

Neighbourhood Matters – A Virtual Exhibition

Each of the entries for this exhibition answered the question: *what makes your neighbourhood a sustainable place to live?*

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A mix-use neighbourhood, Vatara, Bangladesh.

“My neighbourhood (Vatara, Bangladesh) is not only a place for residence but also it thrives with economic activity. Most of the building serves mix-use activity. If you take a walk inside this neighbourhood you will hardly find any settlement without a shop. Most of them are grocery shops, salons, medical hall, and other basic daily necessities. There are four major Bazars, which open almost every day from early morning to midnight. You will be able to find every daily necessity within your walking distance.”

Credit: Tahmina Sultana.

The Victoria memorial, Kolkata, India.

“The Victoria Memorial is a large marble building in Kolkata, West Bengal, India, which was built between 1906 and 1921. It is dedicated to the memory of Queen Victoria, then Empress of India, and is now a museum and tourist destination under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture. Here we can see the sustainable building structure go up time to time smoothly to balance biodiversity within the city.”

Credit: Sourav Karmakar.

A rickshaw puller, Gollamari, Banorgati, Khulna City, Bangladesh.

“A rickshaw puller is a very well-known figure in Khulna city. Rickshaw is the only transport mode within the neighbourhood boundary. They play around the city and are very popular among city dwellers. Though the battery-driven Easy-Bike’s is predominating the main roads, within the neighbourhood areas rickshaws are the only mode to commute. These people make the neighbourhood sustainable by serving all the year-round. Though they are struggling with the increased number of battery-driven and motorized vehicles, it will remain as the most favourite mode of transport to the people of Khulna city.”

Credit: Tanmoy Malaker.

'Igib' (fetching water) Santa Clara, Batangas City, the Philippines.

“Some parts of Santa Clara, particularly those who live near the shore, do not have regular supply of water. Thus, residents’ queue in line at the local river to get their daily supply of water. “Igib” means fetch water in English.”

Credit: Aira Ruth Caluag.

'Shareable neighbourhood', Beauty Sunshine housing estate, Chongqing, China.

“Neighbourhoods are not only places for us to live and rest, but also centres to communicate with each other and enjoy group living. The photo was taken at an affordable housing estate in Chongqing, in which a variety of residents are chatting and relaxing on a huge outdoor square. As Chongqing is a slow-paced city, people choose to leave home and take part in different activities such as chatting, dancing, playing basketball, playing poker, playing Mahjong (a kind of traditional Chinese table game) and so on. As a result, neighbourhood designers in Chongqing may focus more on the construction of public square to provide relaxing area to normal residents. And when people enjoy outdoor entertainment with others, the neighbourhood will be more vivifying at the same time, which make the neighbourhood sustainable.”

Credit: Kehan Ji.

Grow city, Kigali, Rwanda.

“The City of Kigali has launched a new city master plan to be implemented from 2020 up to 2050. The new master plan introduces a flexible and incremental approach to city development as it seeks to accommodate 3.8 million population in 2050 from the current 1.6 million population.” **Credit: Dan Nsengiyumva.**

The daily connecting hub: the mosque, Vatara, Bangladesh.

“This community is not only diversified by income groups but also with different religious beliefs and there are Muslims, Hindus, and Christians. This neighbourhood has majority of Muslims and Muslim people mostly come to mosque five times a day. They can connect there with each other. Here in this picture, the boy in green t-shirt is keeping guard of the shoes left by people and the other two people are in a hurry to catch the salat.” **Credit: Tahmina Sultana.**

The (extra)ordinary street market in Chennai, India.

“The photo shows the weekly market held along the streets bordering the famous Parthasarathy temple complex, in Thiruvellikeni, Chennai. The image captures the vibrancy of the neighbourhood level streets in Chennai, which plays an important role in sustaining the livelihoods of informal vendors and supporting the local arts and crafts to thrive. Apart from the socio-economic significance, the market is a major attraction amongst the local people as it offers a variety of things catering to all age groups, from toys to household utensils at reasonable price. The market is especially popular for its activities such as balloon shooting, ‘robot’ astrology and handicraft making, adding more vibrancy and entertainment to the experiences of the neighbourhood street-life. While one side of the street market is against the temple wall, the other side is alongside the residences and there is a very co-ordinal relationship within the community where the residents allow the vendors to use the entrances spaces. Linked strongly to the temple context, the tangible aspects of the street market, people, objects and colour symbolisms, interpenetrates and superimposes onto one other, creating a strong sense of identity both at individual and collective level, enabling community coherence and resilience.” **Credit: Lakshmi Priya Rajendran.**

Delivering cement, King Williams Town, South Africa.

“It is the hustle that makes this place special. Men line up at hardware stores and offer their bodies to transport cement from delivery trucks outside to the shop (or from the shop to awaiting customers). With South Africa unemployment rate above 40% - making ends meet is a constant struggle. Instead of submitting to the dire circumstance, these hustlers put cement on their heads for food on the table.” **Credit: Mvuzo Ponono.**

Making the ‘urban’ better: from mobility to inclusivity. Kigali, Rwanda.

“Biryogo is the oldest residential neighbourhood in Kigali, established in 1920’s after natives were resettled from the heart of Kigali to pave way for colonial settlers. It is located ½ KM to the south. Neighbourhoods, be they formal or informal, are expected to increasingly transition towards becoming more inclusive, safe and resilient. This photo draws our attention to the way tangible (urban structure) and intangible (social life) interact to determine sustainability. On lunch o’clock in the City, you will need to walk to grab a motorbike to manoeuvre the busy street down to this junction in Biryogo to enjoy traditional cuisine. The bikes have taken over about half of the street, and people the other half. There is not more left for cars, hence they have to be left at the periphery of the neighbourhood. This co-existence of vibrancy and informality presents an opportunity to re-think creation of social hotspots as a central strategy for sustainable neighbourhoods. Where will the space come from? The greatest barriers to our dreams is the stagnant mindset of impossibility, but this photograph is a true testimony to the possibilities of streets as public space. Streets are everywhere in our neighbourhoods, and in plenty. Will you walk this talk with me?” **Credit: Josephine Malonza.**

Access to clean pipe water still a 'pipe dream' for some in Madurai, India.

“Madurai, a historic city in South India famous for temples, once had water tanks all around the city. Two rivers - the Vaigai and the Kiruthumal - augmented the storage of these tanks, which ensured sustainable water supply in those days. Today, the city faces acute water crisis due to increased concretisation and resultant decline in recharge of groundwater. In fact, many neighbourhoods in this city have dry taps, and rely entirely on community taps or tankers, while others depend on depleting underground water. The water tanks which once provided water to the entire city, have been converted into concrete structures in the name of urban development. The irony is that many of the important government buildings such as Madurai Law College, World Tamil Sangam, Sunday Market, Madurai Bench of Madras High Court, District Court, All India Radio Station were constructed on water tanks. The picture is an eye opener, that access to clean piped water is a pipe dream for many neighbourhoods in Madurai. Rejuvenation of water tanks, efficient storage, mandatory rainwater harvesting and re-use of recycled water can help in building water resilience in Madurai city.”

Credit: Pragma Sharma.

Not just a hand pump. Source of drinking water, an asset for the community in saline prone Khulna, Bangladesh.

“Khulna’s water is saline and ground water from deep aquifer layer is the only hope for drinking water. Many of the communities in Khulna do not have access to piped water network but the community installed their own hand pump to share water for drinking. The hand pump is a symbol of solidarity, community coping strategy and above all a valuable asset for the community’s sustainability.”

Credit: Shilpi Roy.

Old China market of Kolkata, India.

“Tiretta Bazaar is an old neighbourhood in Central Kolkata of West Bengal. This locality was home to the initial Chinese immigrants to the city in the early 1800s and comprised of about 20,000 ethnic Chinese Indian nationals, mostly the Hakka Chinese. Only about 2000 of them exist in this part of the city today. It is interesting to mention that the bazaar (market) was probably owned by Edward Tiretta, an Italian living in Kolkata (Calcutta) in 1790s. The traditional Chinese culture greatly amalgamated with Bengali and other dominant cultures; yet, the area is still renowned for some of the oldest and famous eateries serving the traditional Chinese and Indian Chinese cuisine. The scene in this photograph depicts a vendor selling traditional Chinese food items in the famous breakfast market. Tiretta market is a popular destination for food lovers in early mornings. Cheenapara (Chinese neighbourhood) as commonly called in the local language, boasts an economically sustainable neighbourhood with vendors traditionally selling fresh vegetables, homemade breakfast foods like steamed buns, hot dumplings, wontons, momos as well as homemade condiments for decades. New shops of other economic activities have also come up. Though the ethnic neighbourhood has changed its composition of residents over the years, yet the Cantonese style breakfast continues to attract crowds even bigger today. The Chinese vendors, many of whom have moved out of the neighbourhoods, still come to this destination to sell their homemade food items. Social and economic sustainability have been a character of this neighbourhood forever.”

Credit: Devarupa Gupta.

Walk safely or safe walking, Azizur Rahman Road, Khulna, Bangladesh.

“My photograph represents a story of 'Azizur Rahman Road', an organically grown neighbourhood of Khulna city. During our fieldwork of the Centre for Sustainable, Healthy and Learning Cities and Neighbourhoods (SHLC), the covered drain grasped my attention. As many wealthiest neighbourhoods of Khulna city still have open drainage, all drains of this upper-middle-income neighbourhood are covered. Talking to some middle-aged residents, I came to know about an interesting story. Once the roads of this neighbourhood were narrow, and there was open drainage alongside the roads. Residents needed to walk carefully to ensure safety. Most of the children of this neighbourhood were not allowed to walk alone on the

streets. Whenever any children went out for a walk or to roam around, parents remained anxious about their children's safety. But now as the drains are covered, parents have no more worries about their children's safety. In the absence of footpaths, drain covers are used as footpaths, and children get a chance to walk and play freely on the streets without concern about safety. Respondents were so proud about the fact that in their childhood they needed to 'walk safely' on the roads, while now their children get a 'safe walking' environment. A safe walkable environment is pivotal to uphold the sustainability of any neighbourhood. It opens multiple windows of sustainability including better social cohesion, better environment, less pollution, mental satisfaction, community pride and so on. My photograph is a demonstration of safe walking environment that contribute to the neighbourhood sustainability."

Credit: Nafisa Anjum.

Trolley transportation, Pandacan, Manila, the Philippines.

"The photo represents the everyday transportation for some residents of Pandacan, Manila. This is a wooden trolley made to accommodate passengers going to their work, school, or groceries. The trolley is operated by a person pushing it. The speed of the trolley depends on the number of passenger and steepness of the track." **Credit: Aira Ruth Caluag.**

A butterfly in the chaos, North Kolkata, India.

"This photo is captured from the balcony of the first floor of my house. During the last few years, I have seen this place undergoing various changes, but it never gave up its greeneries or the basic systems. I think myself lucky to live in this locality because: 1. Over the years, many real-estate agents approached to make this housing complex to a fully urbanised one harming its natural greeneries. But we, the dwellers, never gave in. 2. The age old dug-well ensures that even if there is a fall of electricity, there could never be a shortage of water. 3. Almost 8-10 years ago, the road was concretised due to its bad condition during rainy season and put to the usages of car parking or garage which generates revenue to contribute to the wellbeing of the housing. Some benches with shades have been built where we can sit in the weekend to experience the breeze. 4. Last, but especially important, the drains were particularly made to support the passage for storm water. I love the idea that how sticking to the basics we can live scientifically and sustainably." **Credit: Soumita Banerjee**

Top of Byangabo, Rwanda.

"An aerial view of Byangabo city which is located in the western province of Rwanda, and it has 388km² area, this photo shows how the population is growing. Now the city has over 10,662 population, the city lies on the shores of Kinoni river, around the city of Byangabo, and it the middle of Musanze and Nyabihu district." **Credit: Niyorugira Wycliffe.**

Old Latin quarters of Goa, India.

"Maintaining its colonial character, with narrow cobbled streets lined with houses and cottages painted in pastels, Fontainhas is a true piece of Portuguese history in Panaji, Goa, India. As history unravels, built on reclaimed land, in the late 18th century, a Goan expatriate AntonioJoao de Sequeira established Fontainhas. It is the only area in the Indian state of Goa where, Portuguese is still the main spoken language. Many mansions have been renovated for modern buildings yet, windows and projecting balconies of some of the old houses exist. The area today holds some of the oldest art galleries and exotic cafes other than being used for residential purpose. The Chapel of St. Sebastian erected in 1880 is located here. The Fontainhas art festival is held annually for a week and attempts to create awareness for preserving heritage among the young generations. The atmosphere in the neighbourhood focuses on the architectural elegance of the heritage area. Preserving a colonial establishment in the 21st century and maintaining social and economic wellbeing as well as relating to a cultural character while maintaining low environmental impact is what makes this neighbourhood sustainable in all dimensions."

Credit: Devarupa Gupta.

A touch of green, Vatara, Bangladesh.

“You may find this place (Vatara, Bangladesh) grey as most of the area is filled with structures but people in this area try to plant trees on their balcony and terrace. I grow spinach, beans, mint leaves, and henna leaves on my terrace. In this grey area somehow this plant grows like it owns the electric lines. This tea stall gets busy during afternoon time and people gather there to drink tea and gossip about their daily life.”

Credit: Tahmina Sultana.

A communal bath, Crescent Jute Mill Area, Khulna, Bangladesh.

“The Crescent Jute Mill neighbourhood (Khulna, Bangladesh) designed for the industrial workers, has several gender friendly public baths like the one in the picture. The buildings of this colony are modelled around the baths. Though every household has their own private bathing facilities in their homes, many people still enjoy shower in the communal baths where people meet at their leisure time. Residents joyfully participate in this bath as they neither have to pump the water, nor tote buckets. The view of these spaces of community gathering in the neighbourhood is incomplete without some gossiping fellow who open their heart to each other with the splash of water. Though it is not like the Roman baths, these communal baths raise a great opportunity for the community people to gather and socialise.”

Credit: Nishat Tasnim Maria and Irfan Shakil.

Micro-regeneration at neighbourhoods in Jiayuanxinli Community, Tianjin, China.

“As we all know, one of methods to make the neighbourhood sustainable is to implement micro-regeneration. In this photo taken in 2018 during field research in Tianjin, old buildings were being renewed by changing outside surface and repairing insulating layer in order not only to beautify neighbourhood environment but also to improve housing quality. As a people-benefit project in Tianjin, this micro-regeneration program promotes sustainable development of the neighbourhood successfully. We believe that more and more neighbours will experience micro-regeneration and get a new life in the nearly future.”

Credit: Nankai University.

The invisible workers: capturing home-based work in Madurai, India.

“are 37.4 million home-based workers in India. Most home-based workers are invisible and happen to be women who try to supplement their family income by engaging in home-based economic activity. The invisibility of homeworkers in a supply chain can be attributed to the fact that they are employed through a series of intermediaries and have no direct access to market. Due to the invisibility of their work, the contribution of home-based workers to the economy is unrecognised, and they are deprived of social benefits and workers’ rights.”

Credit: Debolina Kundu and Arvind Pandey.

Busy night, Yameili Community, Tianjin, China.

“Night life is an unforgettable part of a city which radiates the city’s charm, while night life in a neighbourhood shows more breadth of daily life. In this photo taken in a common street at Yameili Community, Tianjin, residents are enjoying their night life through shopping and strolling, with traditional character stores working busily. At the same time, some street stalls are also providing goods or services which improves the energy of the neighbourhood. Chinese urban managers are encouraging street stalls, which are called Ditan in Chinese, these days in order to create multiple and energetic streets and then promote sustainable development of neighbourhoods.”

Credit: Nankai University.

'Heritage', Datong, China.

“This photo was taken during urban research fieldwork in Datong in 2019. As children are the hope of the city, urban managers also pay attention to development of youths in order to guarantee the sustainable development of the neighbourhood. There is a sculpture of a lovely child in the photo, while a child playing happily is opportunely passing by, which shows that community planners have taken children’s living and growing into account during the neighbourhood construction process, such as distribution of educational resources and public activity space. When children grow up, they will continually build our common homeland in the future.” **Credit: Huan SONG.**

'Pond matters': people still resort to ponds for bathing, washing and other everyday uses. Maheswar pasha, Khulna, Bangladesh.

“In Bangladesh ponds are traditionally used as a source of drinking water, bathing, washing, food preparation and other household uses both in urban and peri urban areas. In Bangladesh, the application of fertilisers, pesticides and antibiotics are carried by pond water. Use of surface water is blessings for Bangladesh by reducing the use of ground water. In the peri urban neighbourhoods in Khulna city this scenario is common for many households sharing pond for their everyday use.”

Credit: Irfan Shakil and Nishat Tasnim Maria.

Home beside workplace, Mirerdanga, Khulna, Bangladesh.

“The industries ensured the residence of its workers along them. The coexistence of the housing and the industry basically complement each other. Due to the housing supply the industries get a sure supply of workforce. And similarly, the residents can make their livelihood by working in the I industries. Employees can easily access their workplace with minimum mobility. The opportunity reduces the urban struggle of traffic congestion.” **Credit: Nishat Tasnim Maria and Irfan Shakil.**

Urban development in Nagpayong, Pinagbuhatan, the Philippines.

For more than 15 years of living in Nagpayong, Barangay Pinagbuhatan, I could confidently say that I saw how our area was developed; from an area of vacant house lots filled with tall grasses to now a dense urban neighbourhood. By now being a dense urban neighbourhood, it became sustainable in terms of job availability and promoting economic growth of the families in the area. Some contributing factors to economic sustainability are: a) the lower land cost and more flexible land acquisition compared to other places within Metro Manila, attracting lower up to middle income earners to acquire a house either for residence or renting; b) the place is full of economic opportunities – may it be industrial, warehousing, wholesale and retail, services, or self-employment jobs, and c) its strategic location by being relatively near (but far - because of traffic) to business districts (like Ortigas Center) and other areas in Pasig City with bustling economic activities. Aside from these multiple factors, it can also be highlighted that our neighbourhood’s economic sustainability is part of the collective economic sustainability in the country’s capital region, thus, it needs to maintain and strengthen its mutual connections with neighbourhoods and cities.” **Credit: Rhay Daniel R. Racoma.**

Public activity space in old neighbourhood, Jingzhongli Community, Tianjin.

“To make the neighbourhood sustainable, it is not only important to provide public space for the residents, but also improve their health level. As a result, many neighbourhoods in China have installed sporting equipment in outdoor space and created public activity areas as this photo taken in Tianjin. We are gratified that equipment was really used by children which is shown in the photo. As the picture was taken in winter, we believe that there will be more residents there at warmer days. On the one hand, residents could keep healthy by doing exercises; on the other hand, community atmosphere could be better helping people communicate with each other. Public activity space makes neighbourhood sustainable.”

Credit: Nankai University.

Aerial view of sustainable habitat of Sikkim, India.

The Sustainable Habitat of Sikkim for Indian Citizen.

Credit: Sourav Karmakar.

Two different roofs under the same sky, Goalkhali Bastuhara Colony, Khulna, Bangladesh.

“The tin shed building in the foreground of the picture is sheltering the indigent. In the same frame the building at the background is sheltering the well off in the same neighbourhood. To guarantee an adequate housing for both substandard and privileged, low-income housing units as well as planned housing is constructed in an inclusive way within the neighbourhood. This balance is intended for there to be harmony and peace. To recognize that all human are equals and part of each other the concept of division by class, skills and income is eliminated through providing shelter to everyone according to their affordability in this neighbourhood. Coexistence of housing for both income groups is creating an integrated society.”

Credit: Irfan Shakil and Nishat Tasnim Maria

Shelters along the railway lines: unsustainable yet only hope for poorest of the urban poor in Khulna city.

The settlements along the railway lines are temporary and shelters are in feeble condition. Risks, uncertainties and shocks are part of life. Although these places do not match the definition of sustainability, without access to these informal and illegal shelters, the poorest of the poor people would not have a chance to live in cities. **Credit: Tanjil Sowgat.**

‘Great park’ neighbourhood, Hot Spring housing estate, Chongqing, China.

“To improve the environment of neighbourhoods, it is important to grow plants at outdoor areas. This photograph was taken at a medium-high level community in Chongqing, in which greenery landscape has been designed wonderfully. Many kinds of plant including both tall trees and low shrubs are made up with picturesque layout, while tortuous road through them gives the neighbourhood more aesthetic feeling. Delightful view of the neighbourhood could not only make residents happy and improve their healthy level, but also be benefit of environmental protection. In the future, our neighbourhoods will pay more and more attention to greening in order to achieve one's goal of sustainability.” **Credit: Kehan JI.**

Combination between old and new, Datong, China.

“It is a sustainable way to combine tradition culture and modern technology correctly in order to develop our neighbourhood. As is shown in the photo taken in Datong, delivery lockers near the entry of the housing estate represent rapid development of modern logistics industry and intelligent electronic information technology, while bulletin board above with old mottos and patterns publicise China’s traditional virtues. Though modern technology change our life successfully, we should not forget teachings of our ancestors and use virtues to maximise the value of technology. In this way, everyone will sustain our neighbourhood collectively.” **Credit: Huan SONG.**

Pasig City mega market, the Philippines.

“As a resident of Pasig City, I consider the mega market as an important landmark in our place. According to the city website, the Pasig City Mega Market or what we call “palengke” in Filipino could possibly be considered the largest public market in the country because of having three storeys, 19,475 square meters of floor area, about 2, 447 fixed stalls, and about 2, 967 stalls for flea market. The market itself boost the economic sustainability of the whole city, especially its adjacent barangays including Barangay Pinagbuhatan in which our neighbourhood is located. Notably, after the Typhoon Ondoy, the city implemented measures to prevent extreme flooding, one of which is lessening the use of single use plastics in the public market.”

Credit: Rhay Daniel R. Racoma.

Proposed map of my neighbourhood in Kigali City/Gasabo District/Kimihurura Sector.

“Sustainable neighbourhood is an area where by present generation has the ability to live meeting their needs with no damage to the environment and therefore able to continue for a long period. In order to achieve sustainability there are three pillars that must be considered such as environmental, social and economic sustainability because, the goals of sustainability are to ensure inclusiveness to all dwellers in current and future generations.

We know that sustainability start with ones individual scale, in fact sustainability must start from the individual by sharing ideas towards neighbourhood scale and continue to global scale. So my neighbourhood is Kimihurura sector located in Gasabo district of Kigali city. As an urban area, my current neighbourhood has poor planning. By considering sustainable urban planning principles such as, adequate space for streets 30-35% space, 15-20% open/green space, at short building block area, mixed land use at least 40% economic use and 30-50% residential use. Avoid zoning and avoid dividing neighbourhoods <10% single use blocks, social mix 20-50% of residential area for low-cost housing with a range of different rent levels, adequate density around 15.000 people/km², connectivity provision of public transport and an emphasis on walking distances and clear connection building streets.

Furthermore what makes my neighbourhood sustainable is better planning through participatory methods based on physical natures by promoting compactness and maximising efficient land use, green growth and diversity considered in the proposed map of my neighbourhood.”

Credit: Aphrodis Muhirwa and Diane Mumararungu.