



HOW THE FORM OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS FACILITATES SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS?

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ABSTRACT The urban built environment in Bangalore facilitates social connectedness among various social and economic groups. An amalgamation of facilities both for the youth and adult population of different backgrounds increase social connectedness among them. The nature of space where neighbors connect are diverse, depending on the socio-economic group. The implication of such environments is that it promotes healthier and vibrant communities within and outside these social and economic groups. As a consequence of this sense of contentment within the groups, there is a healthy networking across communities, and an openness to imbibe best practices from each other.

KEYWORDS :

INTRODUCTION

A built environment of neighborhoods is a man-made space in which people live work and interact on daily basis. This space can either be very big like a city or very small as a shop. It comprises not just the buildings but a gamut of physical elements like parks, paths, roads, playgrounds in addition to transportation facilities and public services like shops, banks, hospitals, offices, education institutions, hotels, restaurants, recreation facilities and so on. Basically, all supporting infrastructure needed by man to maintain his activities and needs.

These built environments are geographical locations, where people from different socio-economic groups live and interact with each other and acquire an identity which helps in producing certain kind of social connectedness among themselves and then as a community as a whole. (Mahmud, 2007)

The topic of our research is whether the form of built environment of neighborhoods facilitates social connectedness. To try to answer this question, I have chosen to study some Indian communities in the city of Bangalore, which saw a phenomenal growth from a small town to a metropolis, just within a few decades. (Gopalan, 2013). Known as the 'Silicon Valley of India', this city was not organized nor designed for such tremendous growth. It was known as a 'pensioner's paradise' with localities for different socio-economic groups, living in houses having not more than 2 floors and having facilities which were just enough to meet the needs of mostly pensioners and their families. With the advent of globalization, Bangalore saw a rapid and exceptional growth in sectors like information technology, IT enabled services and biotechnology industries. This completely changed the physical look of the city of Bangalore.

With changes in socio, economic and political landscape, brought about by the IT boom, the city of Bangalore saw transformation in its urban space, which was not limited to the IT corridor alone, but permeated throughout the city from North to South, thus transforming the built environment of the city. (Stallmeyer, 2011).

But, the IT corridor was growing in big contrast to the rest of the city. (Stallmeyer, 2011). This tremendous, somewhat unplanned growth saw profound changes in the social map, creating aggravating disparities and a highly fragmented and urban polarized society. (Gopalan, 2013). The effect of the IT boom was felt not only in the construction and other sectors, but touched relatively less the lower strata of the society, the economic base of the city. (Stallmeyer, 2011). Known as the 'garden city' of the yore, it was turning into a 'concrete city' with exceptional growth in infrastructure which included high rise buildings and towers, many replacing the two storied independent houses of the times bygone. Gated-communities and communities for the older people grew in numbers. This however is not directly connected with the topic of our research.

My study is aimed at studying whether the built environment of present Bangalore presents both opportunities and challenges for social connectedness. Is the level of bonding between communities which

existed prior to the IT boon is still visible? Are they mostly visible in the lower and middle-income group localities or everywhere? Whether the new IT sector consisting of upper income group or the elite have given rise to new forms of social connectedness which are more westernized in format? Does the changing face of Bangalore's built environment, the amalgamation of old, historical structures along with the high rise and modern buildings, provide the right kind of atmosphere for social connectedness?

UNPLANNED, OVERCROWDED, ECONOMICALLY CHALLENGED COMMUNITIES: MORE SCOPE FOR SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS? A STUDY OF THE CONDITIONS IN A BLUE-COLLAR WORKERS LOCALITY: OKALIPURAM Located in the Central area of city of Bangalore, Okalipuram, is one of the oldest densely populated area. Having an area of about 0.83 Sq.km, and a population of about 36,000 people, male outnumber the female. This area is dominated more by adult population than those below the age of 18 years. Students are mostly school going rather than those pursuing higher education. It comprises a mix of local and migrant population, as its proximity to city Railway station and main Bus station attracts migrant population to this area looking for accommodation and so on. ("India guide: Population of India: Population of Bangalore," 2016).

Lower-middle class group dominate this area. Most of them are blue collar workers engaged in working mostly in public sector organization like the Indian Railways or are small merchants or from labor class engaged in providing services like plumbing, carpentry, drivers, electricians, painters and so on. People of all age groups are visible here, though men outnumber women. Women folk are mostly confined to their homes, but those who do work are engaged as maids in homes of white collar community. Many are also sellers of fruits, vegetables, flowers and small knickknacks.

The built environment is mostly unplanned. There are 1 or 2 floor houses or just single rooms with mostly shared toilets and facilities like common drinking water taps and community spaces. However, due to the influx of migrant population, unplanned forms of residential places have also come up. Houses have common walls common boundaries. Most of the houses are row houses having common open passages in the front. The roads are also pretty narrow and with a high density of vehicular traffic. There are very less or hardly any footpaths.

Even if they exist, they are encroached upon by petty vendors. The locality has certain basic public utility spaces like schools, shops, government health center, places of worship, cinema halls and so on.

POSITIVE SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS: The proximity of residential spaces and certain common open areas makes interaction between neighbors very easy. Everyone generally knows everyone, especially in their alleys. From children to adolescents to adults to senior citizens, everyone interacts with each other. They share their joys and celebrate together weddings, festivals, a new arrival. They cherish the achievements of their children. They share amongst

themselves commodities in times of needs. They help each other out by looking after their children and elders in the times of difficulties. They also figure prominently in each other's moments of sorrow like funerals, sickness, job loss, abusive and alcoholic husbands, and frustrations of their children and health issues of their elder and so on.

The feeling of a community is very high in such localities. Most of the residents know each other by their names. This builds a sense of belonging and caring. Each age group interacts with one another, thus there is a sense of security.

Lack of certain basic amenities like drinking water, electricity, clean roads, proper drainage and garbage woes bring to the fore certain common problems that affect the whole neighborhood. During such periods, generally, the whole community would come forward to address the problems and try and find common solutions.

India is a land of numerous festivals pertaining to different religious groups like Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jains and so on. Okalipuram is predominantly a Hindu locality. But irrespective of the religion, festivities are generally performed as a community. As majority of the people in this locality belong to low-income group, major festivals are celebrated together by pooling in the resources.

NEGATIVE SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS: This kind of locality is not free of problems. The proximity in the built environment can have a negative impact also when it comes to social connectedness. (Mahmud, 2007). Some of the common negative impact observed in this area, as observed in the responses given by volunteers, are generally related to socio-economic conditions.

Some of the prominent **problems** stated by them are as follows:

a. Jealousy rising due to materialistic inadequacies. For example, a neighbor who acquires a color television, when the majority of his neighbors either do not possess one or have a b/w one, will become the center of envy. The acquisition of a new version of a mobile phone could lead to being excluded from certain social activities, albeit for a short duration. Children's new toy or a new garment could result in petty thefts, which if discovered, could result in exchange of harsh words or even fist fights.

b. Fights resulting due to sharing of certain basic amenities like drinking water, which can be scarce especially during summer months, can sometimes turn into major issues, requiring intervention of elders and local civic authorities.

c. Proximity of residential spaces provides ample opportunities for youngsters to be attracted to the opposite sex. But, in such low-income communities, where generally marriages are arranged by elders, friendships between a boy and a girl, beyond a certain prescribed norm, can bring about serious consequences to the families of these youngsters. Religious and caste politics dominate to a large extent the alliances that are arranged. Hence, any deviation can result in total exclusion of such families from the community. Any resistance can also result in serious crimes like abduction or murder.

d. Lack of education and financial constraints: many youth in this area can fall prey to social evils and bad habits like alcoholism, drug addiction, organized crimes, child abuse and so on.

Localities like Okalipuram are common in the city of Bangalore, especially in the central areas. They have their positives and negatives. The built environment here has its challenges and advantages. But, people in such communities are close knit, there is local bonding.

Such environment cater to everyone in the family which indirectly contributes in strengthening the social aspect and helps build neighborhood cohesion, which in turn benefits all in and outside the community. (Wood, Giles-Corti, Zubrick, & Bulsara, 2011).

This area is fairly unaffected by the IT boom. But, since most of the working population here work in homes and offices of white collar community, it indirectly impacts them.

However, the following community is a result of IT boom. It is one of the first gated-community in the city of Bangalore.

A GATED COMMUNITY WITH ALL THE WORLD CLASS

AMENITIES: DOES BETTER FACILITIES MEAN BETTER SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS? A STUDY OF A POSH MINI INTEGRATED TOWNSHIP: PRESTIGE SHANTINIKETAN.

In the year 1985, the Government of Karnataka in collaboration with TATA Corporation and a Consortium of Singapore companies, decided to set-up a Software Technology park called International Tech Park, commonly known as ITPL or ITPB, in a locality called Whitefield located about 18 km from the city center. It was officially launched in the year 2000. Built to international standards, it is a self-contained facility with its own captive power supply and satellite link. All major high-tech industries such as software development, electronics and communication, research and development and financial services are located here. It has the highest level of occupancy among Indian IT parks. (Gopalan, 2013).

With nearly 3000 firms located in this locality, this gave birth to a high-tech city within the city of Bangalore. The type of built environment that was developed was something never seen before. Apartment complexes and gated-community mushroomed in no time. But, it was a planned development as far as the infrastructure was concerned. It was self-contained in all respects, with office, retail, residential and recreational facilities in a single location, set amidst a refreshing and aesthetically appealing lush landscape. ("International tech park Bangalore," 2012)

To meet the ever-growing demand from multinationals, many independent mini townships emerged in the vicinity of the International tech park. Gating is not a universal phenomenon. It is very geographic. It is a metropolitan phenomenon. (Blakely & Snyder, 1997).

One such mini integrated township is the **PRESTIGE SHANTI NIKETAN**.

Launched in the year 2005 and completed in 2013, it was developed on a land area of 105 acres.

The whole township is divided into 3 precincts and is closed to traffic. The whole area is surrounded by wall and the access to public is limited and conditional.

The first is the residential precinct which comprises 24 high rise towers of 12 floors each, housing a total of 3002 apartments.

The amenities include: 24Hr power Backup, Basket Ball Court, Club House, Gymnasium, Intercom, Tennis Court, Badminton Court, Community Hall, Health Facilities, Library, Jogging track, Children's play area, Swimming Pool, Bank/Atm, Garden, Cafeteria, Indoor Games, Super market, Temple and Maintenance Staff.

The second is the business precinct, which consists of 7 towers covering 3.2 million Sq.ft of office space. 3 towers have 16 floors each and remaining 4 towers have 12 floors each. 6 of the 7 towers are located in a single crescent shaped building. The remaining 1 tower is located separately. Some of the top multinational companies are tenants here.

The third is the hospitality precinct comprising a Mall, a multiplex, luxury retail shops and restaurants. A 5 star hotel and a state of the art Convention Centre are also under construction. ("Prestige Shantiniketan," 2014).

POSITIVE SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS: A township for the upper and the upper middle class, it provides all the amenities which are capable of providing ample opportunities for social connectedness among all age groups. It has ample amenities which allow people to interact, share, and mix with each other. But the question is, do they, actually do it? According to the responses collected, social interaction does exist but is time bound.

Most of the families residing there are small families where generally both the partners are working and may or may not have children. The 'DINKS' concept – Double income no kids, seems to be much evident here. The percentage of older people living here is relatively less, compared to a locality like Okalipuram. You may know your immediate neighbor, but not necessarily everyone on the floor. However, interaction through social media portals like Facebook or Twitter is very much evident here, especially among adolescents and young adults. You may not know your neighbor personally, but you

may be interacting with him through social media.

But personal social interactions are more evident through children and older people. Events like birthday parties, sleepovers, school projects and so on bring children together and in the bargain parents and families connect with each other. Children don't have any inhibitions, especially younger ones. For them the play area seems a good place to interact. A built environment which caters to children's needs seems more likely to foster social connectedness among parents, families and the community as a whole. Children indeed seem to be the catalysts. (Wood et al., 2011). Prestige Shantiniketan has a play area, well laid out tennis, basketball, and badminton courts. A separate children's swimming pool and an indoor games area.

Similarly, older people, who seem to have more time on hand, and maybe reluctant to adopt technology for social interaction, find well-designed and user-friendly and safe spaces as a good opportunity to go interact with their peers. Prestige Shantiniketan has amenities like well-laid out park with sitting facilities, library, community hall and a temple.

Festivals bring everyone to the fore and so do contribution to social causes.

The built environment of a gated community, like Prestige Shantiniketan, provides opportunities for enhancement of health of older people through social connectedness. This seems well documented. (Tomczak, 2015). As people age, so does their brain and this can lead to a decline in their memory and cognitive functions. Hence, a built environment which gives them the confidence to independently manage certain basic functions like taking an elevator, moving without fear of traffic and other constraints like unfamiliar settings, uneven walkways and so on, helps them pursue their social activities with ease. This proves to be very beneficial not only to them, but to their families and the community as a whole. This also reduces the fear of social exclusion to a large extent. A single, shared surface between buildings, without retaining distinction between pavements for pedestrians and road for vehicular traffic, and adequate provision for blind and visually impaired people ensures that the design offers adequate, well designed seating at regular intervals; and greater use of planting to create a more pleasant ambience, could in fact help the old people to age with ease and a sense of security. (Curl, Ward Thompson, & Aspinall, 2015).

NEGATIVE SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS: Gated-walled communities seem to attract a new form of adage: discrimination. The lower and lower-middle class seem to feel that such communities are mechanisms to prevent intrusion into private domains of the affluent. (Blakely & Snyder, 1997).

These gated communities are perceived as 'pockets' of exclusiveness, within an urban set-up but yet far from the general crowd. This feeling of seclusion is creating a kind of disparity between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. The grass always seems greener on the other side of the wall! But, is this true?

For the people living in the community, where each apartment is a private-space in itself, the built environment may seem a deterrent to social connectedness. As too much exclusivity and exclusion from the outside contact, could actually result in loneliness and depression, especially for those confined to their apartment. With both partners working, those left at home like elders or children too young to attend school, are left all alone the whole day.

The security guards at the entrance, restricting the movement of outsiders and visitors, the inmates of these communities feel as they are caged, which may be golden, but nevertheless is a cage!

Unlike an open neighborhood, where there is freedom of movement and social interaction possible at any given point of time, gated-communities offer much limited access and perhaps limited hours for social connect.

Gated-communities may provide greater sense of security in terms of physical well-being, but too much predictability could actually make you insecure.

For the outside world, the gates of these communities may seem like

gates to paradise. But they are actually, fortresses that divide people in the name of class, social status and economic considerations. Very foundation of citizenship is rooted in sharing. That purpose seem somewhat thwarted behind these walls. (Blakely & Snyder, 1997).

However, to connect with the world beyond the compound all, the residents of Prestige Shantiniketan try to organize events and programs for the less privileged and the staff members and their families on a regular basis. This networking seems to work both ways. The seeker and the sought converge at some point and this proves beneficial for both.

A HOME AMONG THE PEERS: BEST PLACE TO AGE? A STUDY OF A SENIOR CITIZENS HOME: VLN PRABUDDHALAYA-NISARGA

The concept of joint-family, which was very much prevalent in Indian society since ancient times, seems to have disintegrated in this era of globalization. (Mondal, 2016) Family care system also weakened. Today, nuclear families seem to be the norm especially in urban set-ups. As people migrate to the cities in search of jobs, they leave behind their families, especially the extended family consisting of parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, siblings and cousins. Furthermore, job opportunities abroad are also proving detrimental for the sustenance of joint-families, as children move out and parents are left to fend for themselves, with promise of financial support from their children being sometimes the only support they may receive. Young adults in their most productive phase of life now live such stressful lives that it is impossible for them to give the care their ageing parents deserve. Yet, this is the time when their parents need utmost care and compassion to support them through their declining years. It is normal for aged parents to feel neglected & unwanted or even being a burden on their children.

Almost 6% of the Indian population today is beyond 65 years of age. Everyone is not lucky enough to have families who can take care of them. Hence, many senior citizen homes have mushroomed. Are these homes proving to be a boon or a bane to its ageing inmates? Only time will tell.

VLN PRABUDDHALAYA-NISARGA. Located in the south-east corner of Bangalore, houses inmates who belong to upper-middle class.

This home has 120 rooms equipped with modern furniture and light and cheerful wall colors. There is also a court yard in the middle, which provides ample light and ventilation to all the rooms. There are skid-proof floors, hand rails everywhere and ramps for wheel chairs to make movement easy and safe. The rooms are aesthetically furnished and have features for modern and comfortable living. Every room has an attached bath with hot and cold water, telephone, television, with cable connection, back-up power supply by high powered generators, etc. It has a lounge, landscaped garden and all necessary civic amenities. The home itself is located in 300 acres gated township, set amidst natural surroundings, called Nisarga. It is self-contained and has amenities such as club house, swimming pools, gym, library, boating club and temples. The residents of the home have full access to them.

The home also has a team of dedicated healthcare staff and healthcare facilities like an ambulance, a sick room, a state-of-the-art physiotherapy center and diagnostic lab.

Some of the facilities in this gated township are: Club house, Jogging track, Boating, Indoor Games, Restaurants, Swimming pools, Guest house with conference facilities Games like billiards, tennis, chess, temple, community hall, post office, reading room and so on.

POSITIVE SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS: The atmosphere at Nisarga Prabuddhalaya is conducive for promoting social connectedness among its residents. The infrastructure provided and the built space help the older people to lead a fairly independent and active social life. Facilities are adequate and opportunities for interaction are plenty.

A set of dedicated medical and support staff try to ensure that even those with severe disabilities and immobility get a chance for social interaction. This kind of atmosphere seems to enhance the quality of life of these senior citizens helping them in leading a dignified and secure life amidst their peers. To quote the Managing Director of this

venture, Mr. V. Lakshminarayan who says, quote: "It has always been my dream to create professional and compassionate old age care as an integral part of our modern townships. At Prabuddhalaya, we have the sensitivity to understand the requirements of the elderly and have created an environment where they can spend their twilight years in the comfort, dignity and freedom they deserve."

This points to the fact that social environment is just as important as material necessities in determining the well-being for older people. As a whole, an age-friendly community should provide a comprehensive and accessible physical and social environment in which health, social involvement, and security of the elderly can be supported. (Lai et al., 2016).

NEGATIVE SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS: The concept of a senior citizen's home is fairly recent in the Indian context. Which means that for those staying in senior citizen homes, away from their children and other family members, whether by choice or by compulsion is difficult to accept, at some point of time, during their stay in these homes.

A place like Prabuddhalaya, which may be meeting the needs of the aged in all respects, may not necessarily make all the inmates happy all the time. However, while interviewing some of the inmates, it was revealed that, though a place like Prabuddhalaya, where there is social bonding and sharing, staying with like-minded people, it does not necessarily give them feel of 'home'. People do feel 'distant' from the world around them. They even feel distant from people around them. They don't feel related to anyone around. An age-friendly built environment does not always provide them with mental satisfaction and happiness. For example, playing with their peers does not compare to playing with one's grand-children. Sharing one's experiences of life with co-habitants is not same as sharing it with one's children. Emotional bonding, despite the best of facilities and comforts, may be lacking. Social exclusion is felt by many of the inmates. Some accept it, some don't.

Prabuddhalaya is a fairly luxurious senior citizen home. The inmates there are not having much financial constraints. But money cannot buy emotional happiness for them, even if the built environment they are living in postulates that it does! This is what some of them shared.

TWO PREMIUM EDUCATIONAL CAMPUSES: INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT: CATERING TO THE CLASSES AND THE MASSES.

Bangalore is considered as one of the most prominent education hubs in India. It is recognized as a centralized region for education and training related to different fields. Two of the most important educational campuses located here, namely Indian Institute of Science – IISC and Indian Institute of Management Bangalore – IIMB are known for have a very attractive and user-friendly environment, which attract students from all over India and abroad for the purpose of higher education.

A. INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE – IISC

Established in the year 1909 with the support of Jamsedji Tata, a prominent industrialist, who founded the TATA Group and H.H. Sir Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV, the Maharaja of Mysore, who donated 371 acres of land in North Bangalore and Jamsedji Tata donated generously towards the building of the of the finest institution in science in India.

IISC as it is popularly called, has 40 departments. It is fully residential in nature. Its amenities include six cafeterias, a sports complex with gymnasium, football and cricket grounds, dining halls, a multi-cuisine restaurant, dormitories for man and women, an air strip, a well-stocked library, 2 shopping centers, residential facilities for staff and faculty members and many more facilities.

POSITIVE SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS: One of the most beautiful university campus in India, with a large variety of flora and fauna and a forest area which is also used for ecological studies, IISC provides a most serene atmosphere for research and social connectedness. It recently got placed among the top 100 educational institutes in the world.

Students and teachers from around the world visit IISC on a regular basis. There is an amalgamation of cultures and interactions with

professors and students from other universities and cities which provides an inter-disciplinary and inter-continental research atmosphere. The interaction between students and professors seem of great quality as they become friends for life.

The social connects among the students and faculty and staff is not limited to campus alone, as IISC is located very much in the city and near some very well-connected localities like Malleswaram and Mattikere. So, students and faculty and staff have ample opportunities to get socially connected beyond the walls of the institute. The question, however is do they make use of it? Do they want it? Do they have time?

Some of the students interviewed emphasized the fact that the atmosphere at IISC was such that it was very conducive towards studies, but there were ample possibilities for social connectedness, be it in the labs, the library, the dorms and in the vast open space. Cultural activities and festivals were a big draw and attracted both students and staff to them.

NEGATIVE SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS: Apart from being a green lush campus and with high quality academics, IISC doesn't seem to have evolved something like IISC culture, even after more than 100 years of existence. Though the campus has internet connection, the dormitories don't have internet, which is a big letdown for the students. The emphasis here seems so much focused on academics, that sometimes students seem to forget that there is 'life' beyond the labs and research! The social culture indeed seems limited.

You will find students eating meals alone in the canteen. Students walking alone and talking to themselves is a common scene!

According to some students, the level of concentration is totally research oriented. They are the top 'geeks' and 'nerds' that one can find in such a beautiful campus, and most don't seem to have time to admire it.

B. INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT BANGALORE – IIMB

The high technology environment of Bangalore seemed the right place for the establishment of this premium management institute in 1973. Spread over a land area of 100 acres, in south Bangalore, IIMB architecture is dominated by stone buildings, lush greenery and landscaped gardens. It has world-class infrastructure facilitating excellence in teaching, research, consulting and other professional activities. The architecture of IIMB reflects the architect's perfect sense of scale, proportion and light. A WI-FI enabled campus, with its high-speed internet, the life of students at IIMB is not only made easy and quick but it's also enjoyable.

With a strong focus on overall development of the students, IIMB has a music room, sports facilities and many options for food, within and outside the campus. A perfect amalgamation of academics and entertainment ensures a comprehensive growth of IIMB students. ("Indian Institute of Management Bangalore," 2016).

POSITIVE SOCIAL CONNECTEDNES: With an emphasis on ensuring an all-round development of its students, IIMB provides ample opportunities to its students, faculty and staff for social connectedness. With more than 25 clubs for academics and other extra-curricular activities, social connect among students is very high. The hostel facilities which has ten blocks with individual rooms, provide many opportunities for junior-senior students interaction. It is believed that even a person with average social skills will not take long to socialize. That is the kind of environment and bonding that is perceived here.

Many activities are arranged for the families of staff members also, especially for children like summer camps and children's parties for occasions like Halloween and Christmas. ("Indian Institute of Management Bangalore," 2016).

IIMB is also involved in various social impact initiatives which reach the outside world beyond the campus walls. Some of these initiatives are:

- **IMBx MOOCs:** It is an online management course aimed at upgrading the managerial skills of vast number of workers, who may never get a chance to study in IIMB otherwise.
- **SAMIE:** A tele education project called Satellite & Advanced

Multimedia Interactive Education which is trying to address the problem of poor quality education in rural Government and aided schools in Karnataka. Today, this project is reaching nearly 200,000 school children in 1000 schools in rural areas of Karnataka. ("Indian Institute of Management Bangalore," 2016).

NEGATIVE SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS: Students from all over India study at IIMB. Most of them think that they are representing their state here, hence groupism is very much visible at the expense of cultural diversity.

Some students feel that opportunities like institute Fests and B-school events generally has low attendance. That sense of genuine belongingness is believed to be lacking.

Quality interaction between faculty and students are considered rare. Many professors are considered too authoritative to be approached. This sometimes create a dent in student-teacher relationship.

CONCLUSION

By analyzing the form of the built environment of neighborhoods in facilitating social connectedness among diverse socio-economic groups in the city of Bangalore, we realized that socio-economic factors do play a vital role on social connectedness. Blue-collar community seems to promote maximum social connectedness thus making it a more vibrant and a close-knit community. Financial constraints and lack of awareness regarding maintaining one's physical environment could possibly create certain health issues and deviant behavior. But, such communities are happier and bonding between people across all ages is more evident. From children to old-people everyone seems secure and content in their community, as the proximity provided by the built environment encourages, most of the time, community bonding and sharing.

In the gated-community, the built environment seemed well-maintained and catered to all age groups. However, do one really have the time to enjoy it? The families, which were more nuclear in nature, seemed to be performing a 'duty' towards another human being. The genius in the relationship seemed less forthcoming as compared to one visible in low-income locality.

The senior citizen home seemed adequately equipped in terms of built environment to provide the necessary impetus for social connectedness, however, certain constraints were observed, not really in the built environment, but in the willingness of the inmates to actually indulge in it. The two educational campuses showed that the nature of built environment was very conducive to studies and social interaction. It would not be right to generalize from the point of view of whole city of Bangalore just based on our study. The city is too vast and diverse and growing very rapidly that further research is needed to establish firm facts. More in depth study is required to see whether bridging between communities is actually a reality or whether such diverse 'islands' of diverse built environments are leading to more social disparity than social connectedness.

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