

Research Report  
**A Trifle Strife?**  
Public Space, Rituals and Communalism







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This study investigates Bengaluru's Chamarajpet Eidgah Maidan as a proxy of Hindu-Muslim religious communalism manifesting in public space. The maidan has been a ground of controversy since June 2022 due to a conflict over its use for (religious) ritual activities. The incumbent Hindu-nationalist BJP government fails to mediate such contestations of socio-religious public space between Hindu and Muslim groups. The main risk, among others, is an escalation of communal violence. However, other major risks include the disenfranchisement of Chamarajpet Maidan's everyday existence, and by extension, of its everyday stakeholders. A failure to understand these tensions will exacerbate the megacity's existing infrastructural and social woes. This study explores how public space could address religious communalism.

It has been found that, in addition to exploring the religious and ritual meanings of the maidan through analytical cartographies, an analysis of its 'worldings' - through media representations and physical-social realities - were invaluable to produce a countercartography of the maidan. These countercartographies were possible with reference to books, journal articles, news articles, historical maps, site observations and interviews. Public architecture could address religious communalism if the maidan's religious conflict is addressed alongside its everyday social needs. A long-term view necessitates the integration of (unanticipated) stakeholder uses and clear governance for infrastructural resilience. Politicised religions, which normalise a Muslim versus Hindu antagonism, is becoming ever more rampant in India. To understand its spatial ramifications is a first step in addressing a nation-wide problem.

Key words: religious communalism; public space; maidan; everyday; rituals; countercartography; Bengaluru

# Part 1: The Case of Chamarajpet Religious Communalism

Religious communalism refers to the prioritisation of a particular religious group's welfare over the societal whole.<sup>1</sup> Donald Horowitz, in his paper titled 'Structure and Strategy in Ethnic Conflict', theorises a distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' perspectives in ethnic (including interreligious) conflict. Those from a hard perspective demonstrate "deeply embedded groupness, characterized by diffuse sentiments, altruism, and the willingness of individuals to make sacrifices", underpinned by a notion that ethnic groupings are 'firmly bounded entities'. In contrast, the soft perspective is that "ethnic boundaries are problematic and malleable." It adheres to the notion that "ethnic groups can be decomposed into the motives of their members, that they are instruments for the pursuit of those motives, and that their actions need to be explained in terms of individual calculations of utility in specific contexts, rather than some transcendent collective purpose."<sup>2</sup>

This paper refers to religious communalism as the strife between Hindu and Muslim groups in India. The post-Independence Indian nation state has been operating with a soft perspective on such ethnic groupings under secular governance. With the rise of the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) since 2014, the hard perspective, though always present, has become increasingly mainstream in political and social spheres.<sup>3</sup> This has encouraged the alt-right Hindu nationalist movement, also known as *Hindutva*, to proliferate. It proposes that the Indian nation state should be built on a distinctly Hindu, rather than a secular, constitution.<sup>4</sup> The BJP began in the 1950s as an offshoot of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayam Sevak) party. The RSS was established in the 1920s as an all-male paramilitary organisation, with the aim of building a Hindu state and spreading Hindutva ideology. Today, it has nearly 5 million members globally.<sup>5</sup>

About 80% of all Indians believe that respecting other religions is an inherent part of their religious community's practices, and of their national identity.<sup>6</sup> But Hindutva extremism threatens to other and erase minorities. Muslims constitute India's largest religious minority, making up about 13% of the Indian population.<sup>7</sup> India has seen religious extremism and violence instigated by both Hindu and Muslim hardline groups.<sup>8,9</sup>

This study focusses on communal relations and public spaces under threat due to Hindutva extremism. Spatial communalism has manifested in various ways: the demolition of Muslim activists' homes, mosques; the destruction of Christian churches; the creation of temporary pavilions hosting Hindutva events and inflammatory Hindutva speeches; and riots for which the substrates are public thoroughfares.<sup>10</sup>

One of the more publicised forms of spatial communalism is the contestation over Islamic social infrastructures - particularly, mosques and Eid prayer grounds (*Eidgahs*). Often, Hindutva groups

1 communalism. (n.d.). In Collins Dictionary. Retrieved October 17, 2022, from <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/communalism>

2 Horowitz, D. L. (1998). Structure and Strategy in Ethnic Conflict. *Annual World Bank Conference on Development Economics*. <http://web.ceu.hu/cps/bluebird/eve/statebuilding/horowitz.pdf>. p. 1-2.

3 Patel, A. (2021, November 14). Price of the Modi Years. Westland Non-fiction.

4 Sharma, A. (2020). On the Difference Between Hinduism and Hindutva. *Asian Philosophies and Religions*, 25(1), 43–47. <https://www.asianstudies.org/publications/eaa/archives/on-the-difference-between-hinduism-and-hindutva/>

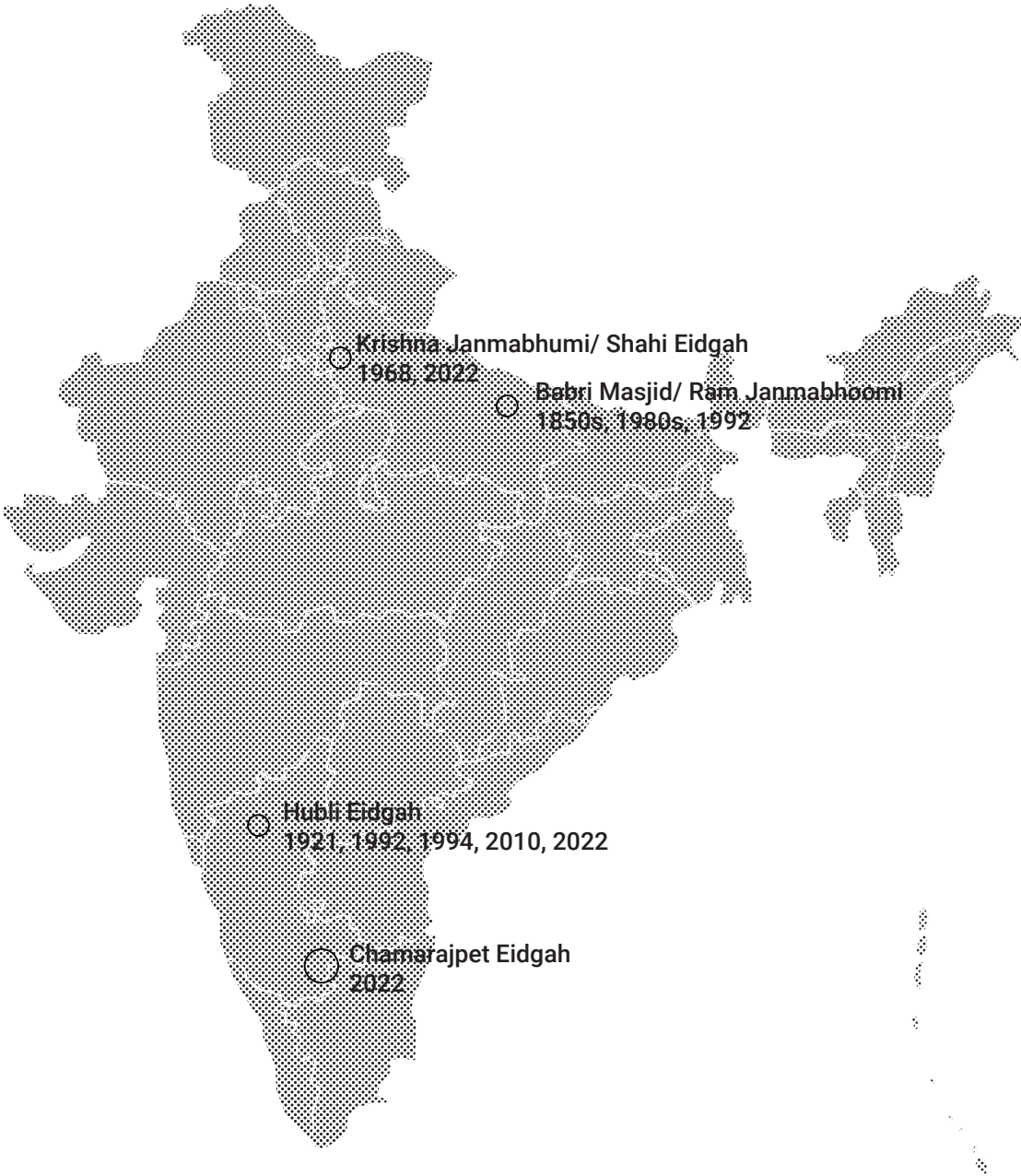
5 Ellis-Petersen, H. (2022, September 20). What is Hindu nationalism and how does it relate to trouble in Leicester? *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/20/what-is-hindu-nationalism-and-who-are-the-rss>

6 Sahgal, N., Evans, J., Salazar, A. M., Starr, K. J., & Corichi, M. (2021). Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation | Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/06/29/religion-in-india-tolerance-and-segregation/>

7 Ibid.

8 Gatade, S. (2014). "Pawns In, Patrons Still Out: Understanding the Phenomenon of Hindutva Terror". *Eco-*





allege that these Muslim spaces were built atop formerly Hindu temples and/ or bear religious significance in Hinduism.

In the 1990s case of the Babri Masjid/ Ram Janmabhoomi dispute in the Northern state of Uttar Pradesh, Hindutva groups alleged that the Mughal-era Babri Masjid was built on the birthplace of the Hindu deity Ram. The mosque was (illegally) demolished by Hindutva mobs in 1992, triggering nationwide communal riots with a death toll of thousands.<sup>11</sup> A few weeks ago, a BJP spokesperson announced that the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple built to replace the violent demolition of Babri Masjid would be complete by the 1st of January 2024. The date chosen is arguably politically motivated to appeal to the Hindutva voterbank ahead of the 2024 general elections. Communalism has become increasingly politicised by the incumbent BJP and the affiliated RSS party.<sup>12</sup>

As the Indian national elections approach, urban metropolises face mounting socio-infrastructureal problems such as pollution, waste mismanagement, water scarcity, flooding and traffic, whilst also grappling with a slow tide of communalism. The case of Chamarajpet Eidgah in Bengaluru, Karnataka is, unlike the other examples in Image 1, one such due to its location in India's third most-populated city.

conomic and Political Weekly. 49 (13): 36–43. JSTOR 24479356.

9

Wankhede, U. D. (2012) Islamic terrorism in India and its impact on Muslim community and human rights. In: The Indian Journal of Political Science, Vol. 73, No. 1 (Jan. - March, 2012), pp. 111-118

10

Patel, A. (2021, November 14). Price of the Modi Years. Westland Non-fiction.

11

Bacchetta, P. (2000). Sacred Space in Conflict in India: The Babri Masjid Affair. *Growth and Change*, 31(2), 255–284. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0017-4815.00128>

12

Hindustan Times. (2023, January 5). "Ayodhya's Ram Mandir to open from. . .": Amit Shah announces date | Watch [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved March 21, 2023, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYQkDC0zoEY>

**Communalism:** The prioritisation of a particular religious group's welfare over the societal whole. Also refers to a mode of governance wherein communes are virtually independent governed and the nation is merely a federation of communes.<sup>1</sup>

**Hindutva:** An extremist ideology of Hindu right-wing nationalism, represented by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, or Indian People's Party (BJP) and more strongly by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) - or National Volunteer Core - Party. Because Hinduism is a pluriversal tradition, the religious basis for Hindutva is thin.

**Karnataka Waqf Board:** In Islamic discourse, *Waqf* is a charitable endowment to the wider community, usually paid by wealthy donors. As part of India's post-Independence secularism, state-facilitated Waqf Boards were established across the country to manage these endowments, of which the Karnataka Waqf Board is one.

**Secularism:** Unlike the exclusion of religion from the state in the West, Indian secularism aims to provide equal treatment and protection to all of the nation's religions.<sup>2</sup>

**Maidan:** A bare, open-air ground in Indian and Persian settlements typically appropriated for multiple uses including, but not limited to, games, fairs, picnics, rallies, markets, planting and cattle grazing.<sup>3</sup>

**Eidgah:** An open-air ground designated for mass-congregational prayers on the festivals of Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha which occur annually.

**Everyday/ daily life:** This paper draws from the ethnographic works of Atelier Bow-Wow in terms of its treatment of the daily experiences and rhythms of those who use architecture.<sup>4</sup>

**Lived reality:** However, given the time limitations of this study, the author is limited by their positionality and their own empirical observations, i.e. their lived reality.

**Public Space:** This paper assumes public space to be any part of the geographical realm that is not bound by domestic or homely boundaries and thresholds.

**Rituals:** Ceremonies with significance in religion or statecraft.

**Worlding:** The writing of the world bearing representations based on author positionality. Gayathri Spivak's coined the term in her essay 'The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives'.<sup>5</sup>

**Counter-cartography:** A mapping exercise which generally comes about as a grassroots initiative and aims challenge discursive notion of spatial representation, going beyond non-scientific pedagogical bases. Counter-cartographies are often used to map disempowerments such as, for example, indigenous territorial claims challenging federal oil pipelines or invisible physical elements (e.g. toxic gas effluents) as climatic forensic evidence.<sup>6,7</sup>

1 communalism. (n.d.). In Collins Dictionary. Op cit.

2 Secularism and Constitution : An Analysis. (2021, October 13). The Daily Guardian. Retrieved October 10, 2022, from <https://theguardian.com/secularism-and-constitution-an-analysis/>

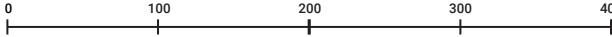
3 Mathur, A., & Da Cunha, D. (2016). The Maidan as a Ground of Design. *Unbound: A Journal of Discourse and Creative Practices*. Retrieved December 22, 2022, from <http://www.unboundjournal.in/hello-world-2/>

4 Kaijima, M. (2018, April). Learning from Architectural Ethnography. *Urban Design Reader*. Retrieved March 22, 2023, from <https://urban-design-reader.de/atrium-behaviorology/learning-from-architectural-ethnography#fnref-1>

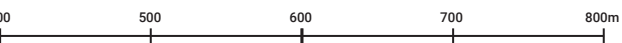
5 Spivak, G. C. (1985). The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives. *History and Theory*, 24(3), 247. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2505169>

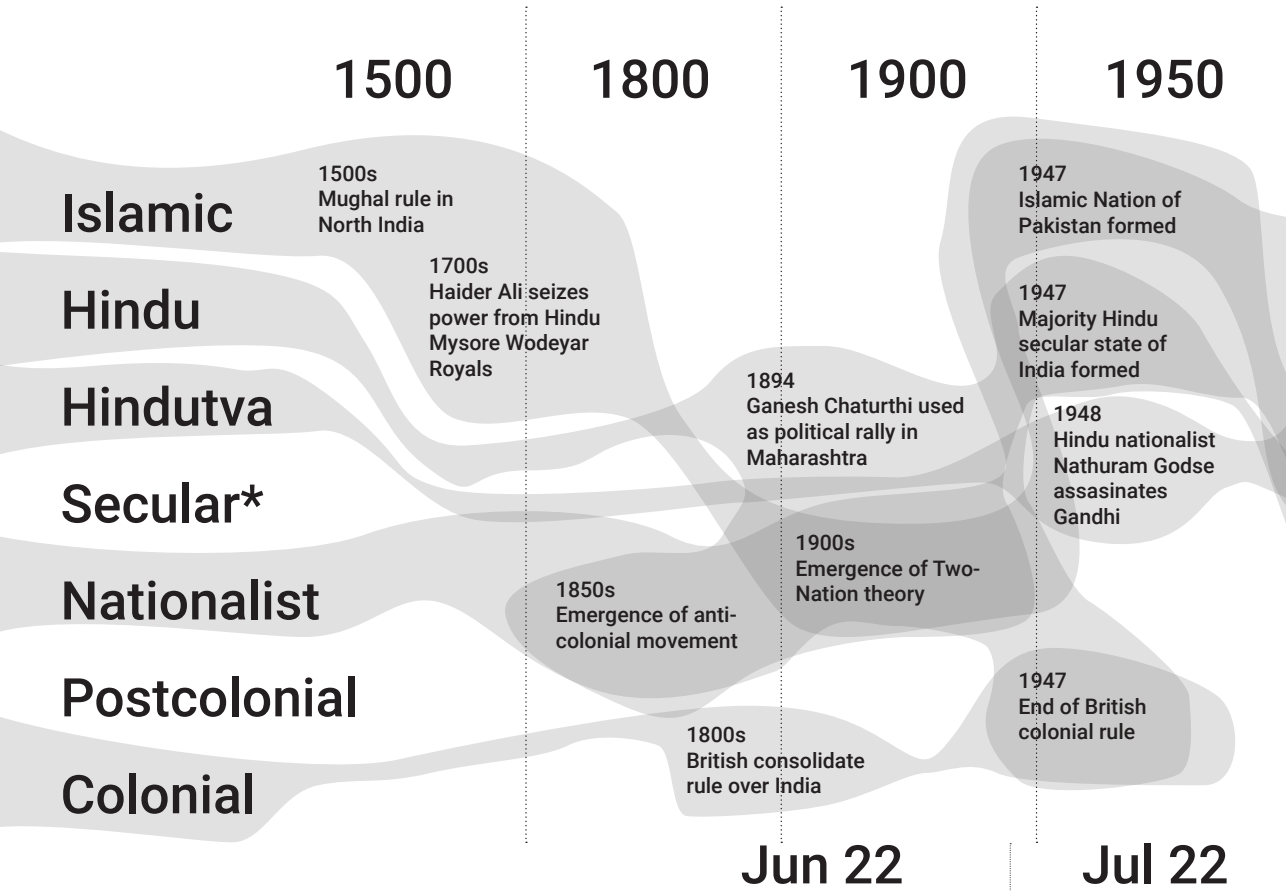
6 Orangetango+, kollektiv. (2018). *This Is Not an Atlas: A Global Collection of Counter-Cartographies*. Transcript Verlag.

7 Weizman, E., et. al. (2014). *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*.









## Chamarajpet Eidgah and its main stakeholders

<b>Hindutva</b> Vishva Sanatana Parishad	Request BBMP's permission to celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi (early Sept)	Demand a bandh (strike) to protest against Muslim claims
<b>Muslims</b> Karnataka Waqf Board	Claim ownership of land as per supposed 1960s deeds	Threaten demolition of Eidgah Wall
<b>BBMP</b> City Municipality	React encouragingly towards Hindutva	Eid-al-Adha prayers held
		Claim 'possession' (not ownership)

## Chamarajpet Eidgah

## Bengaluru

1537  
City proverbially founded and limits demarcated by chieftain Kempe Gowda

1791  
Shrubby tableland outside Bengaluru city limits

1791  
British forces defeat Tipu Sultan and invade Bengaluru

1890s  
Chamarajpet Extension created and plots sold

1890s  
Bubonic plague hits Bengaluru

1964  
Land title names Central Muslim Association as owner after ownership confusion

1900s  
Sanitary new towns created



Based on Charles Jencks famous diagram, this timeline asserts causalities and contextualisations between apparently isolated events of religious tension, extrapolating into a futuring exercise.

1990

2010

2020

2030

2047-----

1984  
Anti-Sikh riots

2002  
Pogrom of Gujarat, during which Narendra Modi was Chief Minister

1992  
Babri Masjid demolished

1990s  
Communal riots across India kill thousands

1991  
Liberalisation of Indian economy

2010s  
Several lynchings of Muslim butchers; violences against minorities

2010s  
Ban of beef in several states across India

2014  
BJP's Narendra Modi elected Prime Minister of India

2019  
Citizenship Amendment Act passed, allowing citizens from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh to claim Indian citizenship if they are not Muslim

2021  
Bulldozing of Muslim activists' homes

2024  
Re-election of BJP and complete erasure of political opposition

2024  
Completion of Ram Janmabhoomi temple on Babri Masjid site

2020s  
Marginalisation of Muslims and other minorities (in public space)

2030s  
Mass emigration of Muslims

2030s  
A new Hindu(tva) constitution

2030s  
Demolitions of other mosques/ eidgahs due to alleged/ invented Hindu sanctity

Aug 22

Dec 22

Forensic Futuring -----

Speculate on whether Ganesh Chaturthi will be celebrated

Anger against Muslims

Set up illegal pavilions and processions for Ganesh Chaturthi

Demolition of Eidgah Wall

No Ganesh Chaturthi festivities

Destruction of local businesses & infrastructure

Shoot-on-sight orders from police

Order from Supreme Court to maintain status quo

Anger against Hindus

Stone pelting, arson, vandalism, intercommunal violence

Make plans to celebrate Independence Day  
Independence Day flag hoisted with heavy police presence

At least 4 police personnel patrolling maidan

Minimise/ end police presence to allocate elsewhere

Governmental support for Hindutva cause

Police violence

1974  
Waqf Board fails to submit *khata* (paperwork) to confirm ownership during city land survey

1920s - 1990s  
Buildings rise well over the 1-storey limit stipulated in 1890s

2013  
RSS procession aimed to walk through Eidgah; stopped by city police

2022  
Communalism controversy over use and ownership

2022  
Flooding nearby in monsoon season

2031  
Groundwater depleted completely and tanks erased; water scarcity

1920s - 1990s  
Nearby tanks drained/ encroached for urban land use

2030  
Other Muslim sites contested and taken over by Hindutva

2030s  
Population surpasses 20 million

The case of Chamarajpet Eidgah is unlike other religio-territorial disputes in India. Firstly, Chamarajpet Eidgah is not a formal nor an enclosed mosque. It is an open Eidgah which is used for congregational prayers twice a year on the Muslim festival of Eid. At other times of the year, it is used for selling goats and as a playground. Thus, it is perceived as a public space. This paper will henceforth refer to it not as an Eidgah, but rather as a *maidan*, referring to an open-ground urban typology of Indian and Persian cities.

Secondly, the site is in the third most-populous city in India<sup>1</sup> and in the state capital. Bengaluru estimated current population is 11.6 million,<sup>2</sup> with 237,460 residing in the Chamarajpet constituency.<sup>3</sup> What happens in Bengaluru affects and is affected by the Karnataka state apparatus. This is something which is in sharp focus at the time of writing, as the Karnataka Legislative Assembly Elections go to the polls on the 10th of May 2023. Indeed, one of the main agenda points for Chamarajpet is Hindu-Muslim communalism.<sup>4</sup>

Thirdly, Hindutva groups do not have a historically-based claim over the maidan (yet). But in their argument, the publicness of the maidan, their citizenship in the neighbourhood and their Hindu-nationalist views suffice to be granted permission for their rituals. Controversy over Chamarajpet Eidgah arose because Hindutva outfits put forth a request to celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi on the Eidgah in June 2022.<sup>5</sup> The timeline of events is described in Image 4. Their request was to the BBMP (city municipality) and included the setup of temporary pavilions, housing statues of Ganesha for the 10-day long prayer rituals on the Eidgah. The Karnataka Waqf Board and the Central Muslim Association, who claimed ownership of the land, strongly opposed this request. Hindu festivals have never been celebrated on this Eidgah, owing perhaps to the implicitly Islamic identity of the space as suggested by the term 'Eidgah' and the presence of an Eidgah Wall on the ground, which is orientated towards Makkah for Muslim prayer. After significant indecision, the BBMP was ordered to maintain a status quo by the Indian Supreme Court. It declared the Karnataka Revenue Board as the landowners of the Maidan, citing that the Waqf Board failed to submit a khata (paperwork to confirm ownership) in the 1974 city survey.<sup>6</sup>

The fourth aspect which sets Chamarajpet Maidan apart from others across India is that the conclusion to this particular controversy, has been in opposition to the Hindutva. In a similar and concurrent case in Hubli, North Karnataka, Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations were allowed on the Hubli Eidgah. However, unlike Chamarajpet, property ownership was clear in Hubli: the land belonged to the municipality.<sup>7</sup> In Bengaluru, beyond a question of communalism, it is a question of land disputes to which the BBMP's response still remains ambiguous.

Rather than viewing it as a closed matter, this paper speculates over the possibility of impending communal violence due to

1  
Census India. (2011). City Census 2011 [Dataset]. In *List of most populated cities in India*. <https://www.census2011.co.in/city.php>

2  
(Bengaluru) Population 2023 | Bangalore (Bengaluru) Population 2023. (n.d.). <https://www.census2011.co.in/census/city/448-bangalore.html>

3  
*Karnataka Assembly Factbook : Chamarajpet Assembly* | *Indiastatpublications.com*. (n.d.). [https://www.indiastatpublications.com/assembly\\_factbook/karnataka/bangalore\\_central/chamarajpet](https://www.indiastatpublications.com/assembly_factbook/karnataka/bangalore_central/chamarajpet)

4  
R, V. (2023). Chamarajpet voter guide: Candidates and constituency info. *Citizen Matters, Bengaluru*. <https://bengaluru.citizenmatters.in/chamarajpet-assembly-constituency-voter-information-112353>

5  
Livemint. (2022, August 30). No Ganesh festival at Bengaluru's Idgah Maidan: All you need to know | Mint. *Livemint*. Retrieved March 22, 2023, from <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/benagloru-no-ganesh-festival-at-chamarajpet-idgah-maidan-all-you-need-to-know-11661865104288.html>

6  
Livemint. (2022, August 30). *Op cit*.

7  
Desk, O. W. (2022, August 31). Hubballi-Idgah Row: A Short History Of The Land Dispute In Karnataka. <https://www.outlookindia.com/>. <https://www.outlookindia.com/national/hubballi-idgah-row-a-short-history-of-the-land-dispute-in-karnataka-news-220258>

dissatisfaction from politically-empowered Hindutva groups as well as upset from Muslim groups over the reduction of their claim over the maidan.

In an pursuit to thoroughly address such strifes, there arises an urgent need to explore the relationship between public space and communalism.

Below  
Eid prayers at Chamarajpet  
Eidgah.

Nachiyar, N., & Bharadwaj, A. K. V. (2022, August 8). Explained | Idgah Maidan row: Whose land is it anyway? The Hindu. <https://www.thehindu.com/news-national/karnataka/idgah-maidan-row-whose-land-is-it-anyway/article65626316.ece>







**Above**  
Children play cricket at the Chamarajpet Eidgah, with the minbar wall in the background.

Chamarajpet Idgah is BBMP property, name it after Wadiyar: MP. (2022, July 15). Deccan Herald. Retrieved October 17, 2022, from <https://www.deccanherald.com/city/top-bengaluru-stories/chamarajpet-idgah-is-bbmp-property-name-it-after-wadiyar-mp-1126736.html>

**Below**  
Independence Day celebrations at Chamarajpet Eidgah on 15 August 2022, when the Indian flag was hoisted there for the first time.

Photograph taken by Jitendra M. Express News Service. (2022, August 16). For first time, tricolour hoisted at Bengaluru's Idgah Maidan. The Indian Express. Retrieved October 17, 2022, from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/bangalore/for-first-time-tricolour-hoisted-at-bengaluru-idgah-maidan-8091543/>

**Opposite**  
Police stand guard at Chamarajpet Eidgah amid communalist tensions.

Siddiqui, M. (2022, June 8). Chamarajpet Idgah: Puzzling BBMP stand on a 'settled' case. Deccan Herald. Retrieved October 17, 2022, from <https://www.deccanherald.com/city/bengaluru-infrastructure/chamarajpet-idgah-puzzling-bbmp-stand-on-a-settled-case-1116267.html>





The main aim of this graduation project, which consists of this research report and a subsequent design task, is to explore ways in which public space can address religious communalism at Chamarajpet Maidan through exercises in architecture and urbanism. A useful point of departure for this study is the assumption that the Chamarajpet controversy is a result of a contestations over Hindu and Muslim religious rituals. However, by focussing solely on religious rituals which occur only a few times a year, the maidan's daily life would be ignored.

This research phase's aim therefore is to investigate the relationship between public space and communalism in Chamarajpet Maidan. The paper begins by exploring how public spaces have been produced in Bengaluru, historically and contemporarily. On a theoretical level, the maidan, its (cartographic) representations and its rituals meanings are theorised to explore why it has attracted controversy.



To summarise, this project aims to answer the question:

*- How can public space address religious communalism?*

The research phase addresses the question:

*- What is the relationship between public spaces, rituals and communalism in Chamarajpet Maidan?*

The main research question is substantiated by the following sub-questions:

*- How does theorising the maidan and its representations explain the Chamarajpet Maidan controversy?*

*- What is the relationship between communalism and Chamarajpet Maidan's everyday rituals?*

*- How can rituals and their meanings (re)produce claims over Chamarajpet Maidan?*

As the author is from a Western institution and has never lived in India (despite being an Indian national), the study began with the recognition of a subliminal neocolonial framework: the Western-educated outsider imposing on an Indian communalistic paradigm. It should also be noted that Hindutva ideology sees itself as anti-colonial by championing Hindu culture and tradition. The paradox is that the distillation of Hindu culture to represent India derives from a Hindu-Muslim binary that was perpetuated by British colonisers.<sup>1,2</sup> As the topic leans towards a need to address coloniality, the research framework is based on an attempt to decolonise the author's introspections. Externalising decoloniality prompted i) an exploration of post-colonial thought and ii) in-situ studies of public spaces in Bengaluru through observation and interviews.

The author's also wishes to declare her positionality as a hijab-wearing Muslim woman. This has unfortunately been an impediment whilst trying to engage in interviews at Chamarajpet Maidan. As a woman, approaching males – the dominant demographic of the Indian public realm – for interviews was culturally less appropriate than it would be in the West. This was nearly impossible with groups of men, of which there were many. As such, most findings have been limited to observation and inference. This friction was experienced due to the author being a Muslim as well, but to a lesser degree than as a woman. Additionally, the author arguably has a systemic bias towards, and greater awareness of, Islamic cultural practices than Hindu practices. This has been addressed by referring to literature, news reports and conversations from Hindu, Muslim and secular sources. Given the above, the methodological base seeks constant awareness of the author's positionality – almost as a decolonising, autoethnographic exercise - and aims to address its counterproductive biases. To this end, a log titled 'Decolonising Pedagogy' was maintained throughout the research phase, which can be found in the appendix. This paper employs a decolonial framework informed by the literature of Indian postcolonial theorists such as Gayatri Spivak (*The Rani of Sirmur*, 1985) and Homi Bhabha (*The Location of Culture*, 2004), who proposed that archival material about colonised spaces ought to be acknowledged as perpetuations of colonialism and power structures in the production of knowledge. While postcolonialism stems from the analysis of colonial pedagogy, decoloniality seeks to "understand the close-knit relationship between the colonial condition and the imposition of a Western logic of 'modernity' as a consequence of colonialism."<sup>3</sup> Decoloniality involves trying to undo existing Western-imposed (colonial or after-colonial) structures of space and spatial knowledge production, and to redo our mental maps of space from this reconstituted understanding.

Based on this, this paper considers how Chamarajpet Maidan is represented within and beyond the current neoliberal (and increasingly Hindutva) paradigm, and how these representations might be emulating colonial power structures. A search for historical

1 Thapar, R. (2023). Why Indian History Cannot be Reduced to "Hindu vs Muslim." CD Deshmukh Lecture, Delhi, India. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0i5YqaYREo&ab\\_channel=TheWire](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0i5YqaYREo&ab_channel=TheWire)

2 Malhotra, R. (2007). The Axis Of Neo-Colonialism. *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*, 11(3), 36–67. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/48505000?seq=1#meta-data\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/48505000?seq=1#meta-data_info_tab_contents)

3 Tsang, M. (2021, January 21). *Decolonial? Postcolonial? What does it mean to 'decolonise ourselves'?* Decolonising Modern Languages and Cultures. Retrieved May 5, 2023, from <https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/decolonisesml/tag/homi-bhabha/>

4 Iyer, M. (2019). *Discovering Bengaluru: History, Neighbourhoods, Walks*. INTACH Bengaluru Chapter. pp 5 - 12.

5 Weizman, E., et. al. (2014). *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*.

6 An interview with a Bengaluru-based architect (as part of the decolonial framework) was used to obtain feedback on analysis of fieldwork.

accounts of the maidan yielded many British colonial cartographies but only a single poem from the pre-British period about the city of Bengaluru generally. The colonial cartographies were selected as the primary source for historical analysis simply because they included mappings of the Chamarajpet area, which the pre-colonial poem did not. A redrawing of these maps in a consistent format was used to analyse the area and to envision an undoing of Chamarajpet's urban development. The Bengaluru chapter of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) published a book, *Discovering Bengaluru*,<sup>4</sup> providing an overview of the city's history, which was used as a key Indian source to cross-verify these historical maps. Upon reflection, INTACH's publication itself relies on colonial sources but makes sure to acknowledge them. Additionally, exhibitions and essays by Anuradha Mathur and Dilip da Cunha were consulted as a source which clearly explains how colonial spatial practices have created the contemporary Bengaluru.

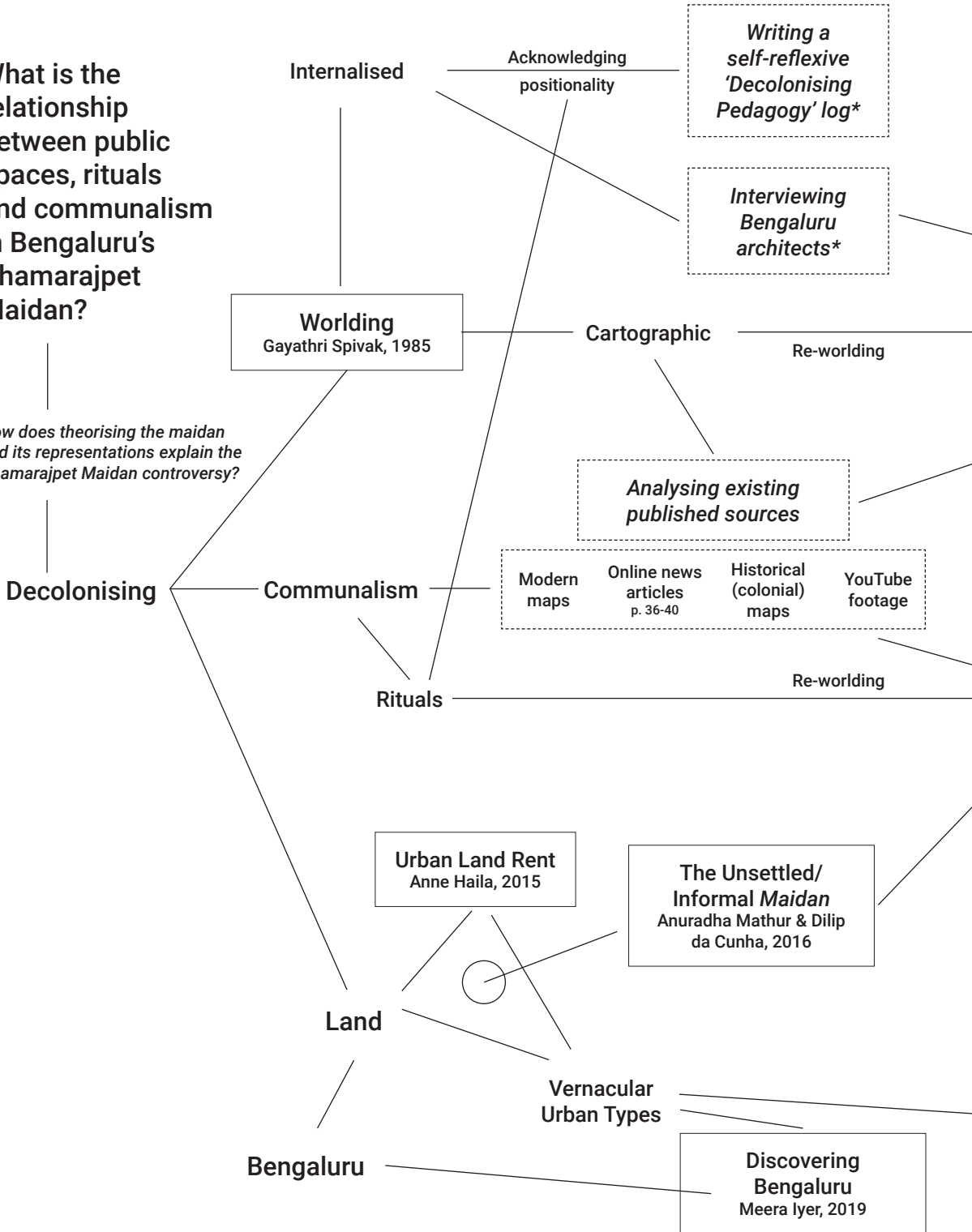
Speculating on impending ritual-induced communal violence on the maidan, pre-emptive forensic futuring cartographies were made. If past crimes can be traced to causes in an even further past, then future crime(s) of communal violence could be traced to our present or near pasts and futures.<sup>5</sup> Urban desk-top analyses referred to contemporary news articles found through web searches and cartographies from OpenStreetMaps and GoogleEarth. To understand these claims in terms of religious rituals involved a two-step process. Firstly, the rituals themselves were studied by consulting ritual-specific academic literature and webpages. Secondly, YouTube footage of Chamarajpet Eidgah was used to investigate how various rituals were happening around the ground as the author's excursion to Bengaluru did not coincide with Chamarajpet's festivities. The analyses were used to construct mappings of present communal claims to trace future potential contestations.

As a non-native of Chamarajpet encountering the maidan for the first time, and without being able to live in the locality for a few months, the author cannot claim to thoroughly understand its everyday life. The scope of the programme has nonetheless allowed a few visits to the ground, offering snippets of the neighbourhoods everyday life. These visits have been used to draw social countercartographies to demonstrate how to observe public life beyond published cartographies (see p. 43 - 49). They fall short of being called an 'ethnographic' study as the term 'ethnographic' implied an understanding of the maidan's society and culture based on rooting oneself in Chamarajpet for an extended period of time.<sup>6</sup> As this was not within the scope of the study, the term 'socio-spatial' suffices without the nuance of neocolonial paternalisation. It is a countercartography as it provides an alternative, lived-reality, view of the maidan whose aspiration is to highlight socio-spatial diversities, rather than conflicts. The countercartographies could have been further within the decoloniality discourse had they been made with active, back-and-forth consultation from the locals of Chamarajpet but this was found to be beyond the study's practical limits.

# Image 5: Theoretical Framework & Methods Used

What is the relationship between public spaces, rituals and communalism in Bengaluru's Chamarajpet Maidan?

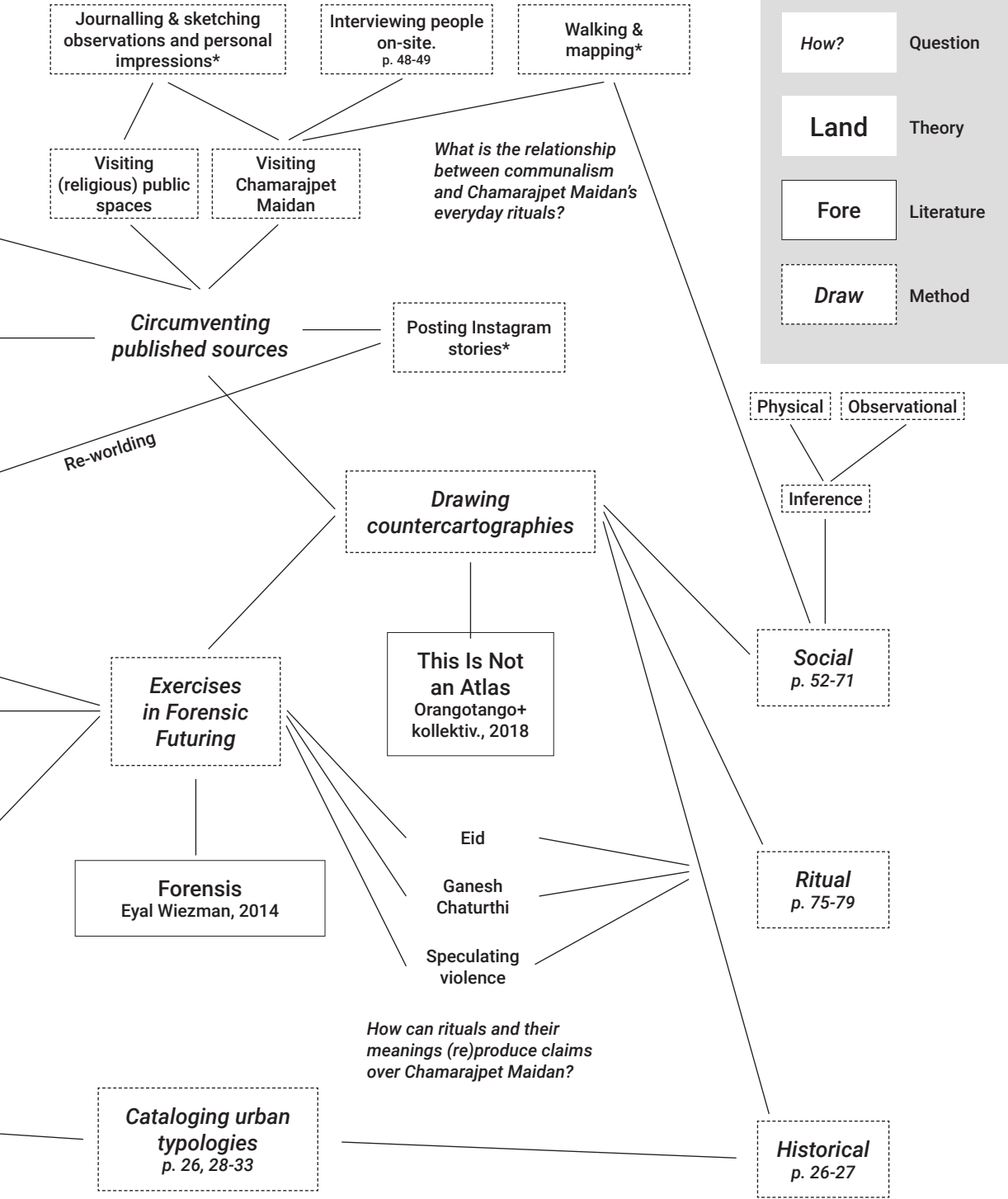
How does theorising the maidan and its representations explain the Chamarajpet Maidan controversy?



\* Please see Appendix for research documentation

**KEY**

How?	Question
Land	Theory
Fore	Literature
Draw	Method



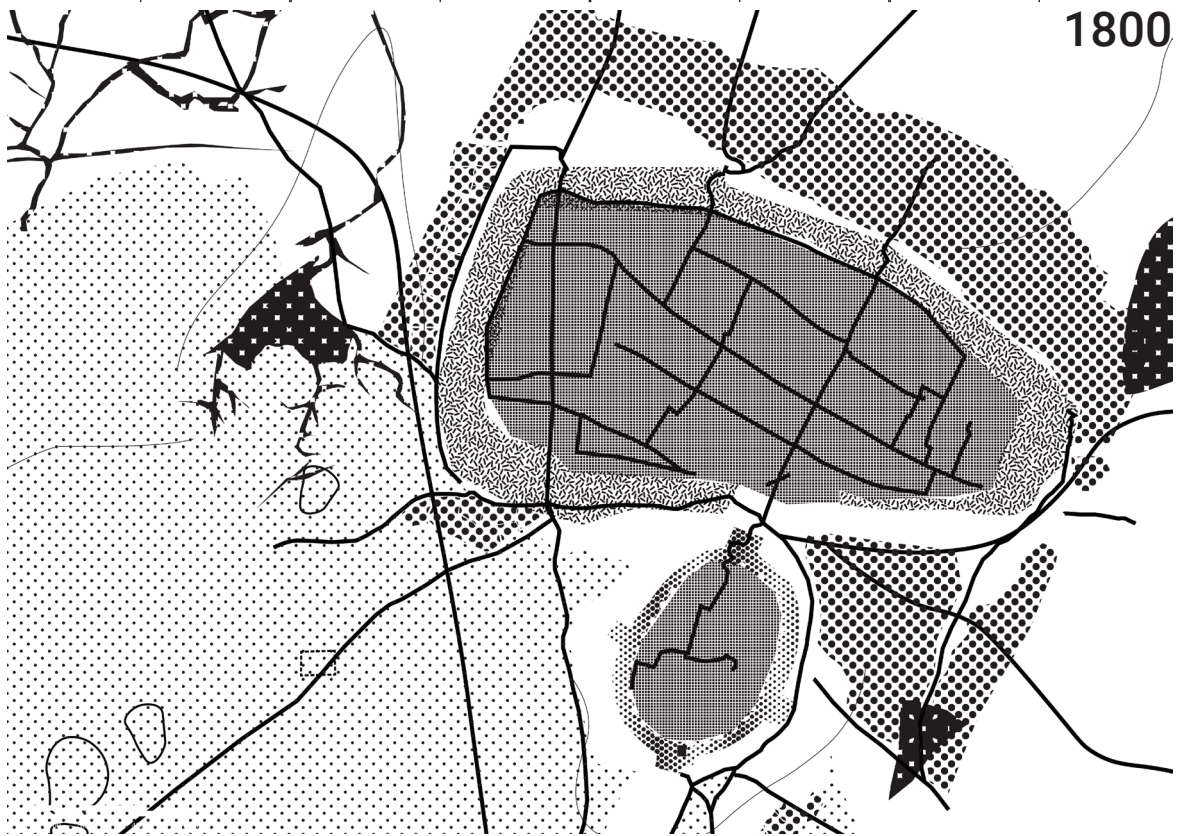
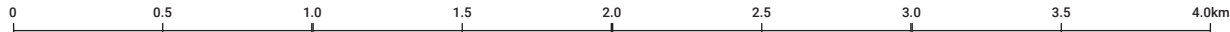


# CounterCartography 1

## Historical Mapping

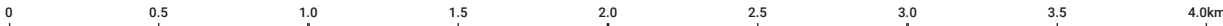
1791

- Human settlement
- Farmland
- Dry ditch / defensive hedges
- Defensive walls
- Gardens
- Tanks
- Open shrub
- Mosque/ dargah
- Temple
- Main road
- Ridges/ topography
- Railway tracks





1900



1925

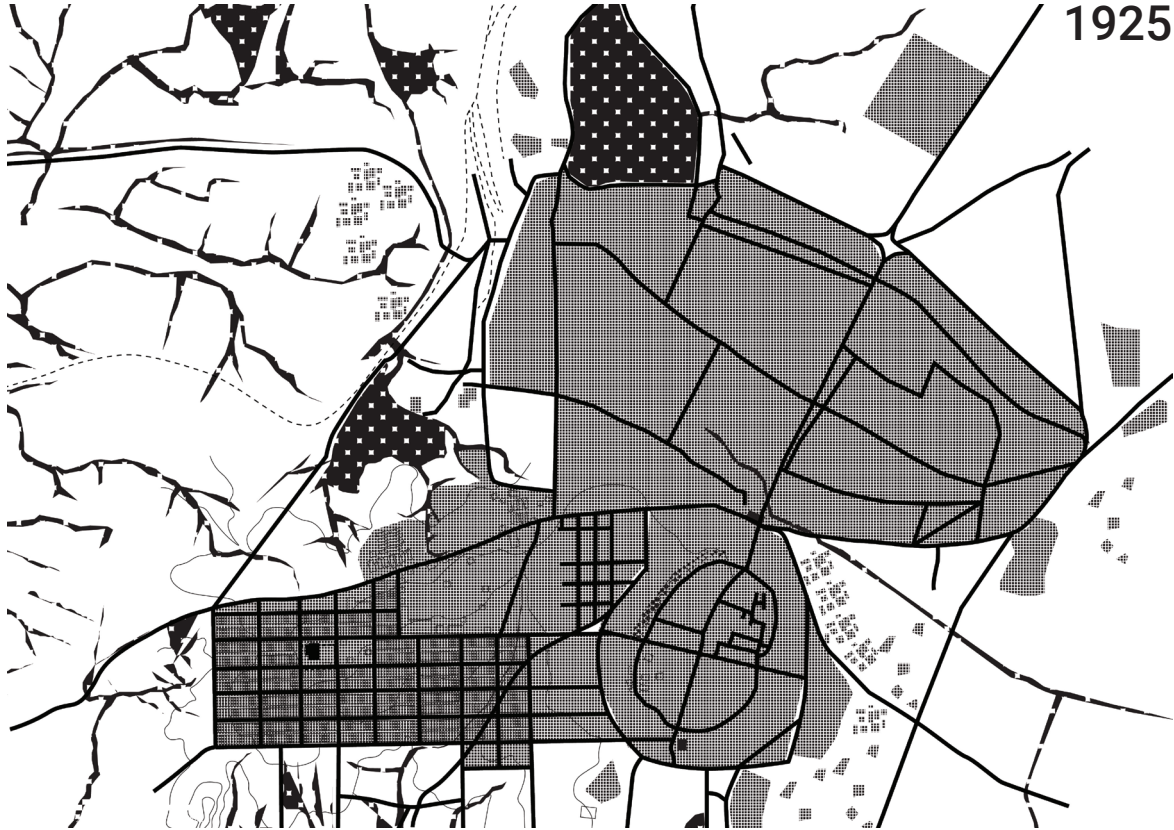




Image 6: Contemporary Map



0 0.5 1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 3.5 4.0km





# Part 2: Contested Land

## Causes for Communalism

In his 1929 essay for Kirti magazine, Indian freedom fighter Bhagat Singh theorised some reasons for why pre-Independence India faced communal violence, not dissimilar to today. He cited herd mentality and communal protectionism, communalistic politicians and news media for using hateful/ communal statements and actions. Using Marxism as a base, Singh also suggested that 'economic factors' of scarcity such as hunger and unemployment were "the root cause of communal violence", proposing that economic improvements were the ultimate solution. He proposed that for economic improvement to occur, i) the governing body needed to be interested in pursuing economic improvement and ii) a united citizenry was to push for this to happen.<sup>1</sup>

## The Communal

'Communalism' refers to a theory of governance where communes are virtually independent states and the nation is merely a federation of these states, thus implying geospatial relevance.<sup>2</sup> For instance, the Two-Nation theory posits that Hindu and Muslim groups cannot coexist in a single state without communal conflict.<sup>3</sup> Communalism was internationally spatialised when India and Pakistan were formed as Hindu- and Muslim-majority nations respectively. Nevertheless, India has the third-largest population of Muslims in the world.<sup>4</sup> With the Muslim population in urban neighbourhoods generally being in the region of 10-70% (and with most neighbourhoods being in the 10-20% range as per the national average),<sup>5,6</sup> most Hindus and Muslims inevitably interact with each other on urban and neighbourhood frontiers. The Indian urban fabric is stitched together by communal civic infrastructures such as streets, markets, parks, water bodies and open grounds.

Temples and mosques establish the presence of religious communities. But they also denote exclusions of the other through canonised architectural motifs and formalised thresholds. It can be argued that this is an acceptable reality. Without exclusion, communes would not exist. However, there is a fine line between the communal and communalism which is well-articulated by the following statement: "to be otherist is to mark as inferior that which is not inferior in order to oppress it."<sup>7</sup>

Simply put, Muslim and other religious-minority infrastructures such as mosques, churches and Eidgahs are deemed inferior within the Hindutva-nationalist framework through allegations of heritage or through brute destruction. Spatial othering is the oppressive force. Within a pre-emptive forensic approach, 'othering' practices which enforce inferiorities in religious and secular communal spaces must be considered as evidences of future communal violences.

1 Dhruv Rathee. (2022, April 20). The Real Reason behind Communal Riots [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved March 22, 2023, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwMutPnXnoA>

2 communalism. (n.d.). In Collins Dictionary. Op cit.

3 Bennett, C. (2018). Two-Nation Theory. In: Kassam, Z.R., Greenberg, Y.K., Bagli, J. (eds) Islam, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism. Encyclopedia of Indian Religions. Springer, Dordrecht. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-1267-3\\_2003](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-1267-3_2003)

4 Sahgal, N., Evans, J., Salazar, A. M., Starr, K. J., Corichi, M., & Mitchell, T. (2022, October 27). Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation. Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project. Retrieved March 22, 2023, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/06/29/religion-in-india-tolerance-and-segregation/>

5 Data from private database kindly shared with author by Susewind, R.

6 Susewind, R. (2015). Spatial Segregation, Real Estate Markets and the Political Economy of Corruption in Lucknow, India. *Journal of South Asian Development*, 10(3), 267–291. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0973174115602168>

7 Southcott, T., & Theodore, D. (2020). Othering. In *Journal of Architectural Education* (Vol. 74, Issue 2, pp. 162–164). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10464883.2020.1790892>



Religious minorities have a “desire for recognition, ‘for somewhere else and for something else’ [that is, something else other than toxic religious communalism] that takes the experience of history beyond the instrumental hypothesis.”<sup>8</sup>

## A Short History

The Chamarajpet Maidan is in the vicinity of Bengaluru’s historic city centre. The area was inhabited since at least 900 A.D. but was formalised as a fortified settlement in 1537 by the city’s proverbial founding father, Kempegowda. Bengaluru saw several local rulers until 1791, when British forces captured the fort from its Muslim ruler, Tipu Sultan. The British and the Hindu Mysore Royals – who had been previously ousted by Tipu Sultan - agreed to administer Bengaluru separately. The dual-city consisted of the native city around the fort (pettah) and the Cantonment built by the British northeast of the fort, across some parkland.<sup>9</sup>

Chamarajpet was one of the earliest planned extensions of Bengaluru, built West of the Old City in the early 1890s. In 1889, the Princely State of Mysore set up a Bangalore City Improvement Committee to plan the expansion of a growing city, with consideration for epidemic-proof design. Hence, the grid-iron plan. Over the 196 acre grid, there were 4 large sites between 1.5 to 2 acres in size and 13 sites which were about 0.5 acres each. Besides that, 1150 sites, each of which was 30 x 108 feet, were demarcated. The sites were sold at Rs. 20-25, according to caste and religion. 270 sites were allocated to Brahmins, 42 for Vaishyas, 72 for Muslims and so on. The area was also linguistically diverse. Residents spoke English, Hindi, Urdu, Kannada and Telugu.<sup>10</sup>

Today, Chamarajpet is surrounded by a bustling megacity. Until the late 20th century, Bengaluru was known as a relaxed town with India’s best weather, a garden city and a pensioners’ paradise. The 1990s IT boom and a subsequent real estate boom have overpopulated the city and pushed its infrastructures to its limits.<sup>11</sup> Less than 15% of the city is covered by gardens, the majority being covered by either buildings or transport infrastructure.<sup>12</sup> The remaining public space has either been expropriated for development, fenced off or regulated by absurd opening hours. Social activities, such as sports and rituals, fight for space in the public realm. Through an interview with Mod Foundation Bengaluru, it was revealed that efforts to improve the provision of public space are plagued by bureaucracy, corruption and in Bengaluru’s case, confusion due to the sheer number of government authorities - BBMP, BDA, BSCOM, BSSWB, to name but a few - who fail to collaborate.<sup>13</sup>

A neocolonial quagmire of spatial mismanagement is obscured by communal spatial claims.

8  
Bhabha, H. K. (2012). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge. p. 12.

9  
Iyer, M. (2019). *Discovering Bengaluru: History, Neighbourhoods, Walks*. INTACH Bengaluru Chapter. pp 5 - 12.

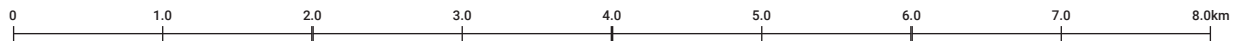
10  
Iyer, M. (2019). Op cit. pp 5 - 12.

11  
India Today. (2022, October 15). *Bengaluru: From Boom to Bust? How India’s Best City Is Being Ruined | Nothing But the Truth* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhkAkZXOD3A>

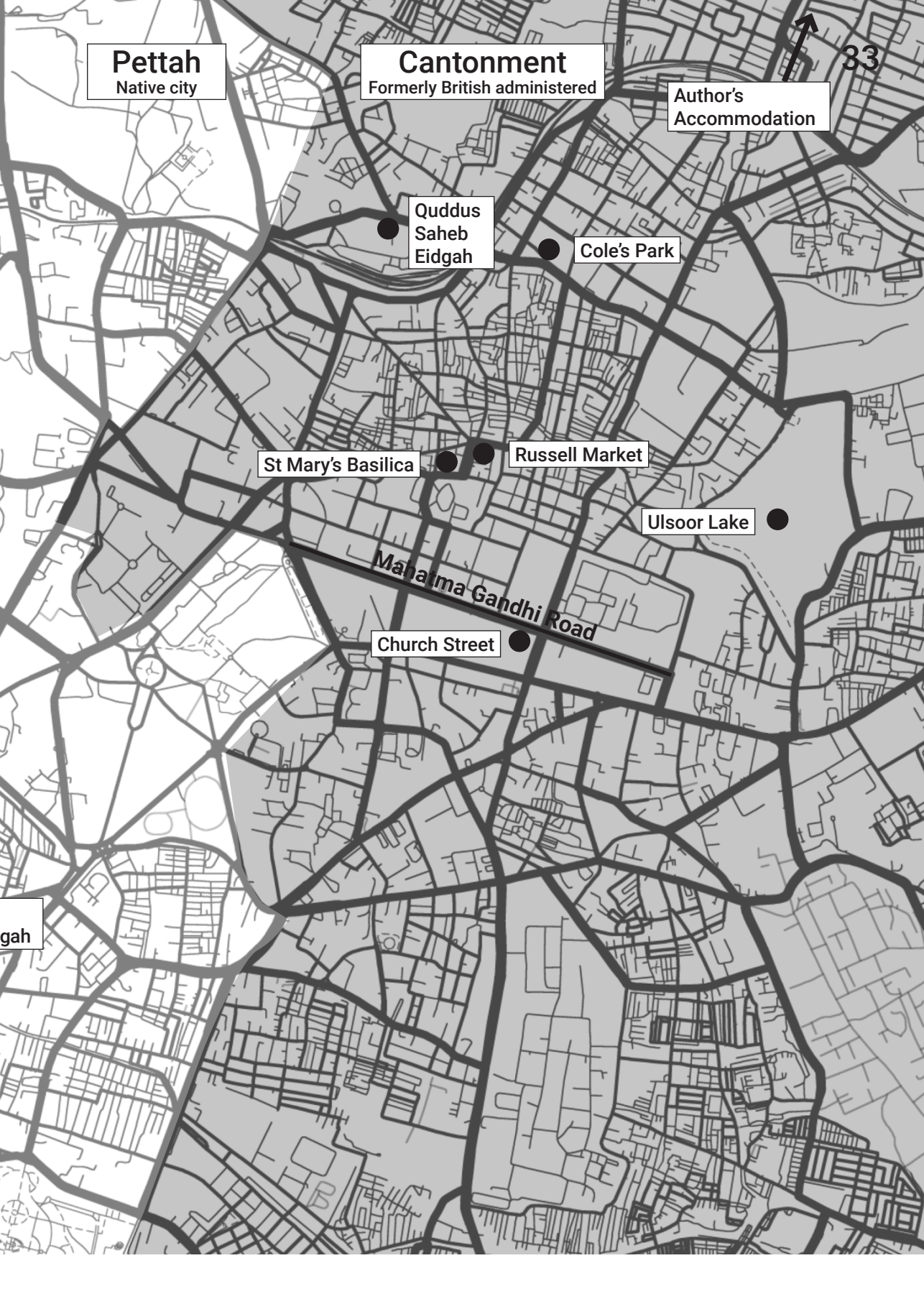
12  
Ramachandra, T. V., Aithal, B. H., Kulkarni, G., & Shivamurthy, V. (2017). Green Spaces in Bengaluru: Quantification through Geospatial Techniques. *Indian Forester*, 143(4), 307–320. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315670439\\_GREEN\\_SPACES\\_IN\\_BENGALURU\\_QUANTIFICATION\\_THROUGH\\_GEOSPATIAL\\_TECHNIQUES](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315670439_GREEN_SPACES_IN_BENGALURU_QUANTIFICATION_THROUGH_GEOSPATIAL_TECHNIQUES)

13  
Mod Foundation. (2022, May 6). *K100 Rajakaluve Rejuvenation*. Retrieved October 19, 2022, from <https://mod.org.in/2022/05/06/k100-rajakaluve-rejuvenation/>

# Image 7: Public Religious Spaces Visited







**Pettah**  
Native city

**Cantonment**  
Formerly British administered

Author's  
Accommodation

33

●  
**Quddus  
Saheb  
Eidgah**

●  
**Cole's Park**

● ●  
**St Mary's Basilica**

**Russell Market**

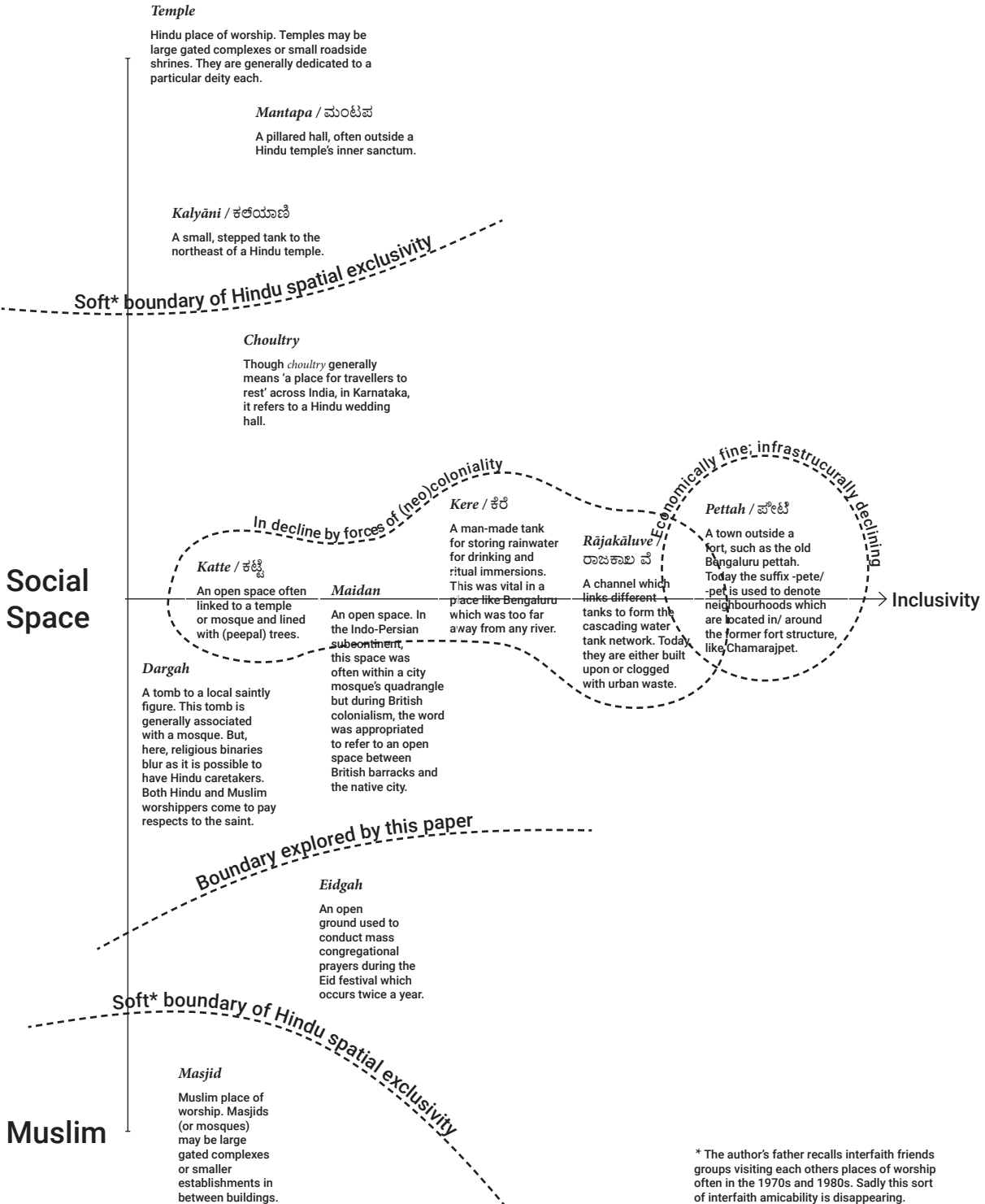
●  
**Ulsoor Lake**

**Maharaja Gandhi Road**

●  
**Church Street**

gah

# Image 8: Religious Spectrum of Urban Typologies



\* The author's father recalls interfaith friends groups visiting each others places of worship often in the 1970s and 1980s. Sadly this sort of interfaith amicability is disappearing.



Various sources such as INTACH's *Discovering Bengaluru* publication, colonial-era maps, and academic literature on Bengaluru's urban development, by Sonali Dhanpal<sup>14,15</sup> and Solomon Benjamin were consulted.<sup>16</sup> A cross-analysis of these sources revealed vernacular precolonial and colonial spatial typologies which the author engaged and reflected upon through visits to these typologies, observations of social behaviours, sketching and photography (see Appendix for full research documentation). The analysis in the subsequent pages focusses on three spatial typologies - market, tank and park - and respective examples to explore the relationships between public space and communalism, how public space has been used for religious rituals, how they might relate to the Chamarajpet controversy and what lessons can be learnt from them.

Having contextualised the example-based studies within a larger range of public space typologies, a clear relationship between public space and communalism is yet to be established. Public spaces are used for religious rituals within the framework of daily activities. Rather than binarising spaces used by the public, it is more useful to consider a Hindu-Muslim spectrum within which vernacular spatial typologies fit. Most of the typologies studied occupy the middle of the spectrum. Secondly, communal discord was not apparent nor present based on the author's interviews and observations, raising the question of the extent to which communalism was a phenomenon of the virtual, rather than the real, arena. In the arena of the real, people are more concerned with economic activity and leisure than religio-spatial identity.

14

Dhanpal, S. (2022). The making of a model town: planning in a Princely city and the All-India Sanitary Conferences. *Planning Perspectives*, 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2022.2131610>

15

Dhanpal, S. (2021). The 'Unintended' City - A Case for Re-reading the Spatialization of a Princely City Through the 1898 Plague Epidemic

16

'Cities within and beyond the plan' (2015)

# Urban Type 1: Market

## KR Market

Above  
Vendors sell flowers for  
weddings and religious rituals.  
Author's photograph, 2022.



Below  
Plan diagram of KR Market.  
Author's drawing based on  
Patel, S., Furlan, R., & Grosvald,  
M. (2021), 2022.



Market/ bazaar for fresh produce, flowers, snacks and household goods;

The original structure of Krishnarajendra Market, nowadays commonly known as KR or City Market, was built in 1929. Today, only a facade from it remains, the rest having been replaced by a megalithic, incomplete concrete building started in the 1990s.<sup>1,2</sup>

### Typological History

A 17th century poem by a Marathi visitor depicts the town of 'Bingarool' as having "a great market... Selling everything under the sun." Despite being politically insignificant until colonial rule, it has been a mercantile hub for trading goods from ports and hinterlands.<sup>3</sup>

### Religious Rituals

Flowers for wedding rituals can be bought at the basement flower market. Photographs depicting the Hindu god Ganesha were hung beside Hindu vendors. Muslim vendors also sat alongside. Additionally, Hindu ritual goods such as incenses, *diyas* (clay lamps) bells and other goods are sold. Equivalent shops for Muslim ritual goods were not seen during the author's limited visit.

According to a vendor of kitchen utensils, KR Market gets very busy during Diwali and Eid, two major festivals of Hinduism and Islam. When asked if there are any problems between Hindus and Muslims during these times or otherwise, the vendor replied in the negative. The author speculates that everyone is too busy trying to buy, sell and transact money to think about communalism.

### Lived Reality (Observed/ Inferred) Rituals

Goods would have to be unloaded into KR Market, prepared and distributed to or collected by vendors for sale.<sup>4</sup> Cleaners sweep the floors and collect waste. It is most likely that the market's activities adhere to a very regimented schedule

### Relationship with (Chamarajpet Maidan's) communalism

KR Market is in close proximity to many temples, mosques and dargahs, and appears to welcome vendors and shoppers of all religions and classes for affordable goods and produce. There appears to be no evidence to suggest that KR Market has had a relationship with communalism.

1  
Iyer, M. (2019). Op cit. pp 35 - 36

2  
Patel, S., Furlan, R., & Grosvald, M. (2021). A Framework for Enhancing the Spatial Urban Form of Informal Economies in India: The Case of Krishna Rajendra Market, Bangalore. SAGE Open, 11(2), 215824402110231. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211023184>

3  
Iyer, M. (2019). Op cit. p. 14.

4  
Patel, S., Furlan, R., & Grosvald, M. (2021). Op cit.



# Urban Type 2: Kere (Tank) Ulsoor Lake



Above  
Male members of a family perform an asti visarjan on a rubbish-strewn bank of Ulsoor Lake.  
Author's photograph, 2022.

Below  
Plan diagram of Ulsoor Lake.  
Author's drawing, 2022.



-  Buildings
-  Stalls
-  Park
-  Open ground
-  Shops
-  Tank

Formerly for the collection and storage of rainwater, today a public water body

Historical maps suggest that Ulsoor Lake was around as a *kere* (tank) at least since the British occupation of the late 18th century. It was at least 1.5 - 2 times its current area. It is bound by main roads and a fence, and consists of a main tank and a small, stepped tank to its north.

### Typological History

A *kere* is a man-made tank for collecting and storing rainwater. The cascading, gravity-reliant network of Bengaluru's *keres*, connected by *rajakalves* (canals) were the traditional basis of the area's water supply until the introduction of piped water from the River Kaveri, from over 200km away, by the British colonial administration. The tanks were also seasonal gathering spaces depending on the wet/dry seasonal cycle. They were sanctified by nearby shrine of protective goddesses. They were also used for *visarjans*, rituals wherein the statue of a deity is immersed in water. Traditionally, clay statues would soften and form part of the tank bed. During the dry season, the tanks would be drained and this clay collected. It also doubled as an open space for markets and play until the monsoon returned.<sup>1</sup>

### Religious Rituals

A few times a year during the Hindu festivals of Ganesh Chaturthi and Durga Puja, the stepped tank is used for *visarjans*.<sup>2</sup> On Ganesh Chaturthi, many processions of Ganesh idols across the city culminate here in the *visarjan*. These rituals are open to all. Historically, the statues were made of clay, softening Nowadays, non-biodegradable materials are used, posing a threat to the tank's ecology.<sup>3</sup>

The author observed an *asti visarjan* ritual in the main tank. This is the immersion of a dead person's ashes in a water body, within 10 days after cre-mation. Families un-loaded rice, flowers and probably ashes from the cremation into the tank, along its steep bank. However, it is against the rules of Ulsoor Lake to immerse flowers.<sup>4</sup>

### Lived Reality (Observed/ Inferred) Rituals

The walking path along the Western edge of the tank was used mainly for exercise (walking/ running).

A few men were fishing on the northern edge of the main tank. However, just a few metres away were heaps of rubbish on the tank's banks.

### Relationship with (Chamarajpet Maidan's) communalism

Chamarajpet also had a large tank to its north - Agrahara Tank - which has since been drained to create City Armed Reserves property. It is plausible that it was a key urban common. Perhaps the loss of ritual space and a vernacular water supply indirectly lead to the anger and contestation over land as a public (ritual) resource.

1 Mathur, A., & Da Cunha, D. (2004). *Deccan Traverses: The Making of Bangalore's Terrain*. Exhibited at Glass House in Lalbagh, Bangalore October 3.

2 As explained to the author by a security guard at Ulsoor Lake (2022).

3 De Koning, D. (2022). Op cit.

4 As explained to the author by a security guard at Ulsoor Lake (2022).



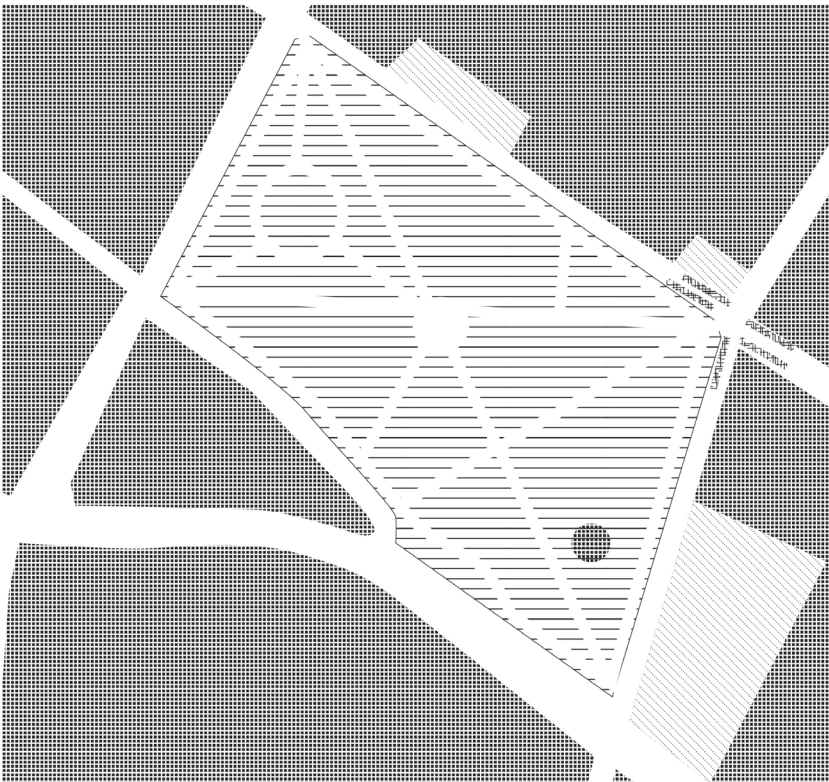
# Urban Type 3: Park







## Coles Park

Above  
A group of Muslim boys play  
cricket.  
Author's photograph, 2022.



Below  
Plan diagram of Coles Park.  
Author's drawing, 2022.



-  Buildings
-  Stalls
-  Park
-  Open ground
-  Shops
-  Tank

Small leisure park in a residential neighbourhood near schools.

### Brief history

Cole's Park was built as a neighbourhood park for Frazer Town,<sup>1</sup> a 'sanitary' neighbourhood which was created in response to outbreaks of plague at the end of the 1800s.<sup>2</sup> It is part of an urban grid and could perhaps be understood as a British colonial stamp on Indian territory.

### Typological History

Coles Park can be viewed as part of the wider trend of the joint British-Princely Mysore state administration to provide leisurely spaces for officials to enjoy the pleasant climate and vegetation of Bengaluru, in addition to showcasing plant species imported from other colonies. The most famous from these parks are Cubbon Park and Lalbagh.<sup>3</sup>

### Religious Rituals

No religious rituals were sighted upon visit, nor were there any religious structures or shrines. However, there was a church to the northeast of the park.

### Lived Reality (Observed/ Inferred) Rituals

That said, it seemed that there were many non-religious rituals at play. At 4PM on a weekday afternoon, the park was teeming with social activity. Many young adults and teenagers were socialising in groups. Often each group claimed a single stone bench. A few others individuals were napping on the same benches, albeit in more secluded spots.

The park is organised by rough use, with each programme bound by walking paths. Some of these zones were designated for particular groups. There was a space for women-only exercise, a children's nursery and play park, a water storage tower and a wedge of ground, ill-fitting but nonetheless, used by a group of Muslim boys for cricket.

### Relationship with (Chamarajpet Maidan's) communalism

It is fair to muse that Chamarajpet Maidan may have been conceived as a neighbourhood park but this might contradict evidence for the notion that it was a private parcel of land. Nevertheless, as an architect, it is not difficult to construct parallels between the urban commoning which was observed in Cole's Park, and the potential for such to occur at Chamarajpet Maidan.

1

Iyer, M. (2019). *Discovering Bengaluru: History, Neighbourhoods, Walks*. INTACH Bengaluru Chapter. pp 271.

2

Dhanpal, S. (2022). The making of a model town: planning in a Princely city and the All-India Sanitary Conferences. *Planning Perspectives*, 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2022.2131610>

3

Iyer, M. (2019). Op cit.

Many vernacular public space typologies in the middle of the Hindu-Muslim spectrum, and which are most open to all faiths, (e.g. keres, rajakalves, kattes and maidans) have been in decline due to colonial and neocolonial urban paradigms. This makes it difficult to trace them or their historic location when navigating Bengaluru. Gayathri Spivak cautions against using colonial maps at face value, proposing that there has been a 'worlding' of colonised land. Worlding refers to the phenomenon whereby records of Indian space made by the British were internalised by colonised Indian subjects as an inherent frame of reference.<sup>17</sup> A (re)writing of the world has been ensuing.<sup>18</sup> The result has been an erasure of precolonial, indigenous spatial knowledge which now manifests as a loss of the aforementioned spaces.

Despite the worldings perpetuated by colonial maps, they are useful records of historical Bengaluru. But there is a possibility that these maps also reiterate a Hindu-Muslim binary. Historian Romila Thapar suggests that this binary was bolstered - through hard perspectives on religious boundaries<sup>19</sup> - by the British to cleave the native community. This way, an anticolonial force could theoretically never unite due to apparent communal differences.<sup>20</sup> The erasure of religiously 'neutral' urban typologies such as *kattes*, *maidans*, *keres* and *rajakaluves* (see Image 9) exposed explicitly Hindu and Muslim spatial typologies in colonial records of public space. Their respective communities sought to protect their infrastructures from the other. The Hindutva idea that the temple is an antithesis to the mosque can be seen as an unfortunate, postcolonial byproduct of this worlding which needs to be decolonised.

Colonial representations of space are not the sole culprits. Postcolonial worldings have arguably occurred through neoliberal forces. Anne Haila's Urban Land Rent theory proposes that the meaning of 'land' has been altered by land commodification, urbanisation and densification in the last two centuries. Haila's work was developed in a different (post-)colonial context, namely Singapore, which has a unique governance structure which introduces corporate elements. Notwithstanding, her theory can be applied to Bengaluru, which has long aspired to emulate Singapore's example of urban growth.<sup>21</sup> British colonialism mandated land ownership for cartographic ease and to improve sanitation, erasing vernacular spatial commons. With neoliberalism, land titles have obfuscated landlord-tenant social relations.<sup>22</sup> This confusion allows community representatives like the Karnataka Waqf Board, Vishva Santana Parishad, and the BBMP to bend Chamarajpet Maidan's history to suit their agenda. The losses of the aforementioned urban typologies also represents the losses of the cooperative management structures associated with these spaces. For example, tanks were often managed by villagers who lived in the vicinity and who used the tank as their main water source. The space was implicitly a common resource which required caretaking. The contemporary condition has distanced the end user from those who administer the space.

17  
Spivak, G. C. (1985). The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives. *History and Theory*, 24(3), 247. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2505169>

18  
Bhabha, H. K. (2012). Op cit. p. 18.

19  
Horowitz, D. L. (1998). Op cit.

20  
Thapar, R. (2023). Op cit.

21  
Nair, J. (2000). Singapore Is Not Bangalore's Destiny. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 35(18), 1512–1514. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4409222>

22  
Haila, A. (2015). *Urban Land Rent: Singapore as a Property State*. Wiley-Blackwell.

23  
Peleman, D., Ronner, E., Barcellona Corte, M., & Viganò, P. (2022). Exploring the Soil: Not a Sentimental Journey. *The Project of the Soil*, OASE, (110), 4–9. Retrieved from <https://www.oasejournal.nl/en/issues/110/ExploringtheSoil>

24  
Mathur, A., & Da Cunha, D. (2016). Op cit.

25  
Rathee, D., (2022, April 20).



Bengaluru's urban development has been dictated by precisely these obfuscated logics of land ownership and 'property', leading to victories for real-estate developers at the expense of urban wellbeing. This paper thus queries the extent to which the maidan's contestation is about religious architectural identity or a Trojan Horse of a real-estate scramble. Being unable to access official Karnataka Revenue Maps for the area, this study relies on discussions with local architects who (cynically) suggest that Chamarajpet Maidan's financial value is probably very high, the controversy being a publicity stunt to drive the value further up.

A theorisation of land necessitates a theorisation of the maidan typology. Though this could be taken further through the theorisation of land as soil,<sup>23</sup> it is beyond the current scope of the research phase but might be a useful point of departure for the design phase. In their article titled *The Maidan as a Ground of Design*, Anuradha Mathur and Dilip da Cunha theorise the maidan as an informal ground which resists the formal and imagined logics of urban growth in the seams of the urban plan. Contrarily, Chamarajpet Maidan had official beginnings but the maidan's open field fosters praxeological transience, unsettledness and multiplicity. It is settled-in by everyone generally and nobody specifically.<sup>24</sup> Contemporary cartographies - Google Maps, OpenStreetMaps and the Bengaluru Development Authority's Masterplan maps - represent the maidan as a tabula rasa, awaiting formalisation. They fail to represent Chamarajpet Maidan's physical objects and daily activities; these are only elucidated upon a visit or through YouTube video documentations. To address this gap, this study undertook a fieldwork-based countercartography of the maidan. Hypothetically (and ideally), it could be used by the citizens of Chamarajpet to track how they use the maidan and to voice their opinions within and beyond the frame of communalism. The socially-focussed mapping consists of four layers: physical entities; observed anthropocentric behaviours; relationships between the physical environment and behaviour; and interviews. The latter layer has been most affected by the author's positionality as some respondents hesitated to discuss the topic of communal relations. Nevertheless, the countercartography yielded many results. The most intriguing were the presence of a Hindu temple and tree shrine existing without much controversy next to the contested maidan; the occurrence of Shivratri celebrations on and next to the maidan; the presence of a BBMP office on the maidan itself; the liveliness of the maidan on a Sunday afternoon of cricket games; and a pair of Hindu and Muslim mothers walking side-by-side to pick up their children from school.

News media does no better than contemporary cartographies to represent these lived realities. A Google Images search of 'Chamarajpet Maidan' in English yields images of the emblematically-Islamic Eidgah Wall perpetuating the notion that the maidan is a Muslim space. The Google search draws these images mainly from online news reports. The Eidgah Wall is a self-perpetuating ornament of Indian Islam, which borrows from Mughal motifs of onion domes, ogee arches, minarets and Arabic calligraphy. Muslim groups use this to bolster their spatial claims. Hindu groups use this to problematise

Op cit.

26

Jadeja, H. (2013, November 24). *Architecture of Habib Rahman: A critical inquiry into the reinterpretation of his early influences into the context of India*. Issuu. Retrieved January 15, 2023, from [https://issuu.com/ram-rahman/docs/habib\\_rahman\\_thesis\\_by\\_hiral\\_jadeja/58](https://issuu.com/ram-rahman/docs/habib_rahman_thesis_by_hiral_jadeja/58)

27

Rahman, H. & Noble, A. (1990). "Do not kill man to protect God" - the Babari Masjid Design Proposal. *The Statesman*, July 28, 47(1).

28

Architexturez. (2022, November 18). Gandhi Ghat, Barrackpore. AÇ South Asia. Retrieved February 16, 2023, from <https://architexturez.net/doc/az-cf-177919>

what they view as an audacious visibility of Muslims in a perceptibly neutral public space. To quote Bhagat Singh once again:

“The real duty of the newspaper was to educate, to cleanse the minds of the people... in order to invest them with feelings of amity and communal harmony, to bridge the gap and build mutual trust... but they have been doing the exact opposite.”<sup>25</sup>

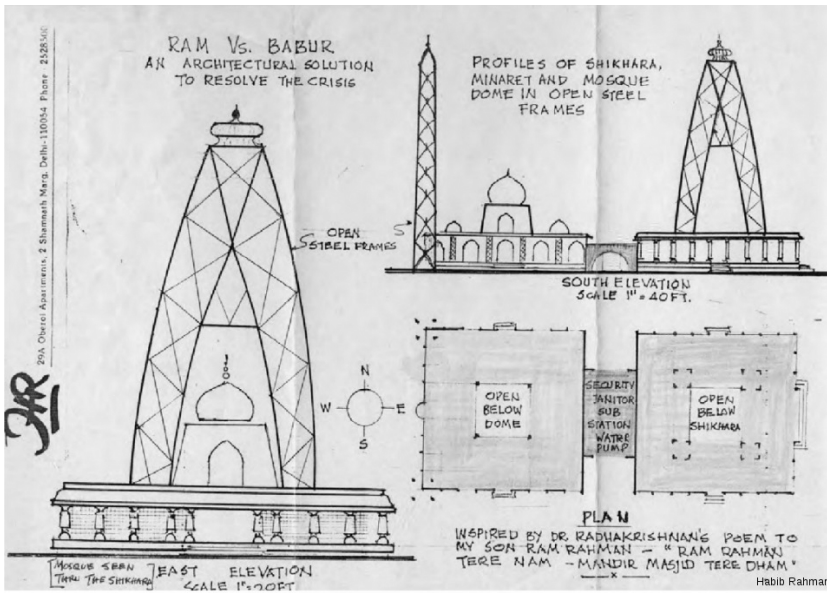
Cartographic logics, mass media and, at times, the Indian psyche itself, parenthesise the inherent unsettledness of the maidan's diverse users as a legitimate way of using space, preferring divisive but digestible Hindu-Muslim binaries instead. Oversimplifications of the maidan lead to contestation.

## An Architectural Response?

20th century architect Habib Rahman tackled the issue of using public space to address communalism. Rahman's career as an Indian government architect coincided with the post-Independence era of Indian secularism and modernism.<sup>26</sup> Having been appalled by communal tensions over Babri Masjid in the late 1980s, Rahman sketched 'Ram vs. Babur: An architectural proposal to resolve the crisis.' His solution was programmatic and symbolic: he proposed a new temple adjacent to the existing mosque of equal square footage and he proposed a steel-skeleton shikhara over the temple which, in addition to self-referencing the temple, framed a view to the mosque's dome in a display of harmonic unity.<sup>27</sup> The gap between the temple and the mosque has apparently been addressed insofar as common infrastructural needs are concerned (security, water pump, substation). But they also appear to be a convenient partition to keep temple and mosque at bay from each other. The common grounds shared by the two have been unaddressed.

To that end, this study refers to Gandhi Ghat in Barrackpore, a memorial to Gandhi completed a year after his assassination. Rahman uses the symbolic motifs of a shikhara, a dome and a cantilevering horizontal canopy which forms the total silhouette of a cross in a united composition to represent India's major religions - Hinduism, Islam and Christianity respectively - and to symbolise the common Indian identity of different religious groups.<sup>28</sup> The design uses the river bank as a social magnet, drawing people to sit by it on a set of stairs. Rahman inspires us to experiment with ornament in a way that can evoke the whole Indian spirit, rather than become let architecture become weapon of communalism.





Above  
Habib Rahman's proposal  
for Babri Masjid/ Ram  
Janmabhoomi.  
Rahman, H. & Noble, A. (1990).

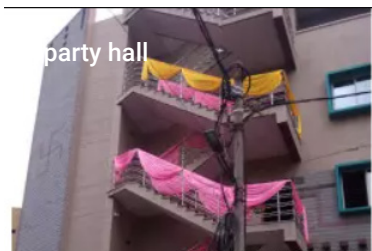
Below  
Gandhi Ghat in Barrackpore,  
Kolkata.  
© Habib Rahman/Habib  
Rahman Archives (1949).



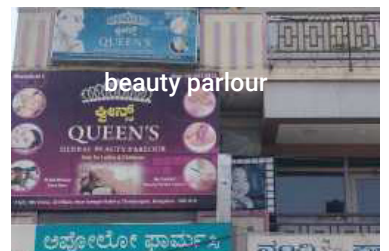
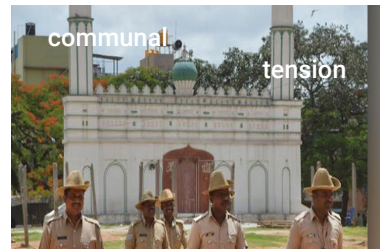
GANDHI GHAT at BARRACKPORE Design & Photo: H. Rahman

GANDHI GHAT - CALCUTTA 1949.

# Google Search 1: Chamarajpet

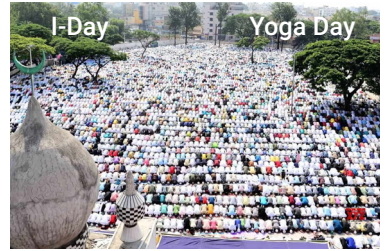








# Google Search 2: Chamarajpet Maidan





This study was inspired by AMO's AI Manakh (2007) which undertook a similar analysis of real-estate promotional videos from Dubai.

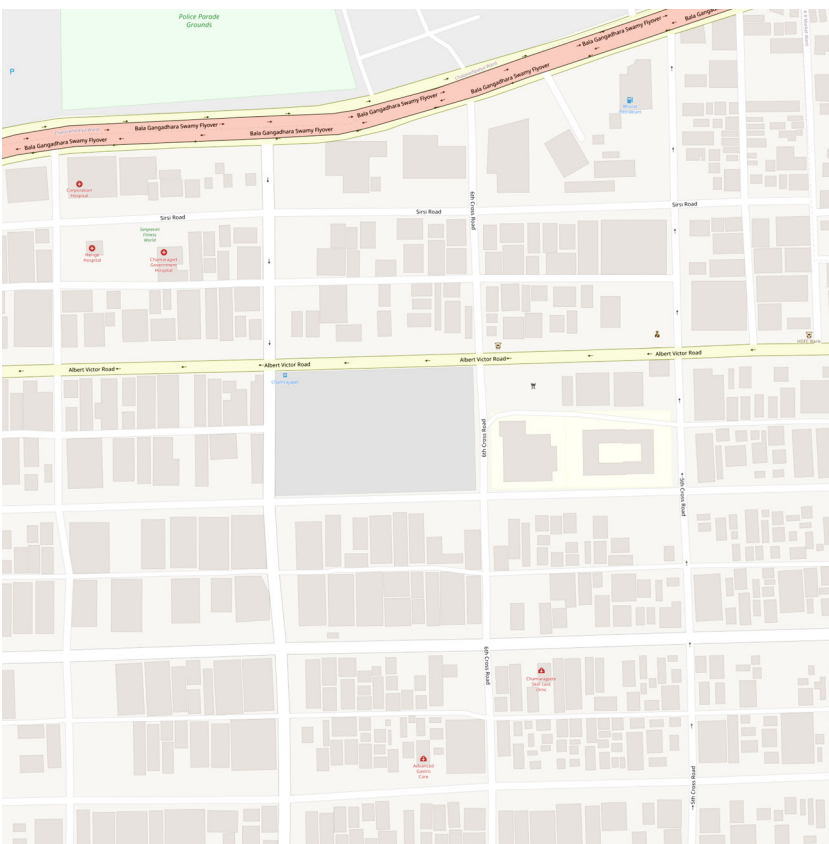






Above  
Satellite view of Chamarajpet  
Maidan.  
Obtained from QGIS, 2022.

Below  
OpenStreetMap of Chamarajpet  
Maidan.  
Obtained from QGIS, 2022.



Left  
Eidgah Wall of Chamarajpet  
Maidan, which denotes  
direction of Muslim prayer on  
Eid and which has a *mihrab*  
(niche) for the *imam* (prayer  
leader).  
Author's photograph, 2022.

- A. Minarets
- B. Onion domes
- C. Arabic calligraphy
- D. *Mihrab*
- E. Ogee arches



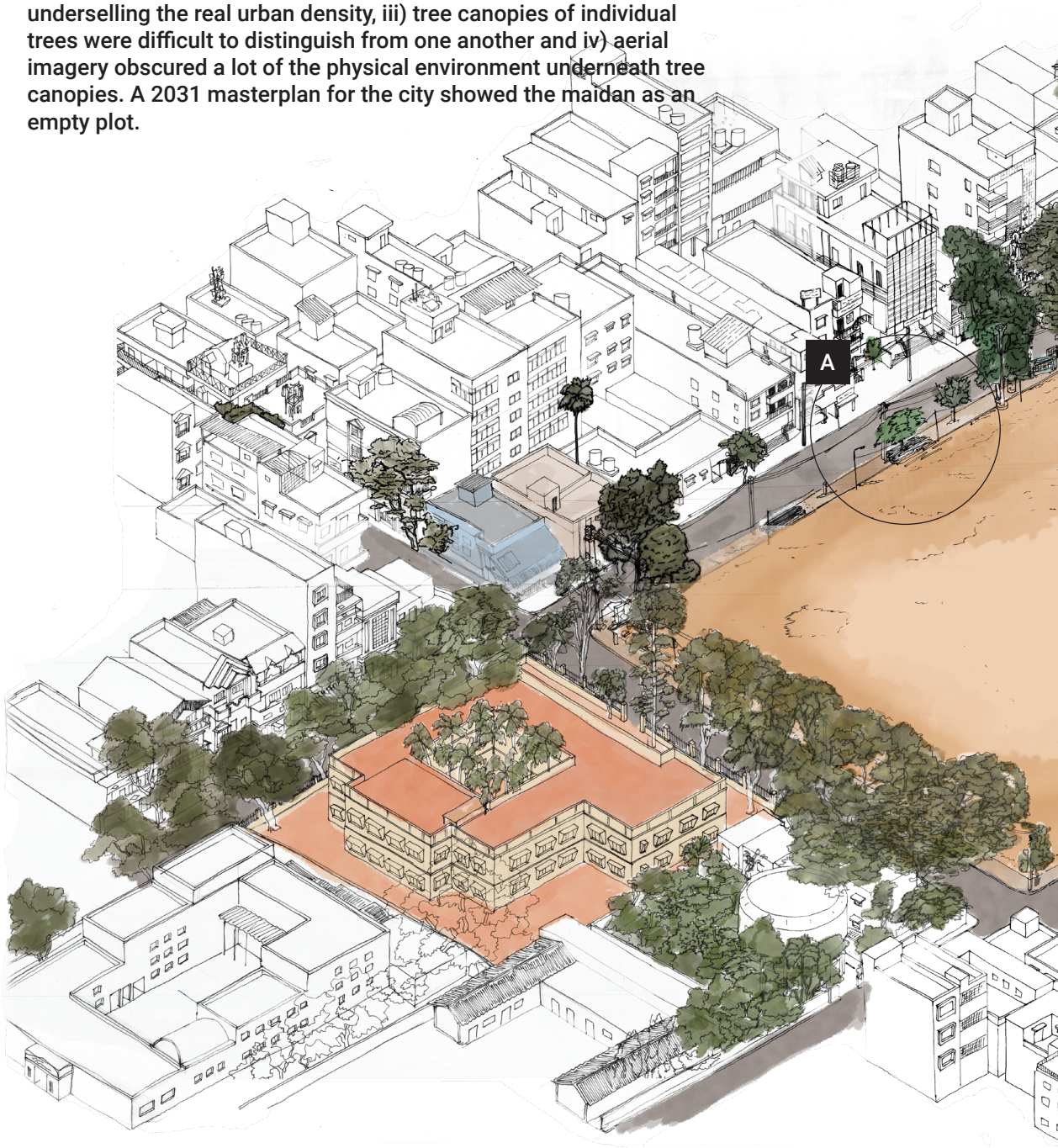


# Counter-cartography 2.1

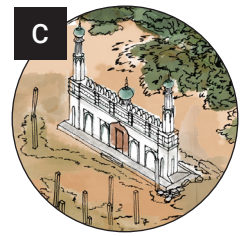
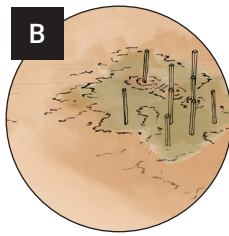
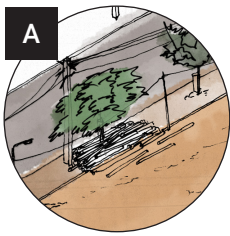
## Apparent Physical

This map shows permanent elements (i.e. longer than 20 year lifespan) of the maidan. It was created based on Google Street view and photographs, videos and sketches taken on three separate visits to the site in December 2022.

Existing cartographies such as OpenStreetMaps and Google Maps proved unreliable because i) they showed the maidan as an empty, featureless ground, ii) building footprints were very inaccurate, underselling the real urban density, iii) tree canopies of individual trees were difficult to distinguish from one another and iv) aerial imagery obscured a lot of the physical environment underneath tree canopies. A 2031 masterplan for the city showed the maidan as an empty plot.







Construction materials (wooden beams, concrete columns and aggregate piles) were abandoned on the maidan's edges and pavements.

A rocky outcrop rising about 1.5m was covered with grass and marked the maidan's centre. On it were 3m high granite columns.

The Eidgah Wall is the centrepiece of the maidan, occupying a prominent view from surrounding buildings.



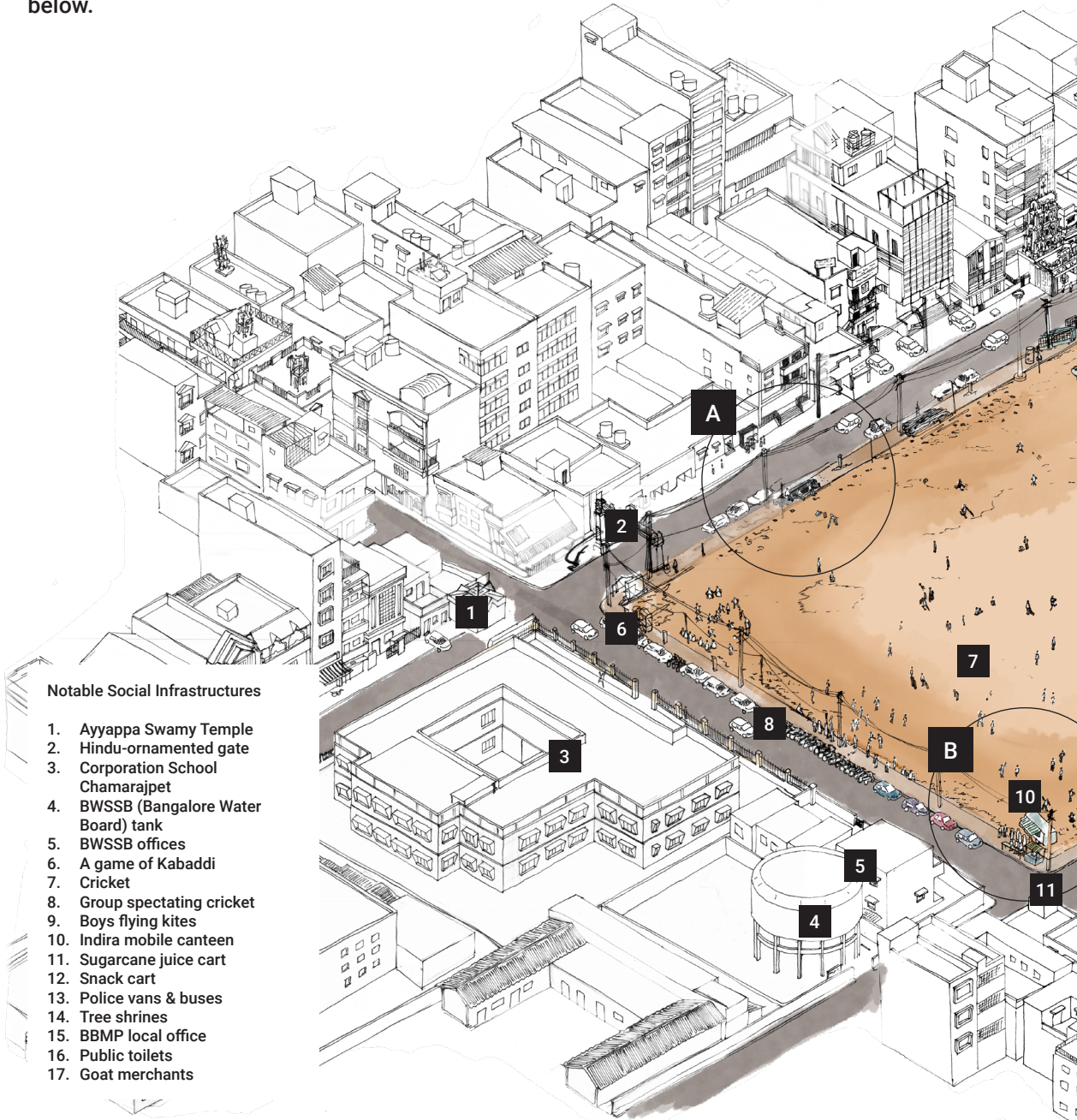


# CounterCartography 2.2

## Fieldwork Observations

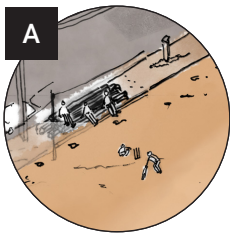
This map shows transient elements of the maidan such as ad hoc interventions, people, animals and vehicles. It was created based on photographs, videos and sketches taken on three separate visits to the site in December 2022.

This observational study elucidated a number of matters, such as the residential nature of the neighbourhood, with local enterprise, the presence of a temple and a BBMP office and the diverse uses hosted by the maidan. The most striking have been highlighted in the map below.

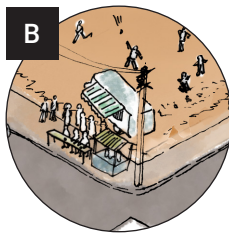


### Notable Social Infrastructures

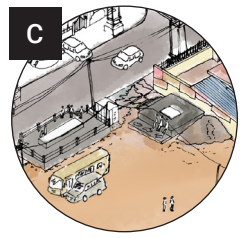
1. Ayyappa Swamy Temple
2. Hindu-ornamented gate
3. Corporation School Chamarajpet
4. BWSSB (Bangalore Water Board) tank
5. BWSSB offices
6. A game of Kabaddi
7. Cricket
8. Group spectating cricket
9. Boys flying kites
10. Indira mobile canteen
11. Sugarcane juice cart
12. Snack cart
13. Police vans & buses
14. Tree shrines
15. BBMP local office
16. Public toilets
17. Goat merchants



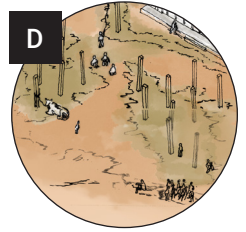
Piles of found objects (concrete beams and wooden scaffolding beams) are used as seats and/ or places to gather around.



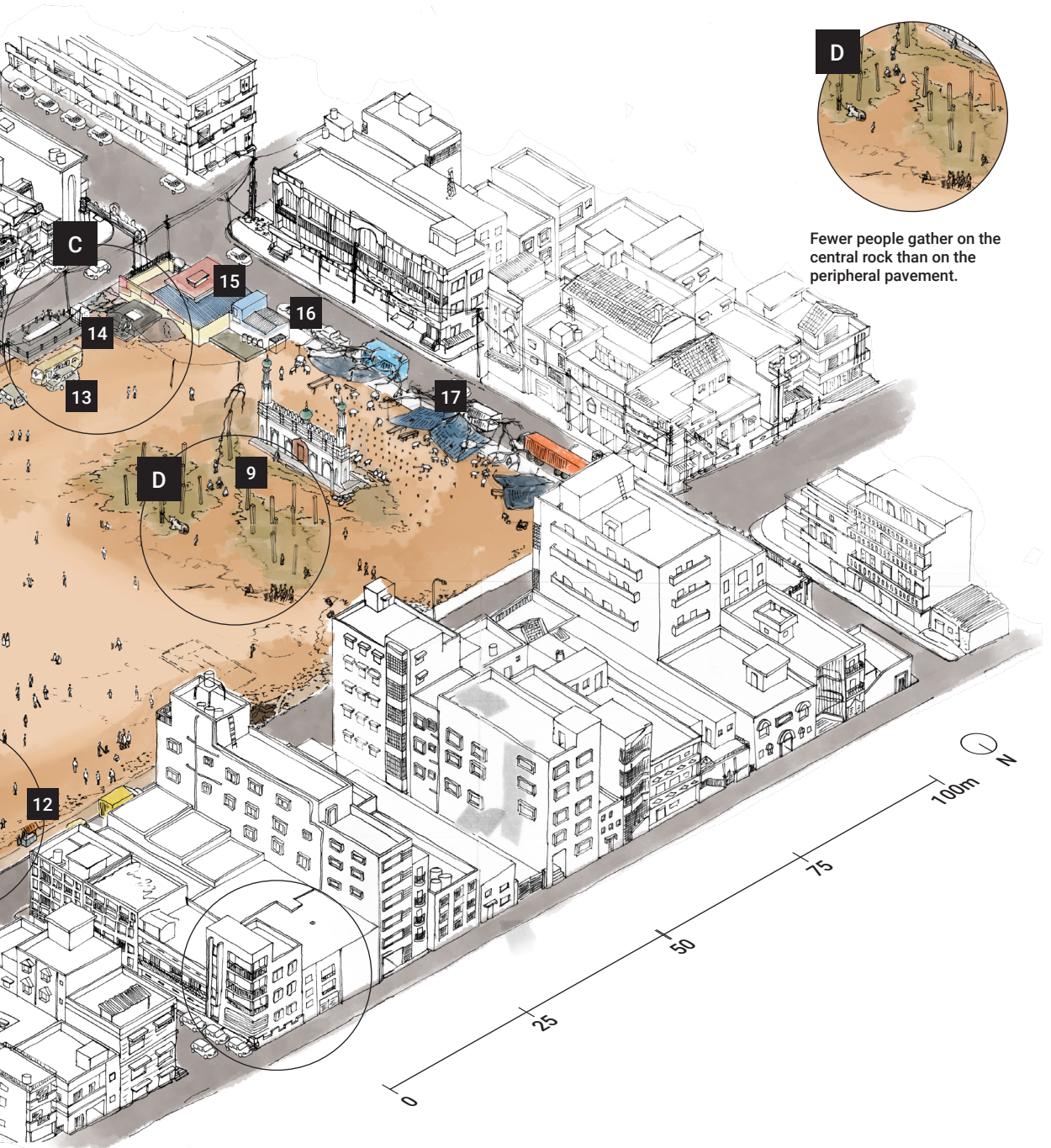
A mobile canteen is another gathering spot, favoured for its location under the trees' canopies.



Trees are venerated through the construction of plinths. The left-hand one is a Hindu shrine associated with the temple in front of it.



Fewer people gather on the central rock than on the peripheral pavement.



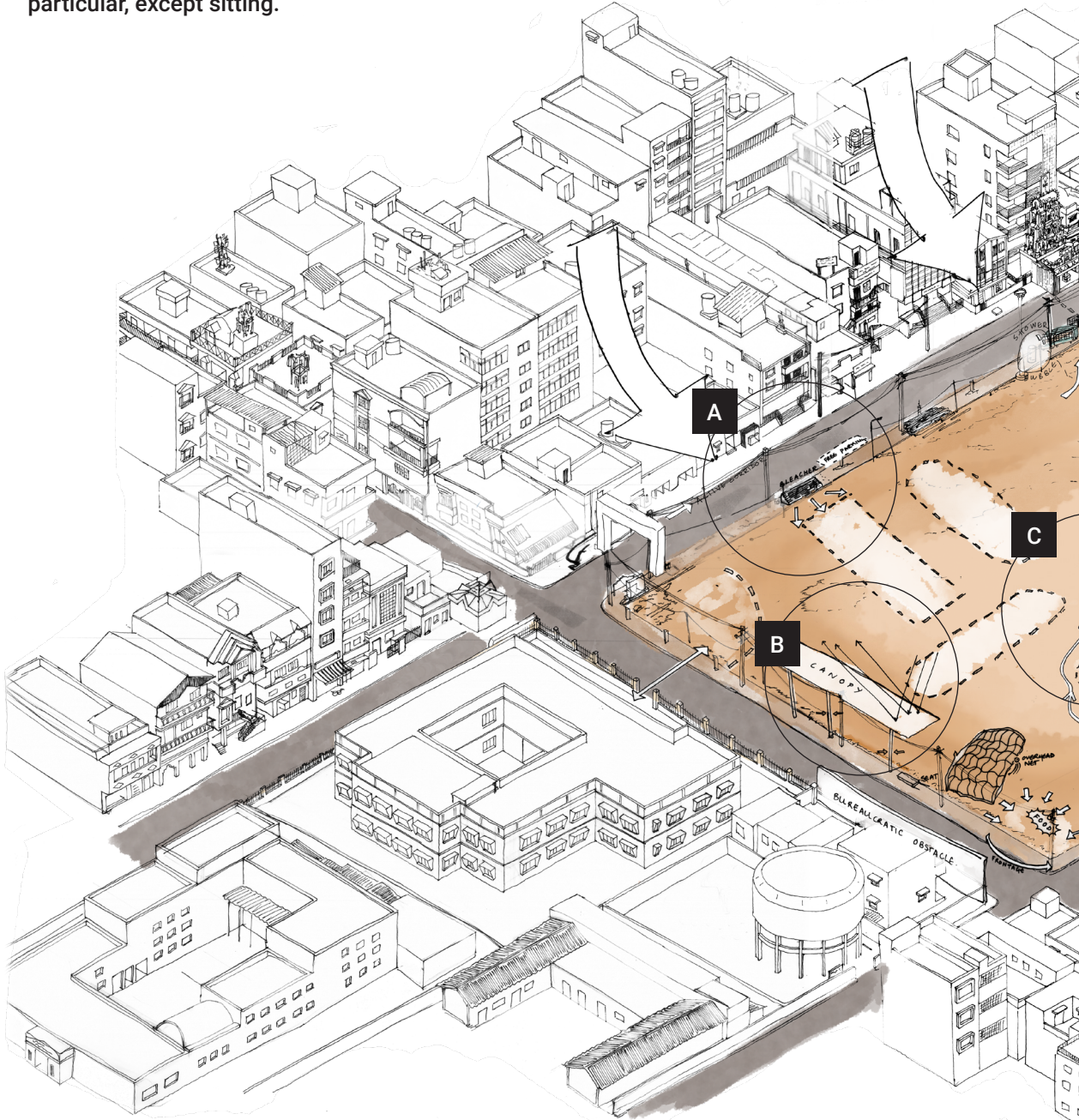


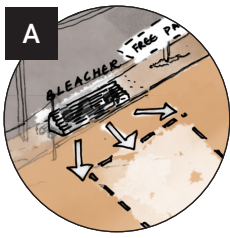
# CounterCartography 2.3

## Physical + Observations = Inference

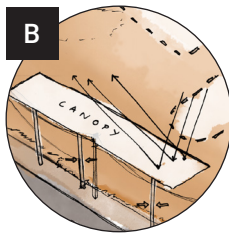
This map shows the deduced relationships between physical elements of the maidsan and observed behaviours. It was created based on photographs, videos and sketches taken on three separate visits to the site in December 2022.

The maidsan is roughly divided into three zones: one is the goat market bound by a long wall implied by the short Eidgh Wall; the second is the open ground used for sports and stalls and the third is the space in between marked by granite columns, used for nothing in particular, except sitting.

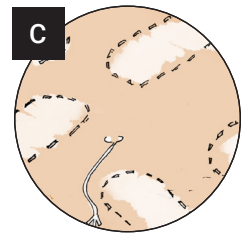




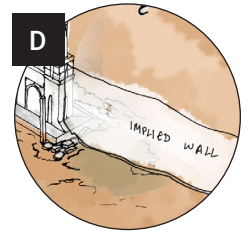
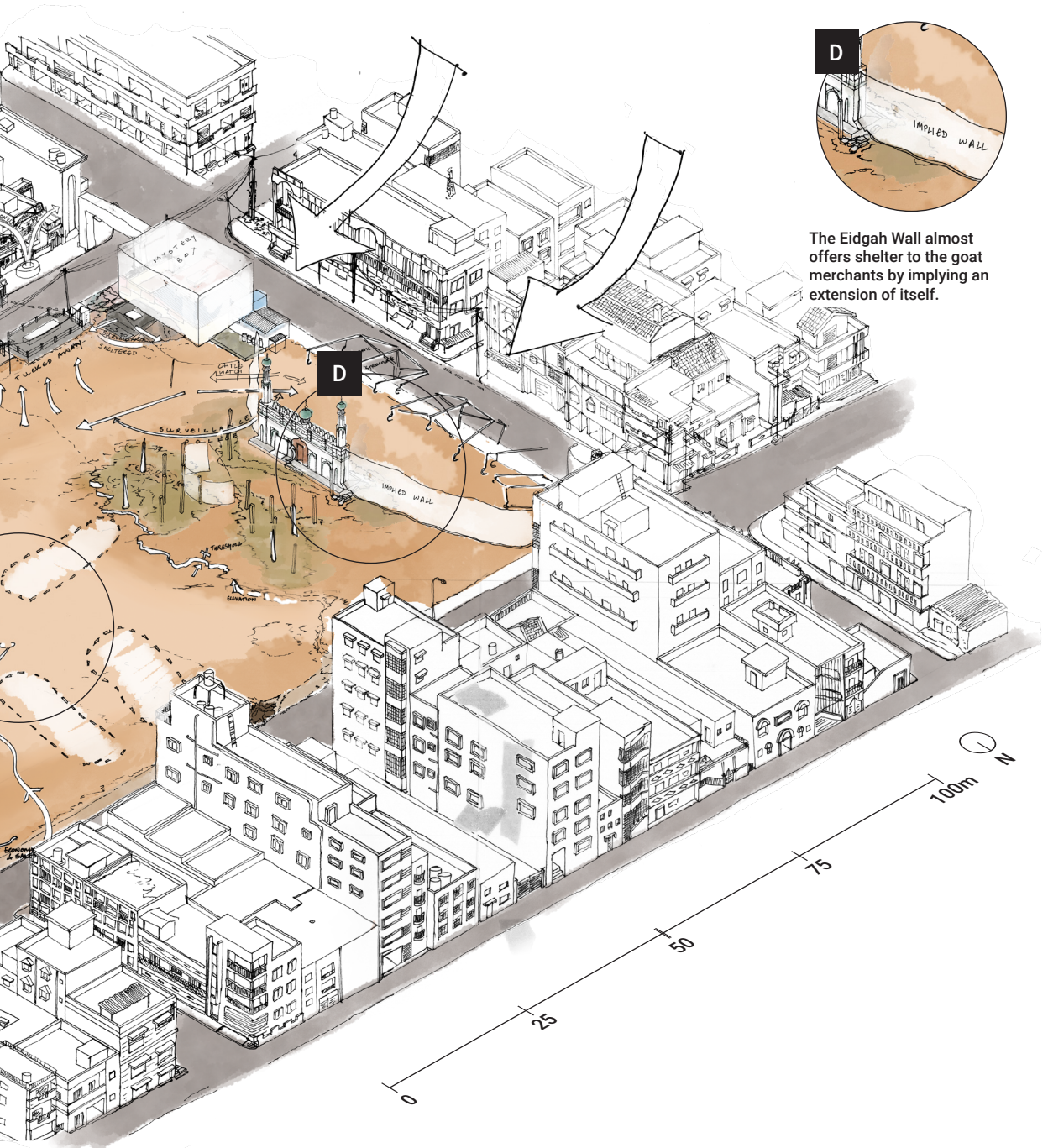
These ad hoc seats offer a good view of the cricket games, without attracting too much attention from onlookers.



Trees offer much-needed shade for spectators and surveilling police officers.



The maidan's openness allows multiple cricket games to occur, and for their configurations to change throughout the day or week.



The Eidgah Wall almost offers shelter to the goat merchants by implying an extension of itself.

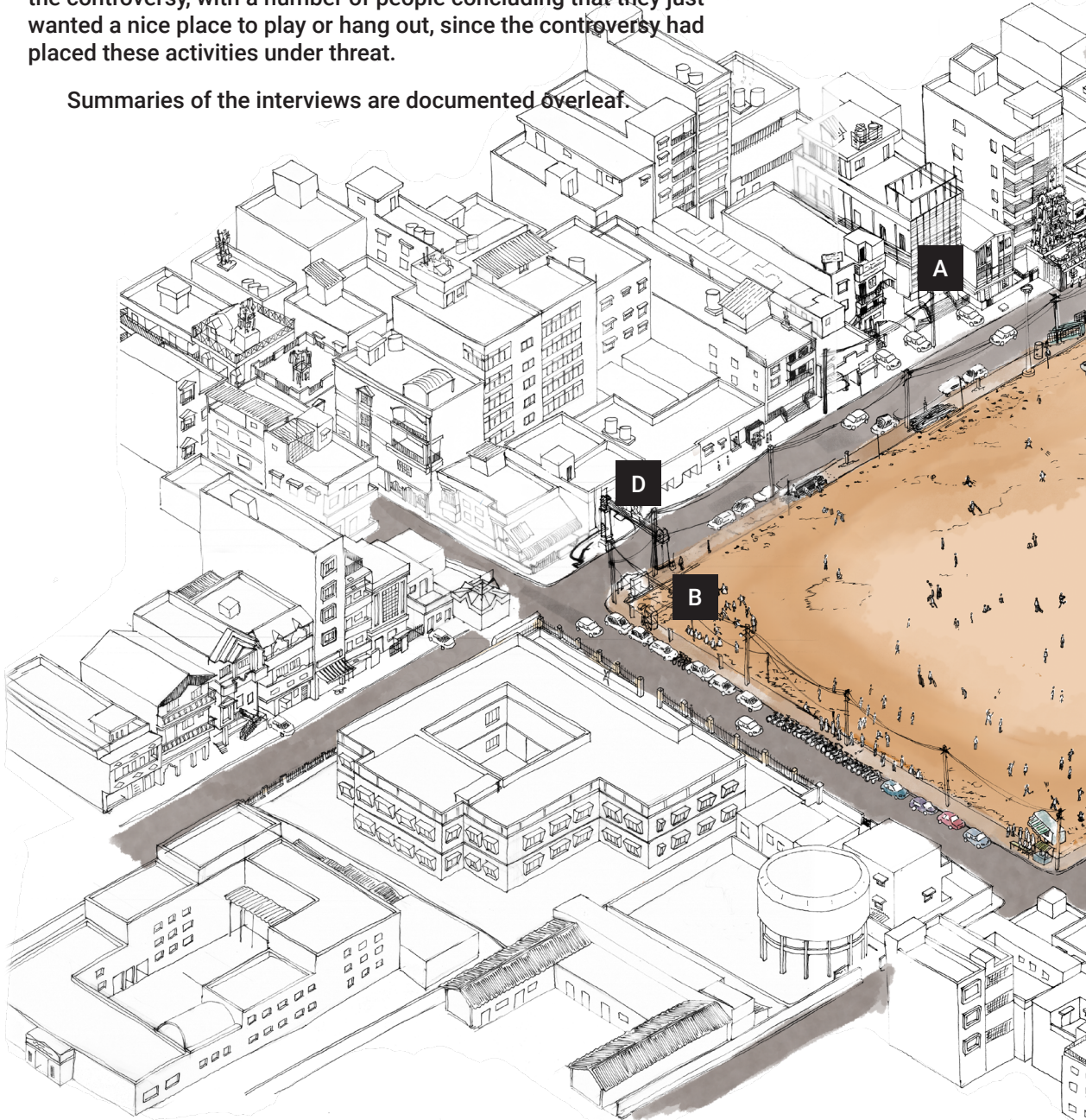


## Interviews

This map summarises interviews and discussions with various individuals in and around the maidan. The interviews were conducted on three separate visits to the site in December 2022.

Though the interviews were initially undertaken to verify the inferences made in counter cartography 2.3, it was more enriching to hear the perceptions those interacting with the maidan regularly. There was a tacit tension when discussing the maidan in conversation. The author felt that the locals were disempowered by the controversy, with a number of people concluding that they just wanted a nice place to play or hang out, since the controversy had placed these activities under threat.

Summaries of the interviews are documented overleaf.





Cashier at Mahalakshmi Sweets Shop



Principal of Corporation School Chamarajpet



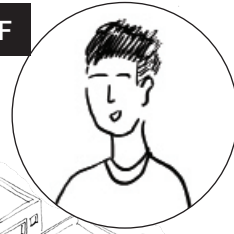
Goat merchant



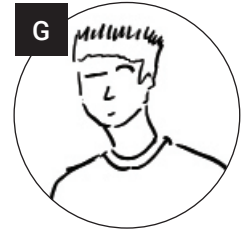
Pipes and plumbing shop owner



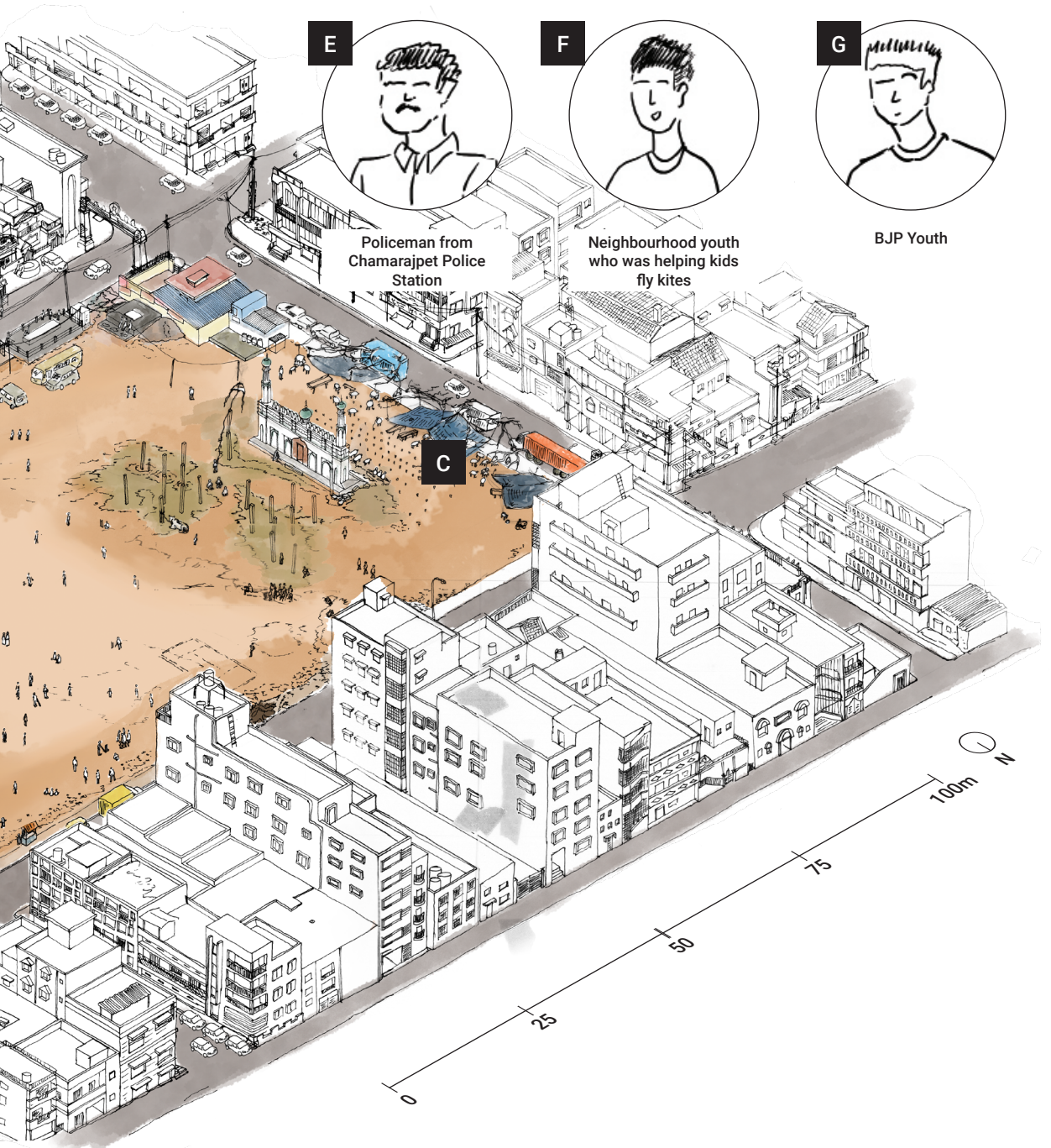
Policeman from Chamarajpet Police Station



Neighbourhood youth who was helping kids fly kites



BJP Youth





## Interviews

### Day 1: Thursday, 7 December 2022

I travelled to the maidan by autorickshaw, accompanied by my mother. We were both hijab-wearing women, which may have negatively affected the freeness of the interview responses. We spent about 1.5 hours there, after which we departed on foot to the nearby Tipu Sultan Summer Palace.

#### Interview A

IA: Do you know much about the Eidgah controversy?

CASHIER AT MAHALAKSHMI SWEETS SHOP: No, I live 2km away, in Vijayanagar. The controversy has nothing to do with me. I don't even work here full-time to know.

The cashier was evasive, perhaps because it was clear that we were Muslim and he did not want to share his opinions.

#### Interview B

A group of children were playing kabaddi<sup>1</sup> in a corner of the maidan, supervised by two women and one man. I approached one of the women to interview. She was the headmistress of the Corporation School of Chamarajpet, a public school run by the municipality.

IA: How come you're only using this corner of the maidan?

HEADMISTRESS: They [no elaboration on identity of 'they'] refuse to give us permission to even put up temporary poles for kho-kho, let alone use the whole maidan.

IA: Who is 'they'? The Waqf Board?

HM: That and all I don't know but either way, yes, they don't let us use the whole space. You see those kids playing inside our compound? That's all the space we have. Isn't much, is it?

IA: No, it is not. It's a real shame. Do the kids play other sports here?

HM: We would like to have them play kho-kho<sup>2</sup> but they won't even let us place poles for for it.

IA: I actually wanted to ask you about the controversy over this maidan. Do you know much about it?

HM: Again, I don't know much but it is no good. This Hindu-Muslim stuff is nonsense. You are Muslim, I am Hindu, but we are able to have this conversation as it should be. Kids are kids and they

1  
Kabaddi is a traditional Indian two-team sport based on tag. With a court divided into two halves for each team, an attacking player is sent into the opponent's half to tag as many players as possible without being tackled and held.

2  
Kho-kho is a popular traditional Indian tag sport, with two teams of 12 players each. It is played on a rectangular field with three poles in the middle. The aim is to tag opponents before they can touch a player from your team.



should just be allowed to play here.

IA: Could I please take your email address so that I could contact you for further research?

HM: No, sorry. I don't know who you are, who you are associated with and where my details might go.

The headmistress was generally hesitant to provide any details about her position in the controversy, with vague responses. However, she was clear about wanting better prospects for her students.

### Day 2: Friday, 16 December 2022

On a sunny Friday afternoon, I travelled to the maidan by car. On this visit, I was accompanied by Swastik Harish, a Bengaluru-based architect and urban planner. He was a former faculty member of the Indian Institute of Human Settlements and currently runs a capacity-building practice which coordinates and runs workshops for various stakeholders (e.g. government officials, police officers, slum dwellers) to further urban improvement projects. As such, and also with his positionality as an Indian Hindu male, he was able to guide the interview process more smoothly on this day.

We chose to visit on a Friday afternoon to see how the maidan reached to Muslim congregational prayers (*jum'uah*). We found that there were no prayers on the maidan whatsoever.

### Interview C

Swastik and I approached some goat merchants to enquire about their premises on the maidan. They were incredibly welcoming, even offering us free coffee from a nearby stall.

SWASTIK HARISH: We would like to know a bit about your business. How much do you sell the goats for?

GOAT MERCHANT: They range from Rs. 400 - 700 per kilogram.

SH: And who buys them?

GM: Customers come from all over the city, not just Chamarajpet.

SH: How long has this goat market been around for?

GM: About 15 years. There are about 5-8 merchants here. We all have permits from the BBMP to sell here.

SH: So from that office in the corner?

GM: No, that's only a tiny local office. We go to the big office down the road.

SH: What happens here on Eid?

GM: Just before Eid-al-Adha, the whole maidan is filled by goat merchants. And before Eid prayers, the BBMP also cleans up the whole place and gets rid of all the rubbish so that people can pray here.

SH: And how long have you been here for? Do you live nearby?

GM: I've been here 6 years. Because my family is in Uttar Pradesh, I live in a single room nearby.

SH: So you saw the controversy here last August?

GM: Yes. It was a scary time. There were police everywhere and there was a shoot-on-sight order. Even now, you see the police standing around. There used to be people hanging out here till late at night - sometimes husband-wife arguments would come out here, sometimes it would be just groups of friends having fun and hanging out- and far more kids used to play here. But since the police order, people have been fearful of coming.

It's so sad. You see how dense this neighbourhood is. The jids don't have much more room to enjoy. All we want is for the kids to have a nice play area and enjoy their childhood. This Hindu-Muslim stuff doesn't matter.

For a short while after, we walked around the neighbourhood and discussed the politics of Chamarajpet and its housing stock. We found that a lot of the houses retained their historical plot sizes (30' x 108') but they were disproportionately tall due to lax planning by-laws. Each house had its own individual character, painted in a different colour and ornamented with architectural elements of the homeowners' choices. A lot of these houses architectural languages draw from Greek Classical and/or Modern architecture.

#### Interview D

We wanted to interview some shopkeepers. Swastik suggested that we approach a shopkeeper who appeared Muslim so that they were not hesitating due to my positionality. He theorised that Hindu shopkeepers often had Hindu names for their shops whereas Muslims preferred English-language abbreviations of their names so as to not allude to their Muslim identities. On this basis, we approached the owner of a pipe shop, who kindly invited us to sit in in shop, even going so far as to requesting chairs from the adjacent shops.

SH: For how long have you had this pipe shop?

Shop Owner: This is my own establishment, started by my father here. I've been in watching this business for 40 years and one day, my wonderful kids will take over. In fact, this pipe shop is just one part of my business; the other part is real-estate.

SH: Here in Chamarajpet?

SO: Not here no, in Indiranagar. However, here in Chamarajpet if

you need to know, the standard plot size is 30' x 108'; sometimes two are combined to have a 60' width.

SH: Do you live near here?

SO: Yes, not too far. I live with my wife and two sons and two daughters.

[He proceeded to show us photos of his daughters to demonstrate how much I reminded him of them].

SH: Are there other Muslim shop owners around here?

SO: To the left and right of me are all Hindu businesses. I'm the only Muslim standing [up to their competition] here. I don't get any help from them.

Anyway, I have to head for prayers now but it was nice talking.

SH: Could we please contact you later if we have any questions?

SO: Sure, you can have my business card.

### Day 3: Sunday, 25 December 2022

On the last fieldwork day, I visited the maidan accompanied by my father, with whom I was able to approach yet more people for interviews. I were surprised to find that, unlike the previous visits, the ground was busy with cricket games and spectators, despite cloudy weather. We set about walking around the ground, taking photographs and sketching.

#### Interview E

I was sketching the Eidgah Wall where a group of men were watching the cricket games when a policeman approached.

POLICE OFFICER: What are you drawing?

IA: I'm drawing the maidan. I study architecture and I am doing a school project about it.

POLICE OFFICER: Right. Yes, there was a lot of controversy here. That's why us police are stationed around to maintain peace.

IA: Am I allowed to fly a drone here, by the way?

POLICE OFFICER: No, as this is a residential area.

#### Interview F

My father and I proceeded to walk around and take photographs. While we were taking photographs near the Eidgah Wall atop the rocky outcrop, a boy of about 17 years of age approached us. Before he did so, he was with two other boys of about 10 years and was flying a kite with them.



YOUTH: Could I help you?

IA: I am taking photographs for a school project about this maidan. Do you know where we could get some pictures from above?

Y: My friend lives in that tall building there. I can ask him if we can go to the terrace.

AH (my father): Do you live around here?

Y: Yes, just down the road. But I work at KR Market. I run a shop there.

AH: No work today?

Y: I've taken a holiday for Christmas. But most people don't.

AH: So the boys are all playing cricket because its a Sunday?

Y: Yes. Every Sunday, it is this busy.

AH: No Christmas celebrations here? What about other festivities in the year?

Y: So on Eid, the entire ground, and the roads leading up to the other Eidgah further West are filled with worshippers. It's a pretty big affair.

AH: But there's a temple next to the Eidgah. What do they celebrate there?

Y: They mainly celebrate Shivratri and the celebration does happen on the maidan near the temple all throughout the night. But who knows what's to be after this controversy? I just think that us Hindus and Muslims ought to coexist like we always have. All Indians are my brothers and sisters.

We continued walking around the neighbourhood, mapping our observations (see Appendix for on-site mapping). In a street just off Chamarajpet Eidgah, a party tent had been installed outside an apartment block's ground floor parking garage. It was blocking the pavement and covered part of the vehicular street. We stood, wondering whether to approach the tent and ask the people inside about it. However, a man emerged just as we were about to take a photograph.

IA: Hi, what is going on here?

MAN: This tent here is for my friend's birthday party. He's the local BJP youth club's chairman. We are members of the local BJP youth group and so this is almost a party event.

We chose not to ask further questions as we were nervous that we might ask the wrong questions and provide a wrong impression, particularly as Muslims. We continued walking for an hour more and left at about 4PM.

These interviews formed an integral part of the countercartographic exercise as they provided alternative spatial representations to those perpetuated by the media and existing cartographies. Upon reflection, these interviews would have benefitted from better preparedness and confidence from the author so that the conversations could have been longer and with a wider cross-section of Chamarajpet's population.



Above  
The goat merchant's premises. The goats are tied to short wooden poles affixed to the ground. As a public space, it is not particularly suited for people to gather due to the smell of livestock.  
Author's photograph, 2022.



Below  
The BJP youths' birthday party tent.  
Author's photograph, 2022.





Above

The pipe shop was closed on a Sunday. Its wooden doors are secured by a steel padlock for security. An overhead balcony provides shade, with the photograph of a popular Bollywood actor's printed on the signage to attract customers.

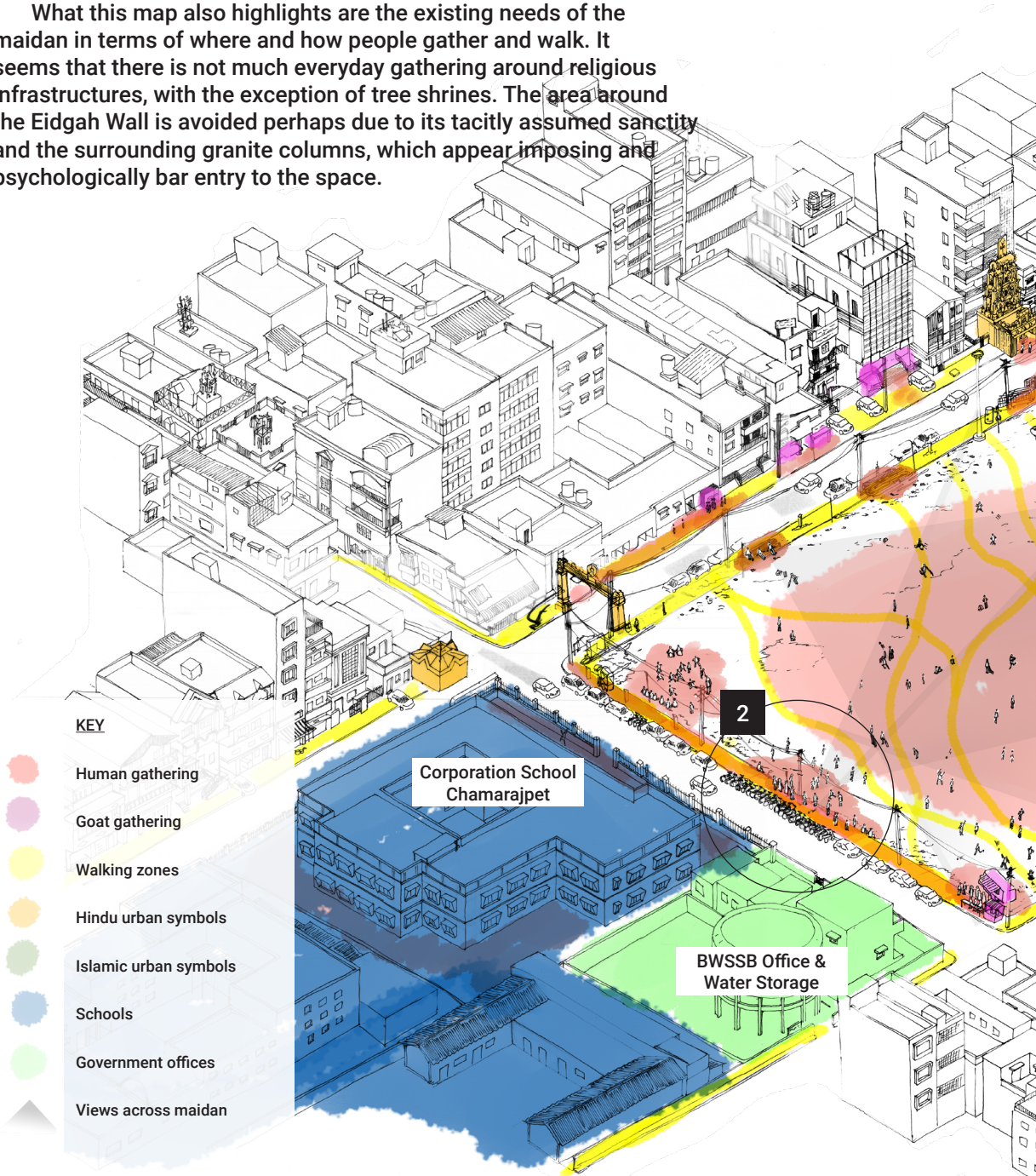
Author's photograph, 2022.

# Counter Cartography 2.5









## Everyday Communal Infrastructures

This map shows social infrastructures and their inter-relationships, treating fieldwork observations as a sample of everyday social rituals. It is interesting that the Eidgah Wall is not the only piece of religious ornament in public space; it is accompanied by similar Hindu-ornaments depicting various deities, representing how Indian urban spaces can embrace various religious identities.

What this map also highlights are the existing needs of the maidan in terms of where and how people gather and walk. It seems that there is not much everyday gathering around religious infrastructures, with the exception of tree shrines. The area around the Eidgah Wall is avoided perhaps due to its tacitly assumed sanctity and the surrounding granite columns, which appear imposing and psychologically bar entry to the space.



**KEY**

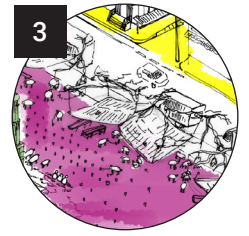
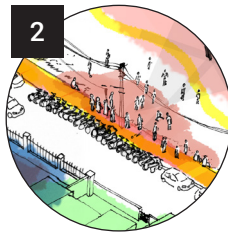
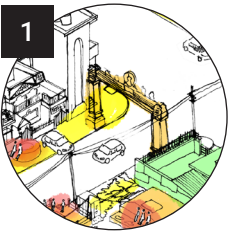
-  Human gathering
-  Goat gathering
-  Walking zones
-  Hindu urban symbols
-  Islamic urban symbols
-  Schools
-  Government offices
-  Views across maidan

Corporation School  
Chamarajpet

BWSSB Office &  
Water Storage

2

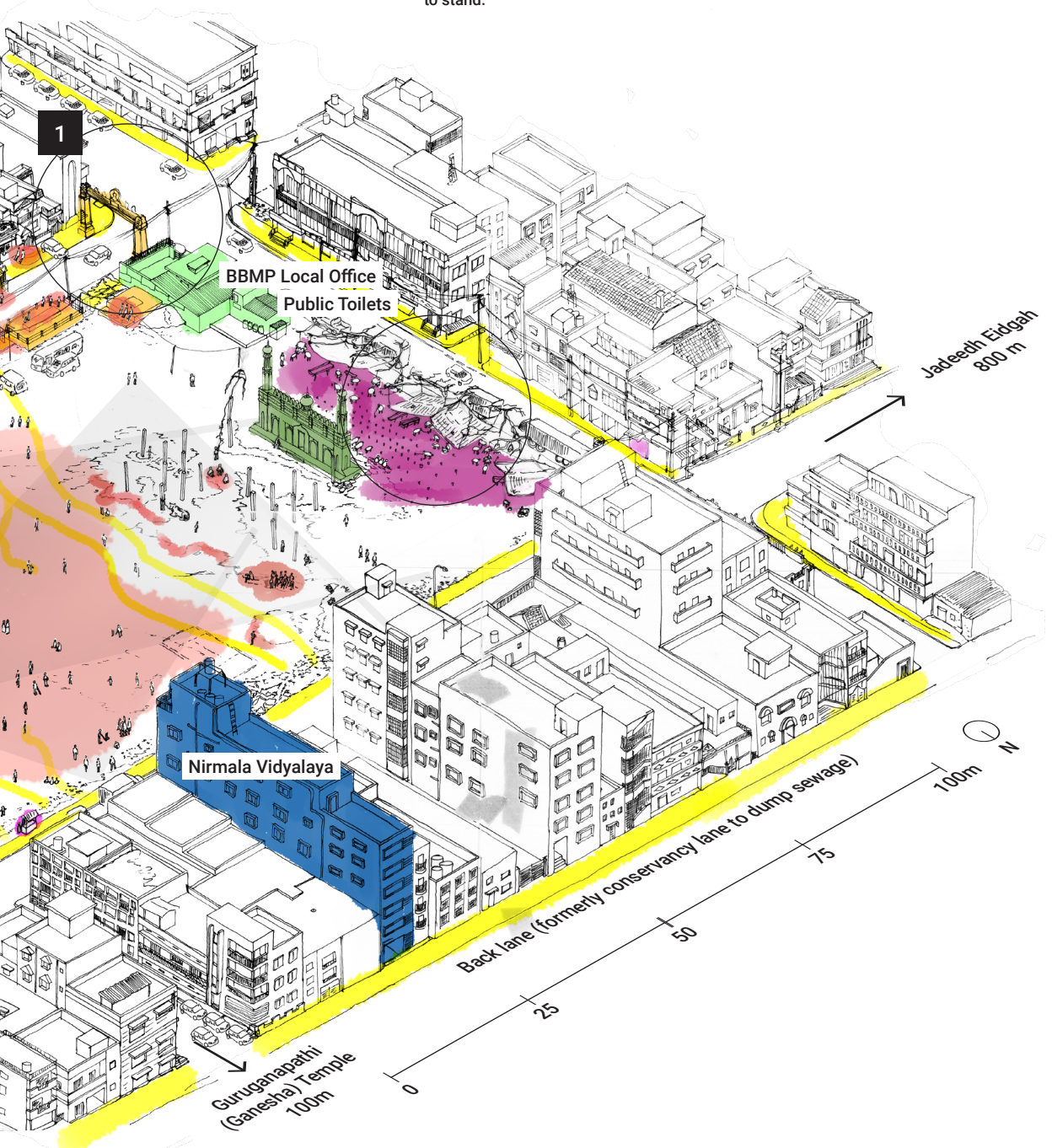




Hindu architectural motifs ornament a roadside temple and two portals which bookend the part of 2nd Main Road adjacent to the Eidgah.

If cricket is a weekly ritual and kabbadi is a daily ritual, then spectators don't have much choice but to either get a chair from elsewhere, to sit on the pavement or found objects, or to stand.

The goat market is a piece of economic infrastructure. The merchants have tied tarpaulin to low hanging tree branches to protect from rain.



1

BBMP Local Office  
Public Toilets

Nirmala Vidyalaya

Back lane (formerly conservancy lane to dump sewage)

Jadesdh Eidgah  
800 m

Guruganapathi  
(Ganesh) Temple  
100m



100m

75

50

25

0





Above  
A group of men spectate  
cricket games under the shelter  
of a gulmohar tree.  
Author's photograph, 2022.



Below  
Rubbish and abandoned tree  
trunks litter pavements.  
Author's photograph, 2022.





Above

An eatery provides an awning and plastic stools to sit on further away (about 400m) from the maidan.

Author's photograph, 2022.

Below

Also about 400m away are roadside vegetable vendors who sell their produce at a busy intersection. Neighbourhood locals or those passing by on motorcycles are their customers.

Author's photograph, 2022.



# Interview with Venkataraman Associates Architects

Venkataraman Associates is a large architectural practice in Bengaluru. In addition to architectural design projects, they also run Mod Foundation, a research arm which has, in the past, published work on the cultural and water heritage of Bengaluru. It was this research work which raised the question of the role of the Bengaluru-based architect, and for which this interview was undertaken.

This interview also sought more details about the management of their ambitious urban proposal to rejuvenate the decaying network of canals (*rajaluves*) across the city.

The specific architects have been anonymised in the below account, instead being referred to as 'VA' until their permission has been taken to use their names. The author is 'IA'.

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**What is the role of the architect in Bengaluru?**

Designing for Maidans

IA: How do architects in Bengaluru deal with spaces for play?

VA: We have a maidan in front of our office. They have basketball hoops of steel but they are prone to theft.



## Architects & Stakeholders

IA: What is the role of the architect in solving Bengaluru's urban problems?

VA: Unlike other cities in India, BLR has different, independent authorities like BESCOM (electricity), BDA (development authority), BBMP (municipality) and BWSSB (water), to name a few. These organisations fail to communicate with each other effectively.

VA: Additionally, corruption is rampant. Even if we underscale the budget of our projects to win the bid, after the tender is awarded, only 50% of the budget - on a good day - will be available.

The architect's role is, as a result, confused, particularly in BLR.

Chamarajpet Maidan:

IA: So, what about Chamarajpet Maidan? What is your view on the controversy?

VA: It is nothing but a media storm which simply exacerbates the problem of corruption. It is possible that there is a real estate agenda behind this. After all, where in Bengaluru is there not a real estate agenda?

IA: What is your ethos for treating 'empty' urban space?

VA: The best thing to do is to do nothing. The maidan should be left as it is as it is most valuable that way. Look at the maidan opposite our office. See the children playing whatever they want to play. No one is dictating that. It just happens.

# Part 3: Ritual

## Conflicting Festivities

Controversy over Chamarajpet Maidan was sparked by a request for permission to celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi on an Eidgah. Departing from Bernard Tschumi's statement that "there are ceremonies that determine space, and spaces that determine ceremonies",<sup>1</sup> a causal relationship between the maidan and its (religious) rituals is assumed. Historically, this has been proven in the Bengaluru context by the consecration of keres by protective goddesses and rituals. In the case of the maidan, the relationship is less clear due to its spatial indeterminacy. A pre-emptive forensic study of Ganesh Chaturthi and Eid is pursued by treating them as events which lead to future crimes of communal violence.<sup>2</sup>

## Ganesh Chaturthi vs. Eid vs. Independence

Ganesh Chaturthi celebrates the birth of the Hindu god Ganesha, god of wealth and remover of obstacles. Festivities occur in August/September and begin with the installation of Ganesha statues in homes and/ or in a neighbourhood pavilion alongside pujas (special prayers) honouring the deity in both locations.<sup>3</sup> Hindutva outfits requested setting up neighbourhood pandals (pavilions) to house Ganesh statues for the ten days of celebrations and prayers.<sup>4</sup> After ten days, the idols are paraded around the city in a lively communal procession, culminating in a visarjan (immersion). It garnered importance during British colonial rule as a form of anticolonial resistance. Being banned from organising mass protests but being allowed to have religious celebrations, Indian freedom fighter Lokmanya Tilak ideated using Ganesh Chaturthi processions to champion an Indian nationalist identity. Despite aspirations of freedom, it also pre-emptively began a "re-territorialisation project against Muslim Indians",<sup>5</sup> encouraged partly by the emergence of the Two-Nations theory. In the past few decades and particularly after the demolition of Babri Masjid, Ganesh Chaturthi processions have increasingly been sites of violence and death between Muslims and Hindus.<sup>6</sup>

Whilst Hindutva groups could have sought any other open space in the area (especially the Central Army Reserve Grounds), the Eidgah was conceivably chosen strategically as per a formula of Hindu event plus Muslim space equating discord. But the formula itself is questionable in the Chamarajpet case because the Eidgah is not an exclusive Muslim space. It operates as a flexible public space, as per the maidan theory. It is controversial but logically possible to pose a design question which stipulates Eid and Ganesh Chaturthi occurring on the same maidan. (If they do occur simultaneously, it would likely only be once every 36 years) What is problematic is the image of a Muslim space. This is precisely why Hindutva outfits might want to demolish the Eidgah Wall.

1  
Tschumi, B. (2001). *Event-Cities 2*. National Geographic Books. p. 19

2  
Weizman, E., et. al. (2014). *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*.

3  
De Koning, D. (2022). Op cit.

4  
Express Web Desk. (2022, August 31). No Ganesh Utsav at Bengaluru Idgah ground, SC orders status quo. *The Indian Express*. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/bangalore/ganesh-chaturthi-celebrations-bengaluru-idgah-ground-solicitor-sc-8120969/>

5  
De Koning, D. (2022). Op cit.

6  
Ibid.

The celebration of Independence Day at Chamarajpet Maidan might have been the government's attempt of trying to appease Hindu and Muslim groups through a celebration of common Indian identity. Their version of keeping the peace, however, involved turning the maidan into 'a fortress' by deploying hundreds of police and army personnel to stand guard.<sup>7</sup> A goat merchant informed the author about a shoot-on-sight order on the maidan against anyone who caused dissent. Its legality and occurrence is ambiguous.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, it has left the neighbourhood ill at ease.

Beginning a pre-emptive forensic analysis, based on the assumption that all the aforementioned festivals can be allowed on the maidan, aids a spatial discussion of (supposedly) discomfoting rituals.

## Futuring Rituals (Forensically)

As the Earth revolves around the Sun and the Moon revolves around the Earth, so too does the human spirit revolve around its divine gravitational pull. Circumambulation reifies this cosmic, primordial movement, bringing it to the physical realm. Hindus circumambulate clockwise (*pradakshina*) around sacred elements in space drawing positive energy from their axis of rotation.<sup>9</sup> On the pilgrimages of Umrah or Hajj, Muslims circumambulate around the Holy Ka'aba in Makkah in a collective counterclockwise movement known as *tawaaf*.

According to news reports, Hindutva groups requested permission not only to install pandals of Ganesha on the maidan, but also to begin their procession by circling around the maidan from the Ayyappa temple in the southeast corner.<sup>10</sup> This paper extrapolates speculatively as follows: by circumambulating in a presumably clockwise motion around the maidan, the Hindutva aimed to invent tradition and spatial sanctity around the maidan itself. Having done so once, twice or a few more times in the next few years, they could lay a more (falsely) substantiated claim over the maidan expressing a religious need to circumambulate around holy ground. This trajectory suggests the formation of a newly invented Hindu heritage which threatens to push extant Islamic practices, and perhaps even non-religious activities, out of the maidan. The non-Hindu adherent is othered. Following this line of speculation, this paper problematises this development at the behest of a marginalised, radicalised group of the othered.

### Speculative Futuring

"Processions, carrying deities, often come under a volley of stones, followed by arson attacks, vandalism and violence, under the garb that they played devotional songs and hymns that 'provoked' the other side."<sup>11</sup> Using the elevated rock of the former Eidgah Wall as their base, this group pelts rocks at a circumambulatory Ganesh Chaturthi procession and pandals around the maidan. Most of these bombardments are unsuccessful due to distance, but casualties have

7  
The Hindu. (2022, August 15). Chamarajpet turns into fortress for I-Day at Idgah Maidan. *The Hindu*. Retrieved October 22, 2023, from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/bangalore/chamarajpet-turns-into-fortress-for-i-day-at-idgah-maidan/article65769268.ece>

8  
Sharma, E. (2020, March 6). The Myth of "Shoot-At-Sight" Orders. *Statecraft*. <https://www.statecraft.co.in/article/the-myth-of-shoot-at-sight-orders>

9  
Kumar, S. (2021). Circumambulation in Indian pilgrimage Meaning and manifestation. *International Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research -IJSER*, 12(1), 232–243. <https://www.ijser.org/researchpaper/Circumambulation-in-Indian-pilgrimage-Meaning-and-manifestation.pdf>

10  
Times News Network. (2022, September 5). Bengaluru: Members of Ganesha samiti taken into preventive custody. *The Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/bengaluru-members-of-ganesha-samiti-taken-into-preventive-custody/articleshow/93991612.cms>

11  
De Koning, D. (2022). Op cit.



been recognised on the Western flank of the procession. The parade's edges disintegrate, storming the elevated rock. Sticks are swung, more rocks hurled and shopfronts vandalised. By nightfall, the amber glow of dying arsons surround abandoned Ganesha pavilions and fallen souls.

The exercise in forensic futuring has i) reiterated the spatial dimension of risks associated with a possible outcome of communal strife and has ii) highlighted the need to consider invented heritage – that is, holding beliefs or performing rituals which claim validity through historicity - as an impetus for spatial intervention.

A few other festivals have been occurring in and near the maidan without controversy for many years, according to an interview respondent. One is Shivratri which celebrates the birth of Lord Shiva with overnight devotional prayers and dance performances at home or at a Shiva temple.<sup>12</sup> As a Hindu festival, it would be expected to be met with opposition from Muslim groups. Instead, festivities occur respectfully: the street south of the maidan is pedestrianised for the evening; a partition between the maidan and the street is erected; pavilions, seating, a stage and festival lights are installed on the street.<sup>13</sup> Architectural barriers create respectful boundaries between semiological Islamic (Eidgah Wall) and Hindu sanctity.

12

Business Insider India. (2022, June 30). Maha Shivratri 2023 dos and don'ts you must know to celebrate it in the right way. *Business Insider*. <https://www.businessinsider.in/thelife/news/maha-shivratri-2020-dos-and-donts-you-must-know-to-celebrate-it-in-the-right-way/articleshow/74219387.cms>

13

Arpitha cooking and vlogs. (2023, February 16). *Shivratri special in Mahadeshwara Temple Chamarajpet, Bengaluru* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved February 22, 2023, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4NLUHBtYnE>

# Counter-cartography 3

## Eid Prayer

There are two Eids in the year: Eid-ul-Fitr, celebrated after *Ramzan*,<sup>1</sup> and Bakrid, celebrated during the Hajj season. Evidence from this research suggests that Chamarajpet Eidgah has a greater role in Bakrid. Bakrid<sup>2</sup> (also known as Eid-Al-Adha) requires every able Muslim to sacrifice a sheep or a goat. Hence, the whole maidan becomes a goat market in the run-up to Bakrid.

The research has been unable to elucidate upon where these other goat sellers (who are in addition to the maidan's permanent merchants) come from; whom they get permission from to sell; and the logistics of their operations. What is known, however, is that the BBMP gives permits for the permanent merchants so this is also perhaps the case with the Bakrid sellers. It is also known that the BBMP cleans the space before prayers.

The prayers - for both Eid-ul-Fitr and Bakrid - involve a mass congregation of male worshippers who stand in rows on the maidan and on adjoining streets, all the way to Jadeedh Eidgah, 800m to the West, where a separately-led congregation occurs.

1  
Ramzan, or Ramadan, is a month wherein Muslims worldwide fast (i.e. abstain from food and drink) from dawn till dusk. At dusk, they break their fasts at a meal called the Iftaar. Elsewhere in Bengaluru, many Ramadan markets set up shop, selling kebabs, fried samosas, and other streetfood. Based on the author's anecdotal knowledge, this is popular with (non-vegetarian) Hindus and Muslims alike.

2  
Bakrid literally translates to 'goat Eid' from Urdu



Maha Shivratri - which translates to the 'great night of Shiva' - occurs in February or March each year, celebrates the birth of the Hindu deity Shiva as well as his marriage to the Hindu goddess Parvati. This festival is celebrated as a solemn overnight event and involves fasting, prayers and vigils at Shiva temples.

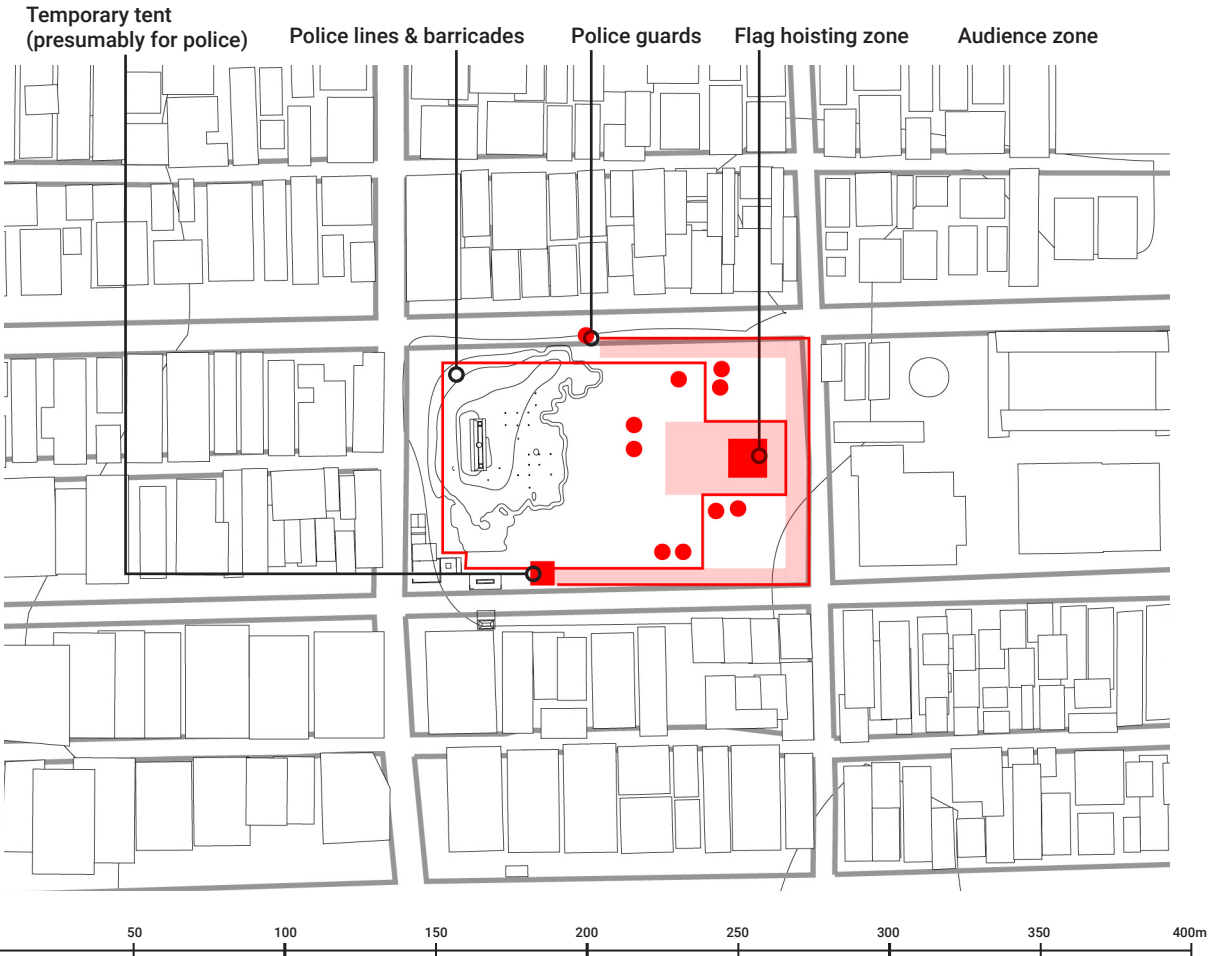
The maidan has a tree shrine in its southwest corner, which is associated to the Sri Mahadeshwara Swami Gudi temple. This temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and as such, Shivratri is celebrated here. It is unclear how the controversy affected the 2023 celebrations but the assumption is that they have not been affected much due to the status quo order.

After all, the celebrations do not occupy the maidan. Rather, a temporary tent made of steel and fabric is erected around the temple to pedestrianise 2nd Main Road for the event. In this tent, several *pandals*, a stage and seating for audiences are installed for prayer rituals, dances and celebration.





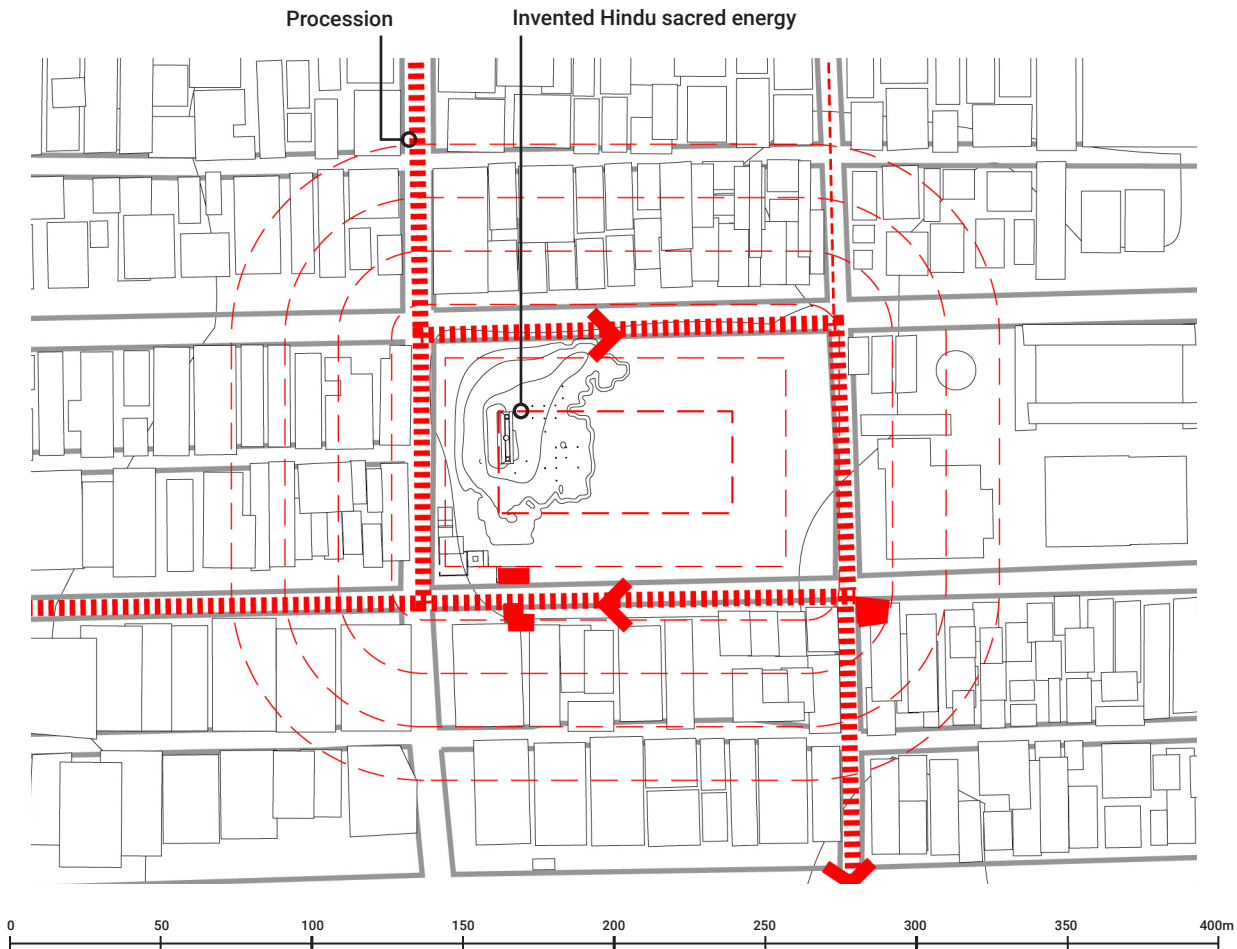
Indian Independence Day is celebrated on 15 August every year. Across the country, it is marked by processions, dance performances and flag hoisting events. 2022 was the first time that it was celebrated at Chamarajpet Maidan amid the controversy. It seems to have been the BBMP's attempt to address the Hindu-Muslim ritual conflict. However, the heavy police presence did little to alleviate the stresses felt by the Chamarajpet locals. That said, Republic Day, another pan-Indian holiday, was celebrated on January 26 2023, without as much security or fanfare. It seems like these Indian festivals will henceforth be celebrated on the maidan to celebrate the common ground between Hindus and Muslims. But it can easily be weaponised by Hindutva nationalists as they stake a claim over Indian-ness which they purport is beyond Muslim reach.



Ganesh Chaturthi does not currently occur on the maidan. However the image below speculates on a future scenario where permission is given. The demand was for a circumambulation around the maidan, which is only done around sacred objects in Hinduism. If this is done for a few years or decades, a tacit assumption that then maidan is sacred to Hindus will become invented heritage.

It is possible that, should such a claim arise, a Hindu-Muslim clash could be far worse than the current controversy. The attrition between the maidan's use as an Eidgah and as a Hindu sacred space would be another echo of the Babri Masjid affair, stoking communalistic sentiments.

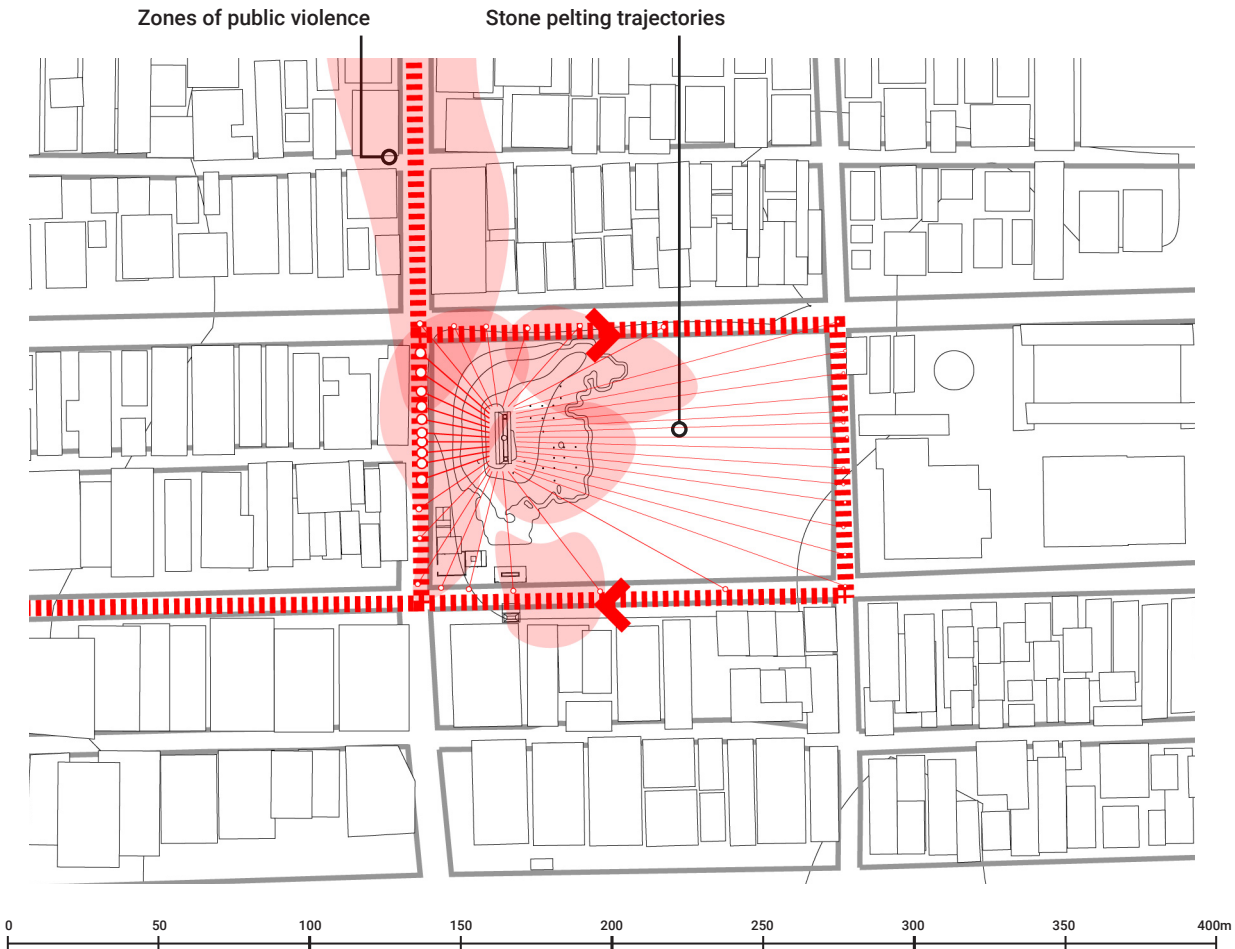
It should be noted that since the erasure of non-binarised urban typologies, Hindus and Muslims have tended to separate their religious spaces from each other so as to not impinge upon each other. Hence, the maidan presents an oddity.



If the maidan is occupied by Hindus (extremists) for Ganesh Chaturthi, it is possible that Muslim (extremists) could retaliate. For example, as suggested in the below diagram, they might take the Eidgah Wall as an elevated place which they can i) defend and ii) from which they can attack a Ganesh Chaturthi procession by pelting stones.

Based on past instances of communal riots across the country, this could lead to retaliation from the procession, which would lead to full-scale riots on the streets, including police brutality, arson, damage to (religious) social infrastructures, stampedes, injury and death.

Given such possibilities, if not now, then in the future, this spatial conflict needs addressing quickly.







**Above**  
Workers move a murti (statue/ idol) of Lord Ganesha to a ritual site ahead of the 'Ganesh Chaturthi' festival, in Bengaluru.

Express Web Desk. (2021, September 6). Amid fears of Covid surge, Karnataka permits Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations on a limited scale. The Indian Express. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/bangalore/amid-fears-of-covid-surge-karnataka-permits-ganesh-chaturthi-celebrations-on-a-limited-scale-7490640/>. PTI photo

**Below**  
Ugadi festivities at a market in Bengaluru.

"Cooped up" Indians Throng Malls and Markets Weeks After Covid-19 Surge. News18. <https://www.news18.com/news/india/cooped-up-indians-throng-malls-and-markets-weeks-after-covid-19-surge-3869570.html>



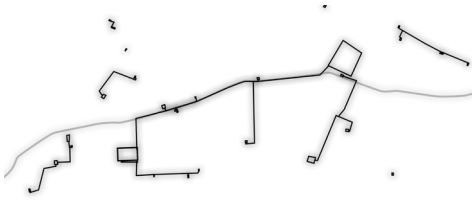
**Opposite**  
Eid prayers at Chamarajpet Eidgah.

Nachiyar, N., & Bharadwaj, A. K. V. (2022, August 8). Explained | Idgah Maidan row: Whose land is it anyway? The Hindu. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/idgah-maidan-row-whose-land-is-it-anyway/article65626316.ece>

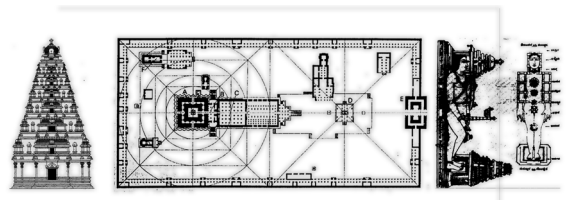




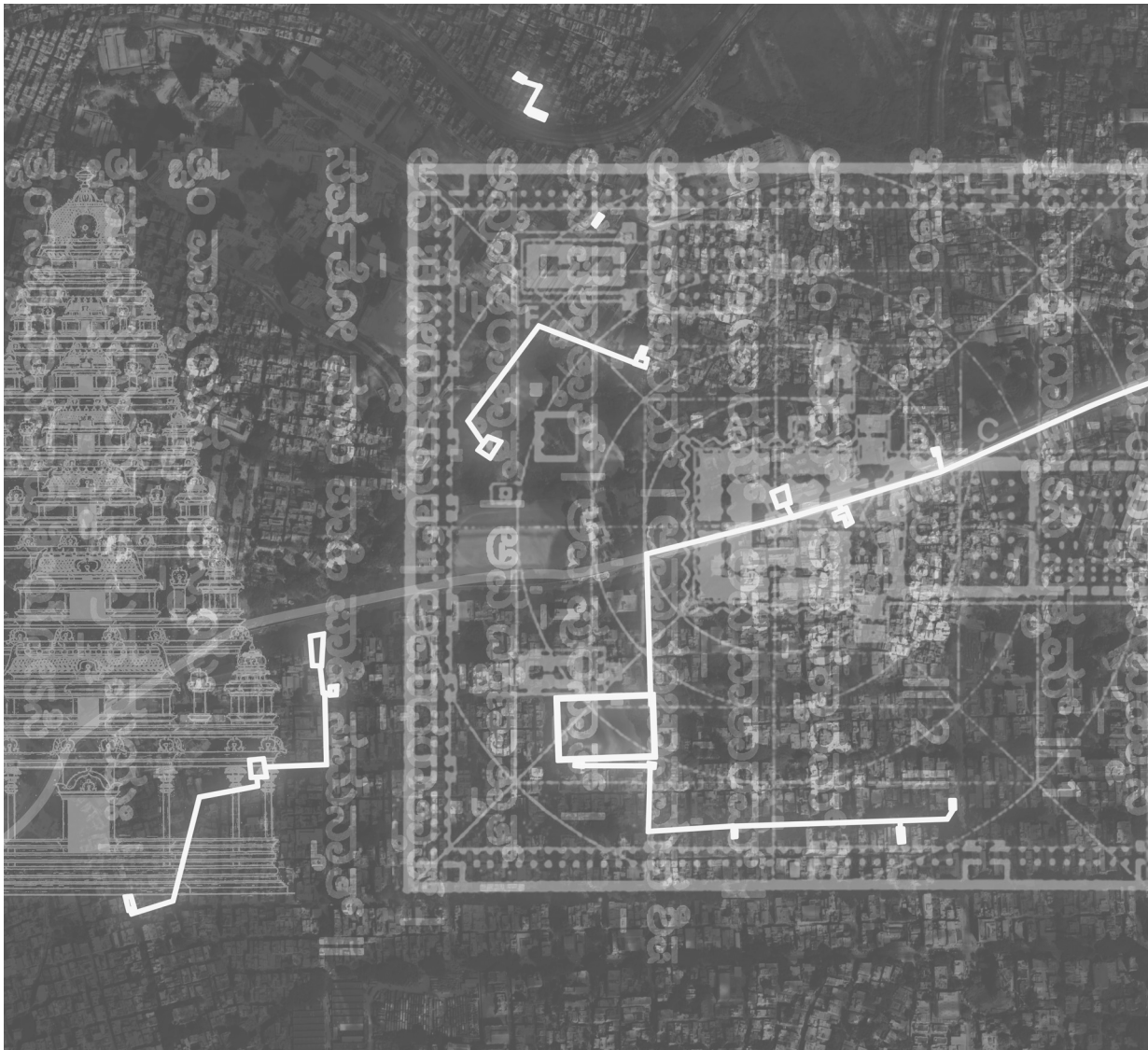




Network of Hindu Temples

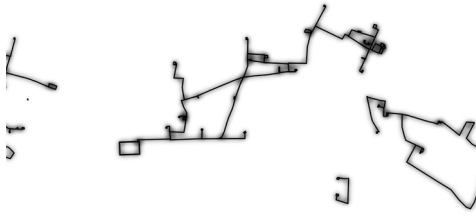


Architectural Drawings of South Indian Temple









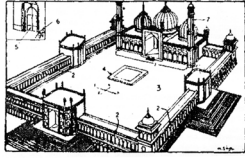
Network of Mosques and Dargahs



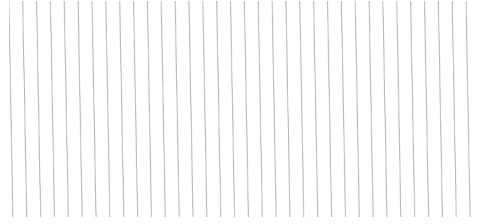
Mosques in South India



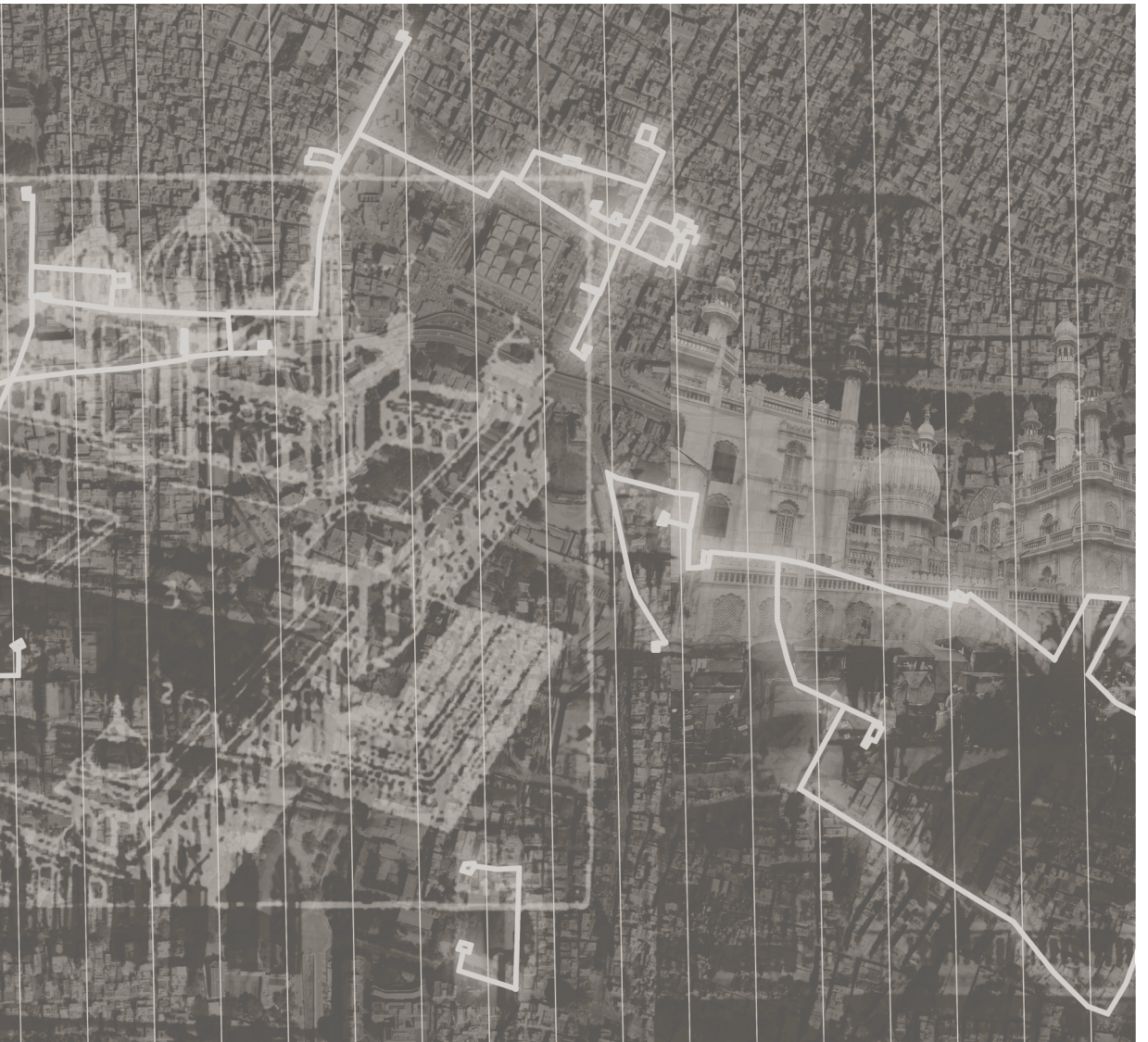




Mughal-Era Mosque



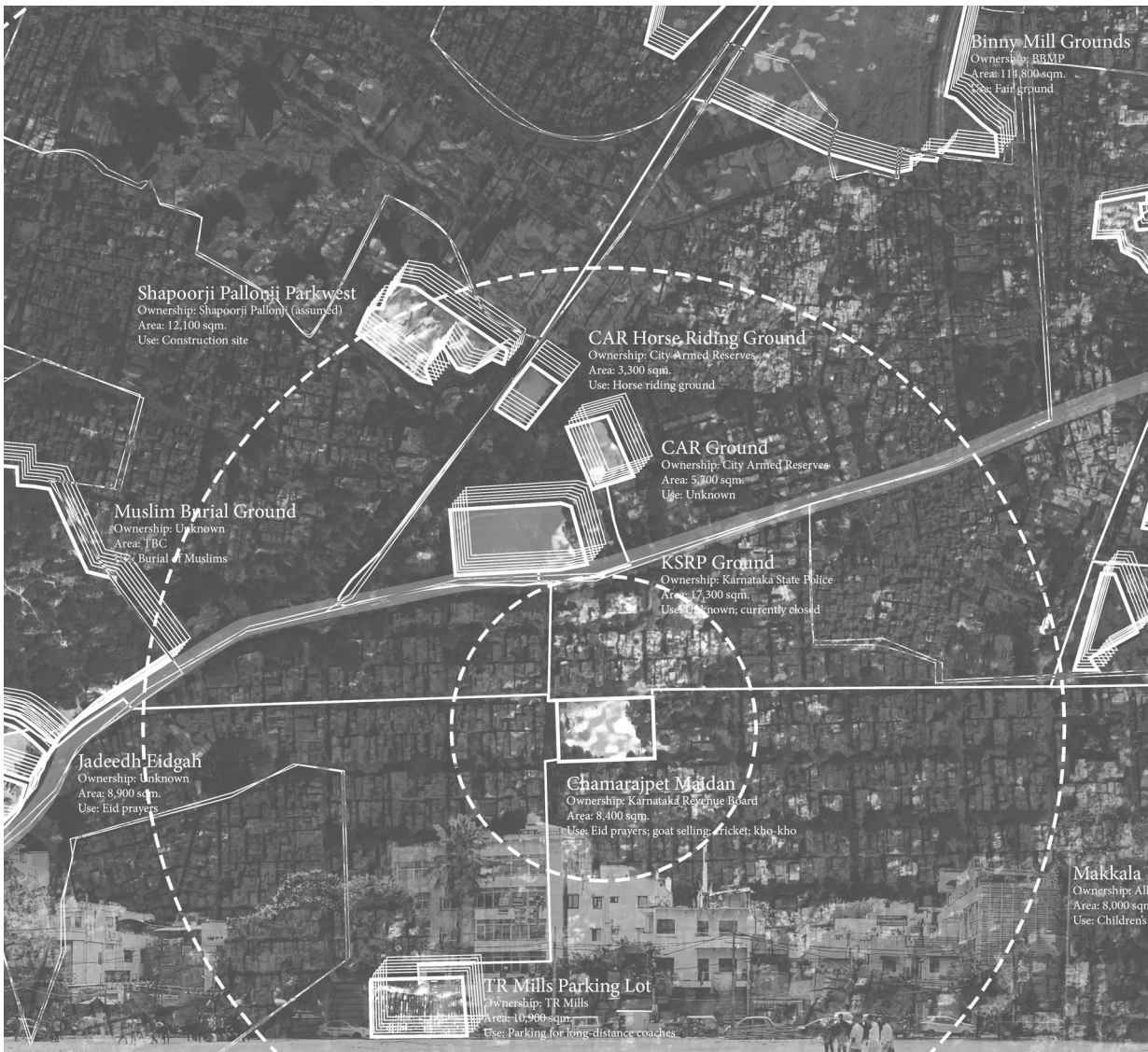
Rows of Muslim Prayer

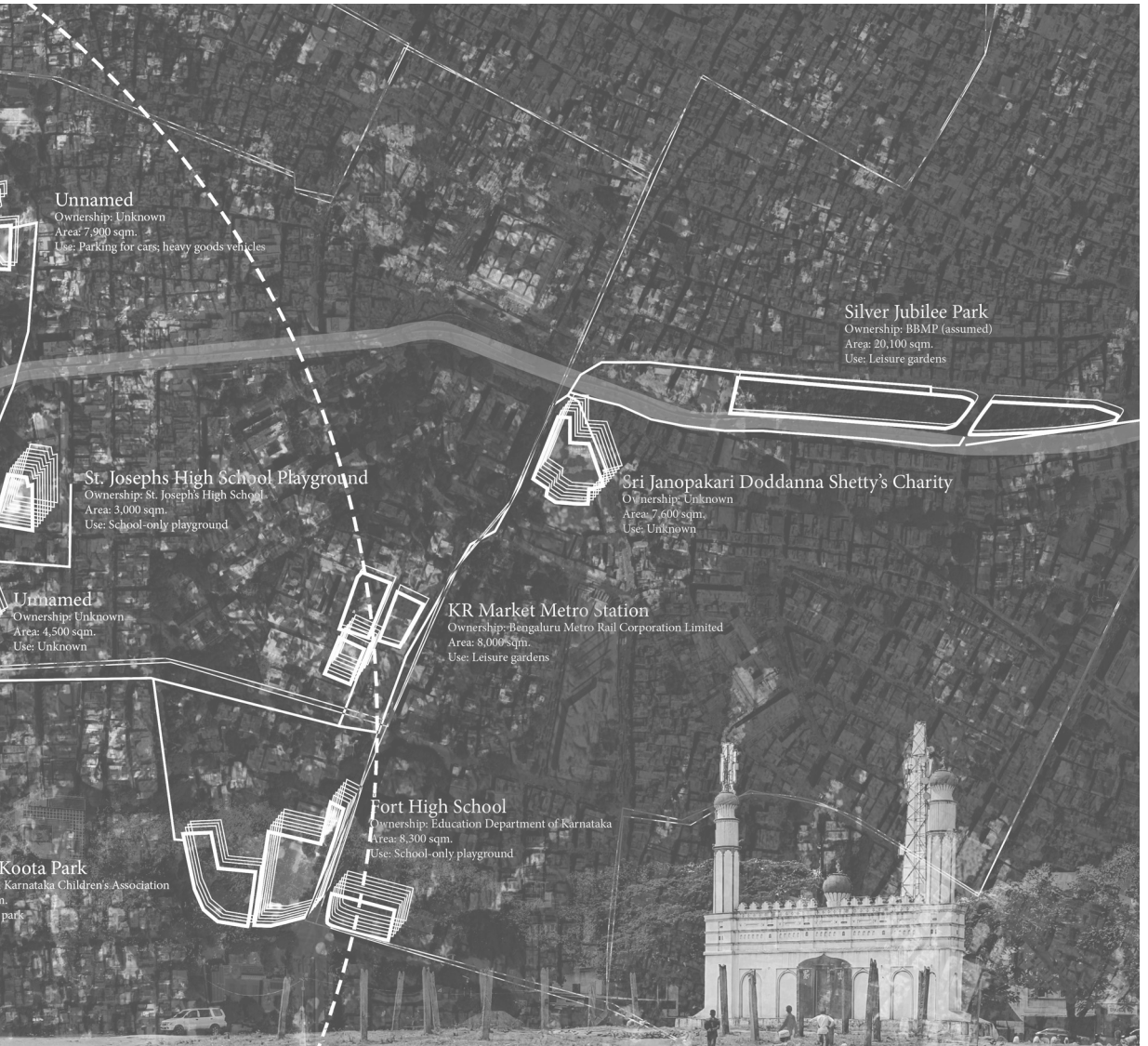




Despite the presence of open spaces very near Chamarajpet Maidan, it is curious to note two matters: firstly, that the Hindutva groups have specifically targeted this ground as it has a very visible Islamic icon (whilst the other open spaces do not); and secondly, that this is the only open space which is accessible for anyone to use.

The glaringly obvious presence of the Central Army Reserves' maidans a short walk away from Chamarajpet Maidan points towards the city-wide issue of a lack of public amenity in the form of maidans.





**Unnamed**

Ownership: Unknown  
Area: 7,900 sqm.  
Use: Parking for cars, heavy goods vehicles

**Silver Jubilee Park**

Ownership: BBMP (assumed)  
Area: 20,100 sqm.  
Use: Leisure gardens

**St. Josephs High School Playground**

Ownership: St. Josephs High School  
Area: 3,000 sqm.  
Use: School-only playground

**Sri Janopakari Doddanna Shetty's Charity**

Ownership: Unknown  
Area: 7,600 sqm.  
Use: Unknown

**Unnamed**

Ownership: Unknown  
Area: 4,500 sqm.  
Use: Unknown

**KR Market Metro Station**

Ownership: Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited  
Area: 8,000 sqm.  
Use: Leisure gardens

**Fort High School**

Ownership: Education Department of Karnataka  
Area: 8,300 sqm.  
Use: School-only playground

**Koota Park**

Ownership: Karnataka Children's Association  
Area: Unknown  
Use: Park



# Part 4: Conclusions

## A Needed Re-worlding

Opposite  
A man plays with his children  
on the maidan.  
Author's photograph, 2022.

Colonial and postcolonial modes of capital-driven infrastructural development and worlding have erased many urban spatial typologies in the middle of a Hindu-Muslim spatial spectrum which historically welcomed all religious denominations. Those that remain, such as markets, are underpinned by economic, rather than social, incentives. Those typologies that have less obvious economic incentives, such as parks, *keres* (tanks), *kattes* and *maidans*, are in decline, with the case of Chamarajpet Maidan having been tinged by communalism.

It is easier for the maidan to fall prey to communalism due to the strange combination of praxeological informality, apparent religio-semiological claims and cartographic clean-slatting. Representations of a tabula rasa by cartographies, and an exclusively Muslim space by news photography, have allowed Hindutva groups to justify their exasperation. Despite sensationalising the matter further, forensic futuring reveals a possible ulterior motive of the Hindutva to form an invented heritage based on ritual circumambulations around the maidan. And even though it is logistically possible to have Hindu, Muslim and Indian national festivals on the maidan, overlapping religious semiologies and stakeholder sentiments require careful navigation in the design phase.

The lived reality is distant from narratives of religious and ritual contestations. Citizens of Chamarajpet feel apprehensive about the controversy and simply wish to go about their daily routines of trading goods, walking, socialising, and especially being able to let their children play. Perhaps it is worth considering Bhagat Singh's manifesto which points towards the need for (economic) stability to veer away from communalist sentiments.

In this case, the relationship between public space, rituals and religious communalism is based largely on conflicting worldings. A response requires a two-pronged approach. Firstly, the Hindu-Muslim spatial conflict itself needs to be mediated. Secondly, the maidan needs to encourage and improve the everyday life of Chamarajpet. Architecture for public space can be a means to these ends, which can result in an alleviation of religious communalism.





# Part 5: Reflections

## Limitations of Undoing and Redoing

### Academic Programme

The Cross Domain City of the Future studio engages the other master tracks to provide a holistic understanding of the MSc AUBS program. I have found that, without this multidisciplinary approach, it would have been difficult to analyse the urban complexity of Bengaluru. To isolate the issue of socio-religious infrastructures from water or construction infrastructures would ignore their urban ecological relationships. Though religious communalism and architectural identity is not ostensibly related to water infrastructure, for example, the Bengaluru context is one where now depleted water tanks (*keres*) were sites of Hindu rituals and shrines. Water is also required for Islamic prayer rituals. The studio, by employing this holistic approach, has provided an argument for why an architect with an awareness for all the disciplines in the MSc AUBS track, is becoming ever more necessary.

With regards to architecture particularly, the matter of Hindu-Muslim tensions has been found to be a matter of supposedly conflicting architectural semiologies (physical symbols – temples and mosques - and the meanings people associate with them). Communalism is perpetuated by particular representations of architecture as binarized Hindu or Muslim space, rather than viewing these architectures as part of a more nuanced spectrum of Hindu-Muslim spaces. This is compounded by the apparent spatial indeterminacy of the maidan, which is formally portrayed as a ground on which nothing much occurs. By problematising the *tabula rasa* approach architecture takes towards open-air sites this project offers an architectural/ urbanistic proposal to address communalism.

### Research-Design Nexus

By virtue of the fact that the CotF studio is a research-based studio, I found myself researching quite deeply even during the post-P2 design phases. Pre-P2, the research was heavily focused on fieldwork and interviews with the aim of establishing an understanding of public spaces in Bengaluru. Unfortunately, my visit did not coincide with any major Hindu or Muslim festivals. I was at the maidan on Christmas day, but found, upon inquiry, that Christmas was not a major affair in Chamarajpet. That aside, the research was intent on understanding the everyday life of the maidan as architectural ethnography (drawing inspiration from Atelier Bow-Wow). To that end a countermapping exercise marked the start of a design process which aimed to provide space for activities disempowered by the controversy such as playing cricket, spectating or selling snacks.

Having returned to the desk to design, it became clear that there was a mismatch between my observations onsite and media/cartographic representations. This, through the very first design iterations, I attempted to address by installing (a 20th century definition of) a new architectural icon which was inspired by my research on Habib Rahman's address to religious communalism in Ayodhya. But it was jarring to its context and could have been described as an exercise in the architect's egotism. Whilst this approach could have proceeded, the socially-focussed base of the research demanded opinions from Chamarajpet locals. After all, for whom was the architectural intervention designed for?

That was the first criterion for a socially-contextualised design. The second, and one which lost its place during fieldwork, was rituals in public space. Reflecting on the fieldwork, it was found during a visit to Bengaluru's famous KR Market that as long as people had an economic basis for their religious rituals, there was little room for communalistic sentiments. Coincidentally, I found this view substantiated by a century-old source: the writings of Indian freedom fighter Bhagat Singh. There was a ritual economy that could be tapped into that was based around the trade of fresh produce, food, flowers and other ritual goods, both for Hindus and Muslims. The design proposal therefore aims to provide space where these trades can occur to help the various rituals flourish, and for the various religious groups to feel included.

On the other end of the spectrum, the various ritual demands that were set upon the maidan were problematised through a forensic futuring exercise. A worst-case scenario of communal violence on the maidan was speculated, based on past cases across India. It was found that the Ganesh Chaturthi festival particularly had a history of communal violence which included riots, stone-pelting, arson, damage to property, rape and murder. The maidan's analysis took these speculations as cautionary tales as the starting point for the mediation of intermediate spaces between existing Muslim and Hindu infrastructures.

This complex interplay between research and design continues to pervade the project. For instance, literature-based research about the seasonal wet-dry cycles of Bengaluru's tanks are inspiring a (yet to be put on paper) construction and water management framework for the design. The aim is to build capacity for the project to be a citizen-built effort, and to destroy walls of religious difference in the process of necessary collaboration.



Due to my positionality as a Western-educated student, the research began with a decoloniality framework to address my cultural-nonsituatedness. As part of this framework, I enlisted the help of Bengaluru-based researchers and architects. However, one of the first things I was told during interviews with them was that historically-bound narratives of decoloniality could be deemed irrelevant in the face of the maidan's everyday life. Though it was true that decoloniality was far-removed from the fieldwork phases, I maintained a 'Decolonising Pedagogy' log to understand systemic biases in architectural representations and meanings between Western education and Indian contextualisation. Indeed this was invaluable when the research outcomes demonstrated a need for de-worlding our neoliberally-infused and communally-stoked imaginaries of the maidan.

One of the biggest setbacks to this projects has, unfortunately, been the inability to substantiate design decisions with sufficient interview-based data. There was an idealised aspiration, at the start of the project, to have an established focus group of Bengaluru-based individuals to provide feedback on the design. But, it was found that i) people were very hesitant to engage in discussions about communalism; and that ii) Bengaluru's historic bifurcation as British-run (cantonment) and Mysore-run (pettah) zones have created particularities in Chamarajpet which cannot be accurately represented by those from cantonment neighbourhoods, or from outside Chamarajpet, for that matter.

I am therefore having to work around a hypothesised scenario whereby I, the architect, see my design proposal as a suggestion for the first step to solve the maidan's tensions. The scenario begins in a citizens forum meeting that includes communalistically-opposed Hindu and Muslim groups, and where my design proposal can be the point to be problematised as a diversion from problematising religious identities.

I like to believe that it has potential to be a benign Trojan's Horse for both Hindu and Muslim views. I say this because there has been an effort to not only empower Muslims who are slowly being marginalised by the ruling government on a national scale, but also to empower Hindus who are currently unable to celebrate valuable open space on a local level. Though its intentions are benign, it surely has its biases – both from Hindu and Muslim perspectives. Due to this duality, I imagine that it could be presented, as a first step in local interfaith dialogue, to both groups as a cause in their favour for them to then discuss and appraise.

Transferrability of Findings

The research outcomes could be highly applicable to other instances of religio-spatial contestations across India, and perhaps even abroad. The conversation within India, however, is most pertinent to this project as such architectural contestations are being heavily politicised for the approaching general elections. Essentially, it helps for everyone – religious or secular, Hindu or Muslim - to recognise the everyday value of these contested spaces, and to assess architectural semiologies perpetuated by (invented) heritage practices, news media, cartography and neocolonial understandings of public space and upon which the masses fixate.

Design-wise, the transferability of the specific proposal for Chamarajpet Maidan is currently unclear as it is naturally dependent on the particular climatic and social contexts of the other contested maidans in India. However, the principle of integrating socio-religious infrastructures with more 'traditional' understandings of infrastructures such as water, waste and transport, can be applied to various communally contested spaces.

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