (Mughal Period)</b>					
1610	1,00,000-1,25,000	Abdul Karim	57,940-72,425	42,060-52,575	138
1640	2,00,000	Sebastian Manrique	1,14,480	85,520	
1670-1688	8,00,000-10,00,000	1) Syed Muhammed Taifoor 2) Rahman Ali's <i>Tarikh-i-Dhaka</i> 3) S N H Rizvi	4,57,920-5,79,400	3,42,080-4,20,600	
1700	1,30,000	Tertius Chandler	75,322	54,678	
1750	1,00,000	Tertius Chandler	57,940	42,060	
1765	4,50,000	James Rennell	2,60,730	1,89,270	
<b>1765-1868 (British Period)</b>					
1786	2,00,000	Abdul Karim	1,03,680	96,320	108
1800/1801	2,00,000	1) Home Miscellaneous Series, India Office Library 2) James Taylor	1,03,680	96,320	
1814	2,00,000	Charles D'Oyly	1,03,680	96,320	
1815	1,50,000	Walter Hamilton	77,760	72,240	
1818	1,50,000	Karl Marx	77,760	72,240	
1823-1824	3,00,000	Bishop Heber	1,55,520	1,44,480	
1830	66,989	Henry Walters' Census*	37,619	29,370	
1837	20,000	Karl Marx	11,588	8,412	
1838	60,617	James Taylor's Census*	31,422	29,195	
1867	51,636	History and Statistics of the Dacca Division	31,424	20,212	
1868	60,000	George Bellet's Estimation	31,104	28,896	

\* Only 1830 and 1838's population, male, female were enumerated, others were estimated/observed.

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