

# NEWSLETTER

## VOL 2



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LET YOUR  
MIND  
WANDER !



Raavee Vats  
editor in Chief

PLANNING IS THE DELUSION OF REALITY.





## COVER STORY JUSTICE FOR CLIMATE

Interview by R Himaja



**Anant Maringanti**  
Director of Hyderabad  
Urban Lab

*"Planning is about  
knowledge, and  
knowledge-sharing should  
be an objective for  
organisations of different  
natures to collaborate"*

Perspectives add value to planning processes, from professionals and people with lived experiences. An intersection of these two is quite rare in the field, stemming from exposure not only to planning tools and techniques but also to people from different communities. The Hyderabad Urban Lab is one of the very few organisations that conducts rigorous academic research while closely working with communities. In an interview with Dr. Anant Maringanti, the founder and director of Hyderabad Urban Lab, new insights and learnings on various subjects related to climate justice were explored.

The Hyderabad Urban Lab was formed in 2012 as a result of Dr. Anant's professional exposure and experiences as a PhD student of geography at the University of Minnesota. It was an attempt to understand different urban aspects of Hyderabad through research and community engagement and to gain insights into other cities through this experience. The organisation works with the government for various community related projects and also conducts community workshops. Anant believes that planning is about knowledge, and knowledge-sharing should be an objective for organisations of different natures to collaborate.

Anant sees the nature and approach of government planning authorities as one driven by creating a set of rules, regulations, incentives, and disincentives, within which people must experiment. This, he says, is what they do alongside people: experiment. He says that the results of these experiments should be picked and integrated back into planning.

Though the idea of community engagement might seem simple, overcoming cynicism and building trust with the people is a significant challenge. When asked about their approach to community engagement workshops, Anant said that they empower people to speak freely, rather than lecturing them. Through these interactions, valuable knowledge is shared within the community, which enhances research. The people who see and bear the risks of climate change hold a simple and real perspective to addressing and understanding these issues.

While discussing the climate concerns in Hyderabad, Anant highlighted that urban heat and floods are among the most pressing issues, disproportionately affecting those living in kutcha houses. Although the physical impacts of climate change are widely recognized, the effects on mental health are often overlooked. Anant pointed out how delivery drivers struggle with impaired judgment from prolonged exposure to extreme temperatures, parents live in constant fear of manholes posing a danger to their children every time it rains, and those in kutcha houses anxiously worry about faecal sludge entering their homes during floods. According to Anant, climate change only exacerbates existing injustices, and in an unjust world, climate change only makes things worse.

Anant's insights serve as a powerful reminder that climate justice is not only about addressing environmental challenges but also about understanding and responding to the human cost of these changes. With rapid value shifts and changes in planning in recent times, he advises planners to be adaptable and address climate concerns in all their decisions. As a suggestion to planning students, he says that it is important for us to look at the real world beyond the preset categories and rules and to learn our tools competently to use them after understanding the context of a problem.



# REDEFINING PUBLIC POLICY AND PHYSICAL PLANNING IN PROMOTING SOCIO- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN URBAN INDIA

**Jit Kumar Gupta** Former Advisor, Town Planning Punjab Urban Development Authority.



As an urban planner, I have observed that while government policies and planning tools aim to be people-centric and promote socio-economic development, their implementation often falls short. Urban planning, in practice, tends to cater to the affluent, creating imbalances and exacerbating poverty. It is crucial to critically review and redefine our urban planning approaches to involve communities, including the informal sector, and make optimal use of available resources. Empowering the poor and making urban growth just and sustainable should be at the core of these policies

To create cooperative and just cities, we must ensure that urban resources and amenities are not monopolized by a few elites. Urban planning must be poor-centric, integrating the poor into the planning process to provide essential amenities and services. Earmarking dedicated commercial and residential spaces for the poor can help reduce slums and promote organized development. Skill development centers can empower the urban poor by providing better employment opportunities.

I believe that day markets and the multiple use of formal urban spaces for business after hours can generate income for the poor. Registering the urban poor can help me accurately assess their needs and target benefits effectively. By adopting a circular economy, I can optimize resource use and convert waste into wealth, reducing poverty. Including the poor in planning processes ensures that their needs are understood and addressed, making urban development more equitable. . Leveraging technology allows me to optimize resources, create employment, and improve welfare scheme implementation. I see cross-subsidization to generate revenue for urban poor projects. Lastly, I think prioritizing regional planning can balance development between rural and urban areas, reducing migration and promoting local employment. These changes can make urban planning more inclusive and effective, promoting socio-economic development and alleviating poverty.



# THE ROOTS OF CHANGE

Perspectives

Dr. Ayon K Tarafdar  
Professor, School of  
Planning and  
Architecture  
Vijayawada



Understanding of 'justice' gets easier when we understand 'injustice'.

## Understanding Climate Justice and the complex layers beneath

Let me elaborate in terms of common man. Understanding of '*justice*' gets easier when we understand 'injustice'. In terms of climate, one has to understand what has been the 'injustice'. While most believe that climate is universal and how it can be 'unjust' to one but 'just' to another - they need to think once more. When we are dealing with a place that has heterogeneity inculcated in its physical and socio-economic layers, climate also puts down its impacts differently. Climate justice is possible if we start accepting heterogeneity of our regions and communities, and also if we involve climatic data's variations in our future planning process.



By Kartikeya Mishra

## Empowering the Bottom Tier: Climate Justice at the Grassroots

The bottom tier of governance takes us to the urban wards or to a village. At that scale, communities are closer knit and there is more scope of spatial credibility. Every building, footpath, tree and water body, however small or narrow, has a meaning and identity. Climate justice can be best achieved if the bottom tier of governance is empowered to prepare for such climate risks with adequate information and knowhow. Ward offices or village bodies, if equipped with the right map and risk factor analysis, can mandate a much more involved strategy to address climate risk with long term relevance as they would be deciding and maintaining their own neighbourhoods against the risks.

## Shifting the Focus: Priorities in Climate Justice

In terms of climate justice, **when** is the call of the day is creation and access to publicly available data that shows degrees and zones of risk or threat. Such data sets aided with technical solutions should become mainstream to the extent that communities, ULBs and CBOs feel empowered to question or suggest any spatial top down policies or plan. Hence, support to the right organisations that can develop, maintain and analyse climate related information that is useful for planners and ULBs is important. There is a need to go into the socio-economic factors to strengthen capacities along with making structural solutions. There is nothing like a mistake. It is about priority, preference and phasing.

Climate justice is not a one-size-fits-all solution—it is a deeply contextual pursuit rooted in the recognition of regional heterogeneity, social inequities, and local realities. It calls for a shift in both perception and practice: from understanding injustice as a way to navigate justice, to empowering the grassroots who live these realities every day, and finally to prioritizing access to transparent, localized data that drives informed decision-making. True climate justice lies in acknowledging the varying degrees of vulnerability and enabling communities—especially at the bottom tier—to lead with knowledge, agency, and resilience.





# URBAN FOOD SECURITY AND EGALITARIANISM IN TAMIL NADU

**Pravin Micheal**

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As urban populations grow, ensuring that all residents have access to affordable and nutritious food becomes increasingly challenging. This article explores the innovative measures Tamil Nadu has taken to promote urban food security, focusing on the principles of egalitarianism that underpin these efforts.

Egalitarianism, the belief in equal rights and opportunities for all, is a foundational principle in Tamil Nadu's approach to urban food security. The state government has implemented various programs aimed at reducing food insecurity and promoting social equality. These programs are designed to ensure that no one, regardless of their economic status, goes hungry. One of the most notable initiatives is the Amma Unavagam (Mother's Canteen) program.



Amma Unavagam is a food subsidization program operated by the state government of Tamil Nadu. It was launched in 2013. According to the late J. Jayalalithaa, who was the chief minister at the time, it aims to provide nutritious and affordable food to urban poor residents. The initiative focuses on ensuring food security, reducing hunger, and promoting social justice through subsidized meals. The means include rice, sambar, curries, and breakfast items, ensuring balanced diets that are also affordable for everyone. This scheme also encouraged community participation by involving local self-help groups and cooperatives in managing and operating the canteens; it also employed women in a way to empower them. The Tamil Nadu government provides financial support and infrastructure for setting up and running Amma Unavagam canteens across urban areas. Amma Unavagam was primarily focused on promoting social justice by addressing food insecurity among vulnerable populations, including migrant workers, daily wage earners, and low-income families. It serves as a successful model and expands to cover more urban areas, feeding a larger segment of the population with nutritious food. It is a successful model that continues to receive funding even after governments have changed. These kinds of Flexible and Scalable models are beneficial in rapidly expanding urban areas where health and inadequate nutrition are major issues.

# EE CLIMATE COUNTDOWN: TIME FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

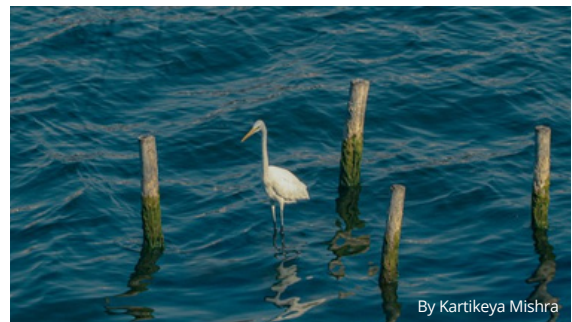
T. Shanvitha,  
Second Year, School of Planning and Architecture, Vijayawada

Climate change is not just a scientific phenomenon—it is a global crisis rooted in colonialism and industrialization, exacerbated by global warming and marked by stark injustices. Marginalized communities, least responsible for emissions, suffer the most from climate impacts, illustrating the deep intersection between environmental degradation and social inequality.

We are in a state of climate emergency. Achieving climate justice requires urgent, inclusive action that transcends national boundaries. Policies must address historical injustices and promote equity, resilience, and sustainability to ensure a fairer, more livable future. Climate adaptation strategies must center social equity as a core imperative, not an afterthought.

Urban areas are frontline battlegrounds of climate change. Rapid development intensifies heat islands, disproportionately affecting low-income neighborhoods and slums. Coastal zones face flooding, mountains endure landslides, and rural communities—especially the disadvantaged—grapple with escalating climate risks. Amid this, urban planning becomes pivotal.

Sustainable practices such as Urban Green Infrastructure (UGI) and Nature-Based Solutions (NBS)—green roofs, rain gardens, bioswales—help mitigate heat and reduce flooding. These not only improve resilience but also foster cooler microclimates. Strategic green space networks, designed with urban morphology in mind, are essential to manage changing precipitation and urban temperatures.



By Kartikeya Mishra

Zoning regulations and multifunctional urban drainage systems must be integrated into housing development to enhance resilience. The consequences of climate change extend beyond the environment, affecting food systems, energy, housing, transport, and rural economies. As global warming disrupts weather patterns like El Niño, the urgency for coordinated action intensifies.

Despite the critical importance, climate action is often sidelined politically. It is essential that local and global institutions collaborate to implement short- and long-term measures. In India, cities must embrace climate-resilient planning—green roofs, natural cooling, and urban forests—as a defense against intensifying heat stress. Proactive disaster management, grounded in climate projections, is crucial for reducing risks and safeguarding vulnerable populations. While sustainable practices aim to curb emissions, long-term resilience depends on unwavering commitment and systemic change.

No region is untouched by the climate crisis. Immediate strategic action and inclusive planning are essential—not optional—to build equitable, sustainable, and livable cities in this climate emergency.





# BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

## THE FIGHT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Faiza Babudhin**

School of Planning and Architecture, Vijayawada

### ***Affordable Housing – The Realistic Myth in India***

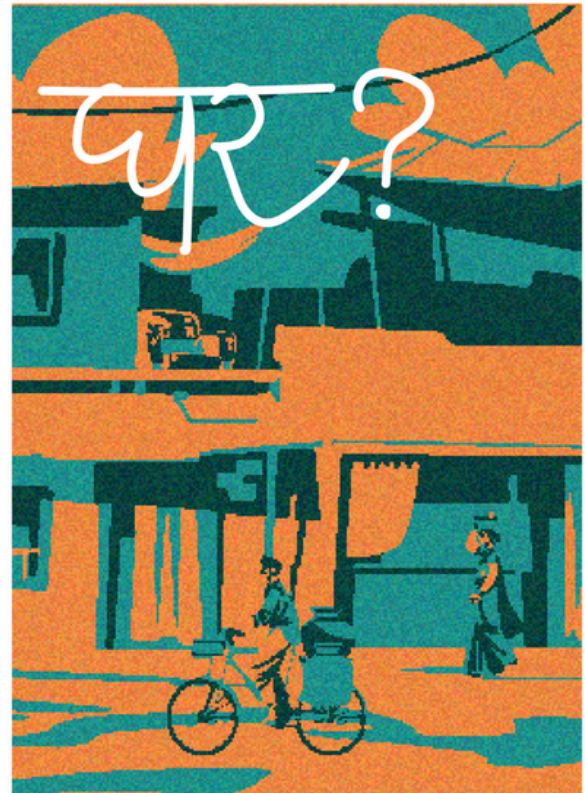
India, with a population of 1.4 billion—the largest in the world—still struggles to provide a roof over everyone's head. While the Government of India has undertaken significant initiatives to promote affordable housing, the progress has been limited and slow.

Often the question arises, “Why should we care about affordable housing?” Many believe it's solely the government's job. However, in a country as diverse and populous as India, relying only on government interventions won't solve the housing crisis. Private participation is essential. In developed countries like Singapore, Austria, and Germany, private sector involvement is incentivized through subsidies and tax breaks. India has made attempts to follow this path. The Bhubaneswar Affordable Housing Project, a collaboration between a private developer and the Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA), is one such example.

But even with Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models, the gap between targets and actual achievements remains wide. A major reason is the vague and unrealistic definition of “affordable housing.” A widely accepted guideline states that housing costs should not exceed 30% of annual household income (Singh, 2016). However, for low-income groups, this is unfeasible as most of their income goes towards basic needs. Additionally, MOHUA defines affordability based on income brackets like EWS and LIG, which doesn't always align with ground realities.

Another issue is quality. Many beneficiaries receive homes that fail them over time. Houses built under these schemes often prioritize quantity over quality. Poor construction results in homes vulnerable to climatic conditions, requiring constant repairs. Though expected to be classified as “good” in the census (with sound infrastructure), many are merely “liveable,” lacking proper ventilation, structural strength, or essential systems.

Thus, people face two scenarios: being excluded from housing initiatives or receiving substandard homes. This deters private participation and slows implementation. Land acquisition issues, financial constraints, and policy limitations add to the problem.



The COVID-19 pandemic only worsened the situation, with rising rents and home prices pushing people into reverse migration. So, crucial questions remain: Should the government focus on homes under ₹40 lakhs instead of relying on private players? Why aren't private developers more involved? Will government guidelines be updated to include every citizen?

Despite increased allocations—like the ₹80,671 crore PMAY budget for 2024–25 and the goal of building 2 crore more rural houses—the challenges persist. India's affordable housing remains “realistic,” yet still a myth for many. Unless definitions, execution quality, and policies evolve, the dream of housing for all may stay just out of reach.





# NAVIGATING CLIMATE CHALLENGES:

## ENSURING JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABILITY IN INDIAN URBAN SPACES

Vatsala Sinha

School of Planning and Architecture, Bhopal

Climate change disproportionately affects marginalized communities in India, particularly in urban areas where inadequate infrastructure intersects with socio-economic vulnerabilities. To achieve climate justice, inclusive urban planning is essential—ensuring equitable access to resources, resilient infrastructure, and community participation in decision-making.

Urban slums, such as those in Mumbai, are highly exposed to climate risks. Monsoon flooding regularly devastates informal settlements due to poor drainage and fragile housing. Addressing these vulnerabilities requires comprehensive assessments, community-driven planning, and investments in climate-resilient infrastructure like green spaces, flood-resistant housing, and efficient drainage systems.

International examples offer valuable guidance. After Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans rebuilt low-income housing using resilient materials while actively involving marginalized communities. Dhaka's informal settlers, vulnerable to floods and heatwaves, have benefitted from participatory planning and infrastructure upgrades. In Cape Town, equitable water distribution and rainwater harvesting were implemented after water scarcity severely impacted poor neighborhoods.

Sustainable development further supports climate justice. Affordable green housing—built with local materials and powered by renewable energy—lowers environmental impact and living costs. Tokyo's green building codes and Yokohama's solar initiatives in low-income areas exemplify this approach. Decentralized waste management systems, like Pune's waste-picker cooperatives, generate employment and improve urban sanitation.

Innovative technologies also enhance resilience. Rotterdam uses flood barriers, green roofs, and water squares to manage excess water. Barcelona's smart city model includes real-time monitoring and energy-efficient public services. Singapore integrates green infrastructure, smart mobility, and forward-looking policies under its Green Plan 2030 and Smart Nation initiative.

Climate justice intersects with social justice. Women, due to caregiving roles and limited access to resources, often bear the brunt of climate impacts. Caste and economic disparities deepen these challenges. Cities like Johannesburg and Vancouver show how inclusive housing, job programs, and community-led planning can reduce these vulnerabilities.

Indian cities must integrate equity into climate action—building inclusive, sustainable, and resilient urban futures.



By Shaunak Ghosh SPAV

# EE INCLUSIVE URBAN CITIES:

## RETHINKING MANAGEMENT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN INDIA

Vatsala Sinha

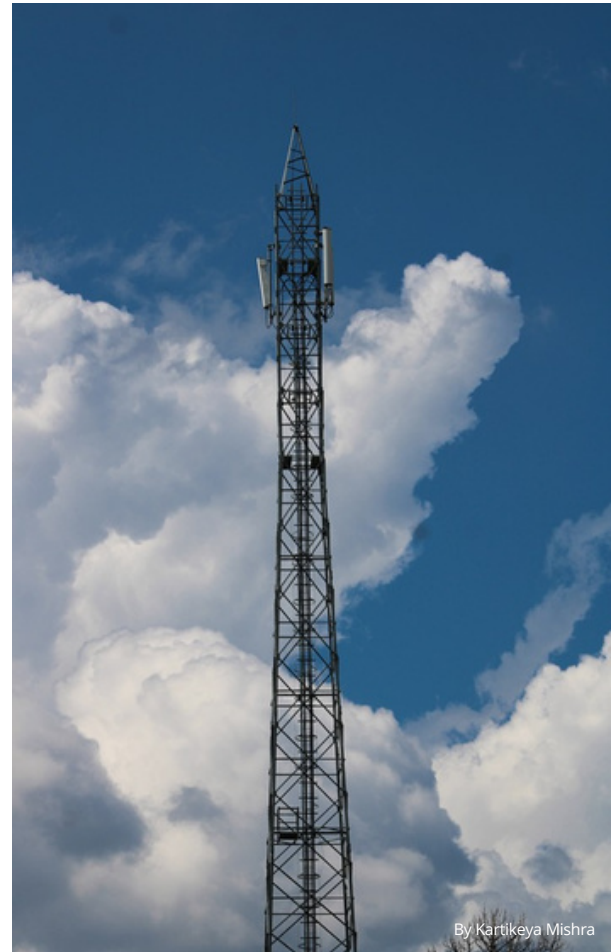
School of Planning and Architecture, Bhopal

Urban management significantly influences the quality of life, access to resources, and opportunities for all city residents. In India's rapidly urbanizing landscape, socially just urban management is crucial for ensuring inclusivity and equity for every class, especially the marginalized.

Inclusive planning plays a vital role. Cities like Ahmedabad and Jaipur offer successful models. The Sabarmati Riverfront Project in Ahmedabad integrated slum resettlement with urban renewal, ensuring housing and livelihoods through community consultations. Jaipur's Affordable Housing Policy incentivizes private developers to create housing for economically weaker sections (EWS), enhancing inclusivity. Equitable access to essential services such as healthcare and transport is also essential. Surat's Mohalla Clinics and Pune's PMPML bus service improve healthcare and mobility in underserved areas. Pune's Jan Arogya Yojana further ensures subsidized healthcare for low-income groups.

Affordable housing remains a core issue. Vadodara's Mukhyamantri Gruh Yojana and Kochi's Life Mission use public-private partnerships and community participation to provide dignified housing for homeless and low-income families, promoting socio-economic empowerment.

However, urban management faces challenges. Unequal resource distribution often neglects low-income areas, as seen in Ahmedabad's Behrampura slum. Political and institutional inefficiencies in cities like Lucknow delay crucial schemes. Rapid urbanization in Ranchi has led to informal settlements with poor access to services, while unchecked development in Kolkata has resulted in environmental degradation affecting the poor the most.



Innovative models show promise. Ujjain's Smart Cities Mission uses technology for efficient service delivery. Bengaluru's MyCityMyBudget promotes participatory budgeting, allowing citizens to decide local priorities.

In conclusion, socially just cities require equitable planning, strong civic engagement, and sustainable development strategies. While challenges persist, innovative urban practices and grassroots initiatives across India are building more inclusive, fair, and livable cities for all.