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"A World Class City of Your Own!": Civic Governmentality in Chennai,
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Abstract: This paper utilizes a critical governmentality approach to theorise the processes through which urban elites become stakeholders in the ‘world-class city’. Through a case study of public consultations for urban development plans in Chennai, India, the paper explores the technologies that produce urban actors who ‘participate’ in urban governance. Key to these technologies is a discourse of participation that privileges and normalizes citizens as urban stakeholders. The paper contributes to current explorations into the technologies of inclusion that are central to an emerging *civic governmentality* in South Asia. In Chennai this civic governmentality engages various segments of civil-society in processes of urban governance through the mechanism of public consultation. It is through these public consultations that elites come to exert influence over urban plans and consolidate a vision and desire for the world-class city.

Keywords: India, governmentality, urban governance, civic governmentality, participation

**“A WORLD CLASS CITY OF YOUR OWN!”: GOVERNANCE AND
GOVERNMENTALITY IN CHENNAI, INDIA.**

Now [there] is a collection of lots of private sector leaders who recognize they have to step in, both as businessmen and as citizens of that city to make Chennai, for example, into a world-class city . . . What’s in it for me? . . . a world-class city of your own!

As an introduction to one of the numerous public consultations that took place in Chennai in 2007, the director of the NGO Janaagraha invites his audience to participate in the creation of the world-class city. On the one hand this statement highlights the commitment to market-led growth that characterises the political agenda of this particular NGO. But the sentiment captured by the “world-class city *of your own*” is also significant because it aspires to a consensus between a bourgeois civic consciousness, the interests of private capital, and the policies of a liberalizing state. There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that this consensus is tenuous, contradictory, and uneven (Anjaria, 2009; Arabindoo, 2010). Yet there is an undeniable synergy between urban development strategies that aim to make cities more attractive, enabling environments for capital accumulation and a politics that seeks to craft city space around the aesthetic and consumptive desires of urban elites (Birkinshaw and Harris, 2009; Fernandes, 2009). In this paper I explore the technologies that attempt to manufacture and mediate this synergy. Specifically I focus on the practices of public consultation in Chennai, India and highlight the discursive function

of the “world-class city” as it articulates and legitimates emerging paradigms in urban development.

There is a substantial body of literature charting the transformation of Indian cities in the wake of neoliberal reforms. An important component of this transformation is the new policies that seek to make these cities attractive investment destinations and strategic nodes in the global economy (Nair, 2006; Mukherjee, 2008; Birkinshaw and Harris, 2009). The suggestion put forth by Birkinshaw and Harris (2009: 4) is that “the world-class city is an urban imaginary that further manufactures and normalizes the idea that the neoliberal urban development model is replicable and sustainable”. They go on to emphasize that the this world-class city is an exclusive city, increasingly hostile to the urban poor as urban plans aim that make the city more attractive to investment simultaneously clear space for “new affluent citizens and their consumption driven lifestyles” (2009: 8). Numerous other scholars have explored how new forms of investment and the restructuring of urban labour markets has expanded the economic bases of India’s middle-upper classes. In this context, the Indian middle classⁱ emerges as a powerful force in urban politics (Anjaria, 2009; Arabindoo, 2005a; Baviskar, 2007; Chatterjee, 2004; Fernandes, 2004; Gandy, 2008; Harriss, 2006; Nair, 2006; Mawsdley, 2009; Zerah, 2007). Yet within many of these literatures there is a tendency toward privileging the hegemonic power of a globally expansive neoliberalism and its ability to make ‘one-size-fits-all’ neoliberal solutions appear desirable (Anjaria, 2009). This has come at the expense of a focus on the more everyday mechanisms through which urban elites formulate such desires. If the world-class city is indeed a “bourgeois city” as many would suggest, then we must consider how the beneficiaries of neoliberal urban

development come to share and participate in this world-class vision. This paper asks, “in what context do elites become legitimate, privileged stakeholders in urban politics?” and “through what mechanisms do urban elites get enlisted in (and exert influence over) new paradigms in urban development?”

This paper utilizes a critical governmentality approach to theorise elite engagements with urban politics in Chennai, India. This approach allows me to chart the technologies that produce new political subjects who ‘participate’ in urban governance. Drawing on and expanding recent work that endeavours to theorise neoliberal governmentality in the South, the paper argues that new paradigms of urban governance are key to forms of governmentality that are taking shape in Indian cities. I begin by reviewing the extant literature on urban governance and governmentality, highlighting recent work that extends the geographies of governmentality in important ways. Utilizing these insights, the paper shows how a discourse of participation, which privileges and normalizes a civil society-centred politics, is a component of an emerging *civic governmentality* (Roy, 2009). In the context of urban India, a civic governmentality engages civil society in processes of urban governance, specifically through the practices of public consultation. It is through these practices of public consultation that a vision and desire for the world-class city becomes common sense among diverse urban interests.

URBAN GOVERNMENTALITIES

Neoliberal urban restructuring has been the focus of over two decades of critical scholarship. This work has analyzed the shifting priorities of city governments from

providers of social goods and urban amenities to promoters of urban economic growth and investment (Brenner 1998; Harvey, 1989; Peck and Tickell, 2002). In this context, various non-state actors have entered the scene by providing services where they have been cut, or as part of new institutional arrangements and public-private partnerships. In a geographically diverse set of cities, older structures of urban regulation and management have been replaced by a regime of governance wherein multiple and various state, non-state and quasi-state become involved in urban governance. Jessop characterizes this shift as:

A move away from the taken for granted primacy of official (typically national) state apparatuses toward the assumed necessity of quite varied forms (and levels) of partnership between officials, parastatal, and non-governmental organisations in the management of economic and social relations (1996: 176).

But equally significant to the transfer of regulatory functions is the fundamental reorientation of the objects and objectives of urban governance. Here a critical urban scholarship has made use of the concept of governmentality to better understand the technologies that bring about this neoliberal transformation in governance.

This use of governmentality extends the work of Michel Foucault who first theorised the ways in which populations are governed through institutional intervention, the production of discourses and norms, and by inculcating practices of self-discipline. These various “technologies of governance”, which take as their object the “conduct of conduct”, are what Foucault famously describes as governmentality (Dean, 1999: 10). Governmentality enables the exercise of power in a myriad of spheres, often in spaces

typically considered to be outside the traditional power centres of the sovereign state. This means that spaces such as the clinic, the workplace, or the family are important locations where power relations are (re)produced and normalized. More contemporary scholarship has set out to apply this theory of governmentality to an analysis of the political economy of the post-Keynesian, post-Fordist decades. While neoliberalism is often seen as a reduction in the role of the state, work within this critical governmentality tradition has shown how economic restructuring is accompanied by new technologies of governance that attempt to instil a market rationale in subjects. Rather than less government, this neoliberal governmentality extends of the domain of governance through technologies that enlists various non-state actors in a neoliberal regime (Rose, 1996). Thus the task of much of the governmentality literatures has been to argue against a state/non-state dichotomy and to instead describe new forms of governance as a “polycentric ensemble” of rule-making and regulation that occur in and through civil society, public institutions, privatized sectors, and the state (Swyngedouw, 2005: 1992).

For proponents of the neoliberal agenda, the expansion of the terrain of governance is promoted as devolution of power that encourages greater democratic participation on the part of local level institutions and citizens (World Bank, 1992; 1994; Abrahamsen, 2000; Mercer, 2003). But ‘participation’ is also one way in which various institutions and individuals become enlisted in the governmentality of the neoliberalizing state. As scholars like Dean (1999), Burchell (1993), and others (see Burchell et al., 1991; Cruikshank, 1994; Rose, 1996) have shown, participation is an important discourse that serves to shift the risk of failure and the onus for success of new institutional arrangements onto the individual. As such, new governing arrangements serve the dual purpose of

privatizing and outsourcing many formerly state functions, and of producing disciplined, self-reliant, “responsibilized” citizen-subjects (Burchell, 1996). Thus a focus on neoliberal governmentality has offered important insights into what is at stake when various subjects get enlisted in the polycentric terrain of urban governance.

When considering the emergence of neoliberal forms of governance, Indian cities pose particularly interesting conceptual challenges. Supra-national, non-state or para-state actors are becoming important players in urban governance through the cohabitating structures of development, transnational flows of private capital, and the recent expansion of the urban middle and upper classes. Contemporary forms of urban governance in India are characterised by an increasingly influential private sector and bourgeois forms of civic activism. Complicating any wholesale neoliberalization of urban governance is a dynamic and heterogeneous terrain of urban politics, and a local state that adopts policies of liberalization in a piecemeal and at times contradictory fashion. Moreover, in many instances, middle class “sensibilities” are not in tune with either state plans or with the influence of private capital (Anjaria, 2009), so that we can assume no easy alliance between middle class civic activism, capital, and the liberalizing state. In this context, Ananya Roy posits that these seemingly opposing trends are being mediated by what she describes as a “civic governmentality” (2009). For Roy, technologies of inclusion that expand the terrain of urban governance are also productive of norms of citizenship or “civic-ness”, which inform an emerging “grassroots civic regime”. But, she argues, “grassroots regimes of government both resist and comply with what may be perceived to be top-down forms of rule, be it those emanating from the state or from international institutions” (2009; 160). By making this point, Roy is challenging recent work that

makes a distinction between governmentality as top-down technologies of state control or “governmentality from below” (Appadurai, 2002; Chatterjee, 2004; for a similar critique see Ferguson on transnational governmentality, 2002). Instead she argues that a civic governmentality leads to both the “civilizing” of political society and the “governmentalization of the state” (Dean in Roy, 2009; 159). While new urban political strategies that emanate from a grassroots civic realm allow various groups to use their knowledge of communities and their locations to resist state power, they also function to “recalibrate” the state’s governing strategies, and to weave these strategies into the policy-making apparatus, so that they become entwined with forms of governmentality “from above”.

What Roy’s account of civic governmentality finally concludes is that despite the pro-poor and rights based language of certain civil society organisations, much of this new civic-ness is inherently “developmental” because it envisions a city comprised of ordered, sanitary living spaces, and also “civilizing” as it promotes a politics of cooperation and mediation over confrontation. Roy’s description of this complex landscape of civic governmentality helps to make sense of the apparent ease with which elites in Chennai have been able to co-opt urban politics through the organisational form of civil society. Participation through public consultation is an example of a governing technology that has changed the way the local state approaches urban planning in response to demands for inclusion emanating from a heterogeneous civic realm. But fieldwork in Chennai also finds public consultations to be instances where new forms of civic-ness function simultaneously to mediate urban politics, normalize particular understandings and

practices of citizenship, and which make possible elite imaginaries of urban space such as the ‘world-class city of your own’.

GOVERNING CHENNAI

Located on the south-eastern coast of the Indian sub-continent in the state of Tamil Nadu, Chennai is India’s fifth largest city (see Figure 1.1). Although only recently becoming one of South India’s favoured destinations for new flows of international investment, the city has long been an important economic and political centre. During the 19th and early 20th centuries Chennai (formerly Madras) became an important European colonial holding (Robins, 2002). Chennai bears evidence not only to the architectural legacies of colonial occupation, but also to the class, caste, and linguistic structures that were consolidated through colonialism and reworked in by anti-colonial movements. Chennai and the state of Tamil Nadu were the loci of a Dravidianⁱⁱ regional nationalism that directly confronted colonialism through appeals to a Tamil ethnic and linguistic identity. State-level politics continue to draw on this regional identity and political power vacillates between two rival Dravidian parties, the DMK and the AIADMK. Both parties claim to represent the best interests of the Dravidian region and as the economic and political climate has changed, the two parties have both selectively adopted and rejected neoliberal policies. In the state’s metropolitan centre of Chennai, the selective implementation of neoliberal reforms has played out on the city’s material spaces, as well as on local institutions of government. For instance, in the early 1990s the recently-elected AIADMK initiated a city-beautification scheme, Madras Vision 2000, which set out to cleanse the city of squatters and informal settlements and to develop urban infrastructure

and amenities that highlighted the city's cosmopolitan aspirations (Hancock, 2002). Much of this city beautification focused on Chennai's beaches and expanding southern fringe, where located newly established Greenfield sites, new industries, as well as "upper-class residences, resorts, expatriate housing and international conference centres" (Arabindoo, 2009: 898). When during the 1996 elections, the DMK came to power, they embarked on a campaign to "Dravidianize" urban space by renaming many streets in the older central parts of the city with Tamil names, and by erecting various monuments to Dravidian heroes (Hancock, 2002; 2008). It was also during this period that the city's name was officially changed from Madras to the allegedly more historically accurate, Tamil name of Chennai (ibid; Arabindoo, 2006). When in 2001 the AIADMK returned to power, the party aligned itself with the neoliberal policies of the incumbent party at the national level. In addition, the AIADMK promised to continue the development of new industries sectors in south Chennai, including the construction of a much-anticipated IT highway. The DMK returned to power again in 2006 and party leaders reasserted the region's political autonomy by turning away from the AIADMK's alliance. But even in doing so, the DMK retained focus on regional economic competitiveness and continued with an urban development strategy that iterated Chennai's global aspirations. To this tune, the DMK launched its own city beautification scheme, much like Vision Madras, but rebranded in Tamil as *Singara Chennai*, or Beautiful Chennai. Yet even as a course for city's future was being charted through Madras Vision and Singara Chennai, there existed no officially sanctioned comprehensive urban master plan. This absence of a city plan arises from the peculiarities of city government in Chennai.

Planning for urban development in Chennai has been a source of contention since allegations of corruption led to the disbanding of the locally elected planning authority, the Madras Corporation, in 1973. In the wake of the Madras Corporation the Tamil Nadu State Government appointed the Madras Metropolitan Development Authority (MMDA) and required that this agency take over land use planning for the city. The new agency suffered from lack of revenue and an inability to fulfil its mandate as a result (Arabindoo, 2005b; 2009). It took nearly twenty years for the MMDA (now the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, or CMDA) to release its own master plan for the city in 1995, at which time the plan immediately met with scrutiny from civil society groups (Jairaj, 2006). The criticisms launched at the CMDA's Plan centred around the inadequacies in soliciting public input due to the short window of time laid out for the plan's approval and because copies of the plan were only produced in English. The plan was stalled by the high court and it was not until 2007 that another plan was drafted and released (The Hindu, 2008). Meanwhile, the piecemeal urban plans of the two competing parties selectively ignored or bypassed existing development control rules in pursuit of their respective city beautification campaigns and attempts at carving out their version of a world-class Chennai. Violations of development controls by private builders were also pardoned through CMDA regularisation schemes, enabling real estate development to progress with minimal regulation (Coelho and Venkat, 2009; Arabindoo, 2005b). Meanwhile, two and a half decades in the absence of an elected city planning authority created a situation where various and overlapping state, para-state and non-state entities became responsible for the provision and management of urban services and amenities.

The 1990s witnessed the formation of several public-private partnerships and ‘para-state’ agencies that became active in urban planning and development.

The unelected status of Chennai’s city government up until 1996 is an important backdrop for current approaches to urban development in the city. According to Pushpa Arabindoo (2005) all this ambiguity enabled the CMDA to “become influential in the socio-spatial transformation of the city” and to transform its own role into and overseer of global investment opportunity in Chennai (ibid: 72). The CMDA’s approach to urban planning was further complemented by shifts within national economic policy that enlarge the influence of para-state agencies. It is not surprising then that when a second draft of the Chennai Second Master Plan was released in 2007, market-lead development and urban reforms formed the basis of the CMDA’s urban strategy.

Urban planning is an important rallying point for urban civil society in Chennai. Much of this political activism centres on a concern with the governance of urban development, often described as a commitment to ‘good governance’. While rhetoric of good governance often emphasizes more democratic, accountable, and transparent public institutions (a commitment that echoes World Bank recommendations), the concern with urban governance also reflects the classed dimensions of urban civil society in India. A now impressive body of scholarship has shown how urban elites have become active in urban politics by forming task forces,



Figure 1.1: Political Map of India showing Chennai in Tamil Nadu

NGOs and, various other initiatives that attempt to wrest control of urban decision making processes. These highly visible, at times veracious forms of bourgeois politics appear to be the “new face of urban civil society in India” (Coelho and Venkat, 2009: 358). For example, the Bhagidari initiative in Delhi serves as a forum for concerned citizens to “facilitate city-wide changes in Delhi” (Mawsdley, 2009: 245). But because of the class bias in the scheme’s ideological and geographical moorings, it functions more as a vehicle for the elite capture of urban political processes (Mawsdley, 2009). In Bangalore the Bangalore Agenda Task Force (BATF) and its partner NGO Janaagraha organize around a claim to “empower citizens and provide for urban advancement” but in reality advocates for the interests of middle class urbanites and private capital (Nair, 2006: 132). Similarly,

in Mumbai, a Citizen Action Group was created to oversee the implementation of Vision Mumbai, a plan that set out to make Mumbai a global financial centre with the requisite social and cultural amenities to attract “internationally mobile high-level human capital” (Birkinshaw and Harris, 2009: 11). Indeed the majority of these urban initiatives share the imaginary and ambition toward world-class city status. Srivastava (2007) notes that the Bhagidari scheme in Delhi represented a “globalized vision of the metropolis in light of planning for the forthcoming Commonwealth Games” (cited in Mawsdley, 2009: 247). Similarly, in Bangalore the BATF openly declared its intentions of making Bangalore “properly reflect its status as a site of global production” (Nair, 2006: 139). If these forms of urban civil society imagine the city as a centre of globalizing economic and cultural formations, they imagine citizenship in similarly normative terms. Within the politics of elite civil society, urban residents are conceived of as ‘stakeholders’ who share a joint responsibility for the fate of the city (Mawsdley, 2009; Nair, 2008). The move toward the language of stakeholder highlights the profoundly classed nature of the world-class city wherein urban citizenship is something enjoyed by those with a legitimate (read: bought and paid for) claim to the city (Nair, 2006). This fusion of world-class aspirations and the imaginary of citizens as stakeholders is an important trope that empowers urban elites as stewards of the (aspiring) world-class city.

In 2007 the Bangalore-based citizen’s coalition, Janaagraha, launched its Chennai chapter. Janaagraha was originally formed under the auspices of the now-defunct BATF. Janaagraha was envisioned as vehicle for soliciting citizen and private sector input in this process through its admonition for people to “take ownership” and get involved in urban governance (Nair, 2006). Toward this end, Janaagraha’s hallmark project in Chennai is its

“City Connect” initiative, which provides the institutional vehicle to allow urban stakeholders from the private sector and organised as urban residents to “engage with urban governance” (janaagraha.org). Janaagraha has piloted several projects in Chennai and Bangalore, all uniting a bourgeois desire for a more orderly city with private sector expertise in design, engineering, and project finance. For example, one of Janaagraha’s most high profile projects in Chennai is a commuter transport network that services the southern parts of the city with sparkling new bus stops, real-time route information, and air-conditioned coaches. The NGO has also released plans for the redevelopment of Chennai’s busy market centre into a pedestrian-ized retail destination (The Hindu, 07/04/2010). Janaagraha has proven itself an attractive outlet for middle-upper class political mobilization in both Bangalore and Chennai, as its approach to good governance marries the language of citizen participation with a decidedly corporate twist:

Good governance is not a gift delivered to the citizens, rather it is a process created by the active participation of citizens in government . . . The glue that holds the world’s markets together is the level to which people participate in their local communities? Preposterous as it may sound, it is true. . . . Let us bring the professionalism of the private sector to this exercise, creating mechanisms where necessary, but more often leveraging existing toeholds. When this happens, the course for good governance will have been set. Good governance eliminates much of the political noise that now occupies the airwaves (Ramanathan, founder Janaagraha 2002).

The final line of this quote brings to mind John Harriss's (2005) oft-cited metaphor about the "dirty river" of party politics in Chennai. Here it is evident that if political noise and dirty politics are the problem, good governance is the solution. And what characterizes good governance for both the NGOs referenced here is a healthy dose of citizen participation. But this participation must be of the right sort, professional, civil, non-confrontational, and non-party politics. Janaagraha invites citizens who can participate in this way to become partners and stewards of the world-class city.

A similar understanding of participation in urban governance has become institutionalised within the developmental initiatives of both the local state and private developers in Chennai. Public consultations in particular have become the favoured means for soliciting this participationⁱⁱⁱ. But the huge variation in the format of these consultations defies any easy assumptions about what is meant by either 'public' or 'participation'. Public consultations range from extravagant, catered affairs enjoying corporate sponsorship and a VIP list of attendees, to highly confrontational and politically charged public debates, to neighbourhood level meetings with local officials. The impetus behind these consultations is similarly varied. Increasingly local state and para-state agencies are compelled to conduct public consultations as part of the funding requirements for new urban initiatives like the recent Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission^{iv}. Private developers even now hold public consultations for large projects to meet corporate social responsibility guidelines or to raise the profile of their investment. This diversity in public consultations is not insignificant because different types of public consultations foster different forms of public participation. Local-level consultations tend to solicit input on topical issues and are often heavily manned by members of neighbourhood associations

motivated less by ideological commitment to participation and more by a concern with the future of a locality. These consultations often resulted in conciliatory remarks from local officials that, by most account do more to remove obstacles to projects than to democratize urban development (Padmanabhan, 2007). Conversely, public consultations for citywide urban development initiatives tend to attract an audience of larger NGOs and civil society figures who, armed with knowledge of urban development regulations and legal prudence, challenge the development plans of the local state. When interviewed about these consultations, local government officials described these sorts of public consultations as “shouting matches” or “a sound-off”, referring to the perceived tendency of these events to become forums for off-topic citizen complaints. But these same consultations were also described in interviews with the staff at one direct-action NGO as “shaking things up” and that they were viewed as an important forum for demanding accountability from local authorities.

This final comment suggests that the language of participation holds a wider currency, particularly among various grassroots, non-governmental, and civic organisations. Within this civic realm, participation is seen as an important element of equitable urban growth that can bring dissenting voices to bear on the developmental vision of the neoliberalizing state. For example, direct action NGOs in Chennai have, on several occasions, organised and conducted their own public consultations when the efforts of the local state to solicit participation were perceived to be inadequate. These events aimed to confront imbalances in power that were seen to pervade the more ‘official’ public consultations. In other instances, local civil society groups organised their own panel of experts to prepare

evaluations and reports of various urban projects as a direct challenge to the authoritarian knowledge of the state and its plans. Through these efforts, civic groups take control of the production of knowledge about urban development and demand greater inclusion in urban politics. Thus participation through public consultation took on different meanings for different groups: for the local planning authorities, public consultation was recognised as important for constructing state legitimacy; middle-class urban residents saw the consultations as opportunities to protect propertied interests; and direct-action or grassroots organisations used public consultations in strategies of resistance.

Despite divergent views about the form, function, and effectiveness of public consultation, para-state and local state agencies, private interests, and diverse civil society organisations shared in the belief that citizen participation could be realized through this platform. This near-consensus around public consultations marks these practices out as important technologies for an emerging civic governmentality. In the case study here, public consultations as civic governmentality function to circulate and consolidate a vision and desire for the world-class city and in doing so enabled urban elites to become legitimate stakeholders in the urban planning process. In the following section I zero in on the most exclusive forms of public consultation described previously. While there is no doubt a huge amount of diversity in public consultations, the events described here are of interest in that they represent an ideal-type public participation and because they are a main locus for debates and dialogues about the world-class city. As such, these public consultations place in sharp relief the relationship between urban elites and the world-class city.

“ A WORLD CLASS CITY OF YOUR OWN! ”: PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS IN CHENNAI

Not just anyone can attend a public consultation. Participation in these events is generally limited to invited guests who represent prominent figures from civil society, entrepreneurs, politicians, and academics or journalists. The most common way in which participants gain access to a consultation is by responding to the invitations that circulate on the list serves of business lobbies or citizen’s groups. Those deemed experts in some element of urban development or governance may also be invited to speak at such a consultation. Many consultations are also publicized as small adverts in the English – language newspapers. Replying to such an invitation typically involves contacting an event coordinator who will take the details of your name, title, and affiliation to be displayed on a pre-made name badge. Public consultations are also rather expensive affairs, often conducted in the exclusive spaces of Chennai’s numerous five star hotels, offering a lavish buffet lunch and often benefitting from corporate sponsorship.

There is a clear code of conduct, almost a culture, to these public consultations. Throughout all the observed public consultations participants were identified by their professional credentials. Business attire was expected, as was professionalism in comportment. To participate in such a consultation presented an opportunity to meet other ‘movers and shakers’ in business and local politics. While sharing a cab to one public consultation, my co-passenger informed me that this meeting was a good place to get “face time”, referring to the opportunity to meet otherwise inaccessible and powerful figures. This same meeting also attracted the local press because of the attendance of a particularly well-known Indian entrepreneur who posed for pictures with local politicians during several ‘networking breaks’. Also during these breaks, participants in the consultation would socialize, exchange visiting cards, and discuss business prospects or new partnerships. In all of these observations, markers of class status were important currency. The professional attire, incessant ‘credentializing’, and strict use of English language all served to police the classed boundaries of the consultation. The civil society presence did not disrupt this air of exclusivity, as NGO activists were quite often indistinguishable from their corporate counterparts.

The content of public consultations is also significant. These types of public consultation typically functioned to unveil a vision of urban development, as opposed to the concrete details of a specific urban project. In this way, public consultations invited urban stakeholders to participate in the creation of the world-class city. For example, in early 2008 Janaagraha conducted an event it described as a ‘public consultation’ to present its vision for an integrated transportation project that was the debut of its City Connect initiative in Chennai. The event took place at a large airport hotel and gathered an

audience of civil society figures, local business leaders, as well as a panel of international investors and experts. The flagstone presentation was delivered by a representative from Ford Motor Company, who conveyed the company's experience in transportation planning and upgrades in Columbia, Mexico, and South Africa. The presentation of these case studies was followed up by an address from the leader of Chennai's Janaagraha wherein the desirability of a smooth flowing transportation network was reiterated. Benefits to middle class commuters and the potential of bringing private sector expertise to transportation planning figured prominently. The director of City Connect described this innovation in personal terms:

In 1991 the economy began opening up and people got richer and once you get richer people realize they have options. Ya know, you don't have to go in a sweaty bus. You don't have to walk through garbage on the footpaths. People like me. So what has happened is the private sector has come in, and they can deliver you cars, they can deliver you computers, they can deliver you cell phones. And the government, very sadly because of the neglect of city governments, finds it very difficult to deliver with the rising expectations of urban populations.

If state-led development was presented as the problem of urban development, good governance and foreign investment were the solutions. Throughout the consultation, numerous references were made to "world class" transportation systems, "global standards" of design, and "internationally recognized" models. Aside from the emphasis on decongestion and environmental sustainability, the project was promoted through the

aesthetic of the “world class city”. In this world-class city, infrastructure of international standard would attract foreign investors and propel Chennai (as it had Mexico City and Bogota) into the 21st Century. But equally crucial to this vision of the world-class city was the participation of “people like me”, people who were proactively involved in urban governance as businessmen, civil society groups, and concerned citizens. Thus while one function of the consultation was to present market-led development as the panacea to urban woes, it also was important in that it enlisted its participants as stewards of the world-class city. Turning away from his presentation slides, the speaker concluded:

Now City Connect is a collection of lots of private sector leaders who recognize they have to step in, both as businessmen and as citizens of that city to make Chennai, for example, into a world-class city . . . What’s in it for me? . . . a world class city of your own!^v

It is tempting to dismiss this type of elite public consultation, with its highly exclusive format and unbridled celebration of the virtues of the market, as nothing more than a glorified business meeting, removed from urban political processes. It is not hard to imagine how easy the promises of globalization and economic growth might go down among a room of corporate elites and globetrotting consultants. But events of this sort are increasing in frequency and scope. As approaches to urban development that envision a greater role for non-state actors gain currency, these types of public consultations are becoming normalized within the practices of urban governance.

A case in point is the public consultation for the Chennai Master Plan released in the spring of 2007. The Master Plan was only the second such document to be produced for the city of Chennai, and was crucial because it outlined an integrated urban development vision for the next twenty years. The public consultation that surrounded the Plan was a many months process, and one that was highly political contentious, particularly because of the recent history of failures in participatory urban planning in Chennai (Jairaj, 2006). While on the one hand experts from NGOs like Janaagraha offered important inputs to the Master Plan consultation, numerous other civil society organisations, from middle-class NGOs to less mainstream direct action groups, launched a full-sail campaign against the plan. Their criticisms centred on the patchy, outdated maps and data that informed the plan, the failure to address historic planning shortcomings, and the exclusion of the poor from both the planning process and the plan itself. Such was the hubbub that one NGO even organised its own public consultation as an alternate to the “sham” consultation being conducted by the planning authorities (Padmanabhan, 2007). Another NGO utilized the language of ‘consultation’ to solicit public input on the Master Plan document through their website, offering an open forum for citizen input. This approach rested on the belief that citizens were the possessors of more intimate, relevant, and valuable knowledge about their localities and that they would be well equipped to evaluate the Master Plan based on how it would impact these localities. The survey questions used to solicit this input targeted respondents as individuals, reflecting a belief that the ‘common-man’ should be considered as a stakeholder in the future of the city; “Do you believe that issues concerning your locality / neighbourhood (where you reside) have been given adequate attention in the SMP

[Second Master Plan]?” and “Would you say that the ‘strategies and actions’ mentioned under each of the specific sectors in the SMP are practical and acceptable to you?”(CAG, 2007). This same NGO also brought together various academics, former government officials, scientists, and other expert practitioners to compile an ‘expert response’ to the master plan. Both these campaigns attempted to challenge the authority in knowledge production that was perceived as crucial to the governmentality of the developmental state, and to do so by producing an alternate set of knowledge about the city. In this sense, they may represent something akin to what Appadurai has described as “governmentality from below”. But what these political challenges also highlight is the currency that a language of stakeholder carried among various sections of civil society. The progressive aims of these efforts notwithstanding, the involvement of civil society groups in this case only reproduced a normative understanding of participation as it is construed by the practices of public consultation. This meant that many of the core assumptions about who participates, and in what way—the individualised citizen as stakeholder; the preference for dialogue and negotiation over confrontation; the desirability of a clean and ordered city—remained intact.

Not surprisingly then, in August of 2007 the ‘official’ consultation was conducted in grand fashion, with a high-profile guest list of urban ‘stakeholders’ meeting in the ballroom of a five-star hotel. Noteworthy attendees included politicians, urban planners, local real estate developers, and prominent figures, many from the same NGOs who challenged the Plan.

Commencing the event was the Chief Secretary of the State of Tamil Nadu who began:

Globalisation and economic liberalization in the recent years have resulted in competitiveness in production and services . . .Tamil Nadu is one of the most favoured investment destinations. Taking advantage of the boom in the IT sector and IT enabled service sector, the attractiveness should be maintained and improved (cited by Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, 2007, 12-13)

The Chief Secretary's allusion to the present and future "global status" of Chennai more than hinted to the aspirations of the Master Plan and its vision for urban development. This global outlook was echoed throughout the two-day consultation and in the Master Plan document itself. The consultation was scripted around six sessions, focusing on concerns such as commerce and economy, traffic and transportation, and sanitation and environmental issues. Each session comprised a keynote speaker, and four to five panellists that represented experts in the topic for discussion. These experts were drawn from the private sector (including builders, architects, and finance gurus), civil society (consisting of leaders of local and international NGOs, scholars from the local universities, and one journalist), and representatives from the various government agencies (including officials from The Slum Clearance Board, but also representatives from the various para-state agencies). The selection of the audience, speakers, and experts for the consultation was with the stated aim of representing the various 'stakeholders' in urban development.

The speakers' presentations were equally divided between those who described the intractability of the current urban reality, and those who offered up innovative solutions to these problems. While representatives from local government agencies described the harrowing conditions 'on the ground'—the lack of municipal resources, rampant illegality in land use, and the inefficacy of public institutions—those representing the private sector and civil society organizations offered up the potential of a more ordered city. Many presented case studies from other 'successful' global cities. Most frequently, Asian cities like Singapore, Bangkok, and Hong Kong were referenced as models of how participation on the part of the private sector and civil society could help to achieve the objectives of urban development. Audience members were also presented with visual models and mock-ups portraying glitzy high-rise towers and sparsely populated, planned green spaces, or unclogged ring roads and high-speed trams all superimposed onto the ostensible 'blank canvas' of an unplanned Chennai^{vi}. These images enticed audience members to imagine Chennai as a world-class city, in league with the likes of other Asian economic success stories. Yet for all that the Master Plan Consultation was touted as an exercise in public participation and good urban governance, the event was remarkably sparse on content. The audience was not presented with the necessary Detailed Development Plans, which provide information about the actual impacts of new urban development agendas. Nor did the Master Plan Consultation offer a guarantee that any concerns or criticism raised through the consultation would be registered in an official capacity. Because the consultation lacked these tangible participatory mechanisms, it ultimately functioned more as a collective discourse that normalized neoliberal approaches to development as the necessary prerequisites for global success. In doing so, the public consultations effectively

united the interests of private capital and urban elites as stakeholders who shared in the responsibility and rights to the world-class city.

CONCLUSIONS

In August 2010, an article appeared in the Chennai English-language news. Taking stock of Chennai's urban development, the author asked, "How does Chennai measure up?" (Srinivasan, 18/08/2010). After bemoaning the civic woes of traffic congestion and solid waste pollution, and lack of civic consciousness, the article polled Chennai residents about what it would take to make Chennai a global city. Respondents offered the following:

Corruption-free politicians, sensible citizens, disciplined drivers, planned infrastructure expansion, huge incentives for wealth creation, tough punishment for public littering, an effective law and order mechanism . . .

Educated, younger and professional politicians. If that's tough, privatize everything

Personally I think Chennai-ites have the lowest civic sense, even in South India. Educate or impose fines and improve personal and public hygiene and, voila, you have Singapore!

Even in the face of global economic recession and a patchy-at-best implementation of the Chennai Second Master Plan, the article underscores the durability of the vision of the

world-class city. Perhaps more significantly it suggests that a very particular understanding of the rights and responsibilities of urban citizenship has become normalized within discourses about the world-class city. This paper has shown how a civic governmentality produces subjects who participate in urban governance. In doing so, the paper sheds new light on how it is that people become enlisted in neoliberal development paradigms. But the paper also shows how participation is inherently exclusive, privileging urban elites as stakeholders in the world-class city.

A combination of market solutions to development problems, and revamped or newly created institutional arrangements in urban governance is becoming a familiar package of neoliberal reforms in a variety of Indian. Yet in all these cities, new governing arrangements are built on fragile and shifting alliances between the local state, the private sector, and various non-state actors. In this context, Anjaria speculates that it is a failure of neoliberal governmentality in urban India that has generated antagonisms between middle class activists and the local state (2009; 403). While I appreciate that there is no trouble-free consensus between a liberalizing state, bourgeois desires, and private capital, forms of civic governmentality mediate this disjuncture. The paper offers a glimpse of some of the technologies of this civic governmentality. Public consultations in Chennai are key technologies of governance that admonish the citizen as stakeholder to provide input in and take ownership of the city's future. The discourse that surrounds the inclusion of stakeholders creates new openings for urban elites to gain new footholds as urban politics becomes "steeped" in an ethos of civic-ness, cooperation, and mediation (Roy, 2009; 26?). This ethos serves to civilise political society by mediating the contradictions, inconsistencies, and exclusions that attend neoliberal development models.

Public consultations have such wide appeal because they tap into a more pervasive discourse about participation. Significantly, this discourse of participation does not only circulate within the policy recommendations of the World Bank, or in the funding appeals of local state plans. Non-state and civil society actors, as well as social movements and individuals also believe in participation, though their definitions vary widely.

Participation, then, is a key trope of a neoliberal rationale of governance. In Chennai, participation is a powerful discursive tool that makes it possible to bypass the messiness of urban politics and enlist potentially antagonistic elements in the ‘world-class city of your own’.

The exclusivity of the public consultations described herein provides a glimpse at the outcomes of an emerging civic governmentality. Despite the efforts of several direct action grassroots organisations to bring dissenting voices to bear on the planning process, the world-class vision of Chennai’s Master Plan was left undaunted. Because an understanding of urban politics as mediation, dialogue, and participation through consultation permeated these resistant efforts, these organisations often reproduced a normative understanding of the ‘right’ kind of citizen participation. Although this discourse demanded that the local state take participation seriously, it failed to challenge the legitimacy of elites as urban stakeholders. Specifically, the emphasis on the value of individual citizen’s as stakeholders allowed urban elites to exercise disproportionately large influence over the planning process through their conflation as ‘the public’. This has validated local planning documents that prioritize issues of sanitation, foreign investment, and quality of life over the provision of services to the poor.

Although Roy's account of civic governmentality leaves open the possibility that these technologies of inclusion may also raise a serious challenge to the world-class city, the current trends of displacement and primitive violence have yet to meet their match in a resistant or insurgent governmentality from below. In Chennai, marginalized groups attempt to utilize the tools and organizational style of elite civil society to gain a foothold in urban governance (see also Coelho and Venkat, 2009). These politics challenge bourgeois ownership of the world-class city, but also jettison popular, confrontational forms of politics for a more civil politics. Much recent work, the present paper included, shows how the civilizing of urban politics is also inherently modernizing, counter-revolutionary, and developmental. Thus it is little surprise that public consultations, as part of a regime of civic governmentality, have to date done little to delegitimize visions of the world-class city.

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ⁱ There are fairly well-rehearsed arguments for and against the categorical accuracy of the ‘new middle class’ in India. Debates about to what extent the middle class constitutes proper class category have highlighted the precarious economic situation of recent entrants to the middle class. Other work has suggested that new middle class in India functions more as a discursive construct; an aspirational category that legitimates policies of liberalization (Fernandes, 2006). While there is not the space to engage with the entirety of these debates here, it is important to point out that there is also diversity among middle class civic associations. Not all middle class groups direct their political energies toward issues of governance and there are plenty that remain service-orientated in their scope. In Chennai, there is a clear geography to civic activism wherein service-focused non-governmental organisations (NGO) tend to work in the central and northern parts of the city, and the governance NGOs base their headquarters in the exclusive southern parts of the city (Harriss, 2006). What unites the civil society groups in this paper (and in much of the work referenced throughout) are their attempts to influence the production of urban space towards the creation of a ‘bourgeois city’. Also the political style of some NGOs is self consciously ‘a-political’, mirroring the professionalism of the private sector. Thus I use interchangeably the terms elite, bourgeois, and middle-class to capture both the aspirations and demographic profile of these specific civic associations.

ⁱⁱ Dravidian regional identity is the name given to the ethnic-cum-linguistic commonalities of the regions of South India, particularly to the modern-day linguistic states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh. The historical and present day contours of this identity are and have been fiercely contested, but retain a salience within Tamil regional politics (see Barnett, 1979; also Ramaswamy, 1997).

ⁱⁱⁱ The phenomenon of public consultations is the subject of several chapters in a forthcoming volume devoted to new practices of public participation in India (Coelho et al. forthcoming).

^{iv} The JNNURM is national level urban project that earmarks large amounts of funding for 28 cities with populations over one million. As part of the requisite reforms to access this funding, JNNURM cities must create, and solicit public input on a City Development Plan (jnnurm.nic.in).