

THE IMAGES OF

**TILJALA**

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**Contemporary City Institute**



# THE IMAGES OF TILJALA



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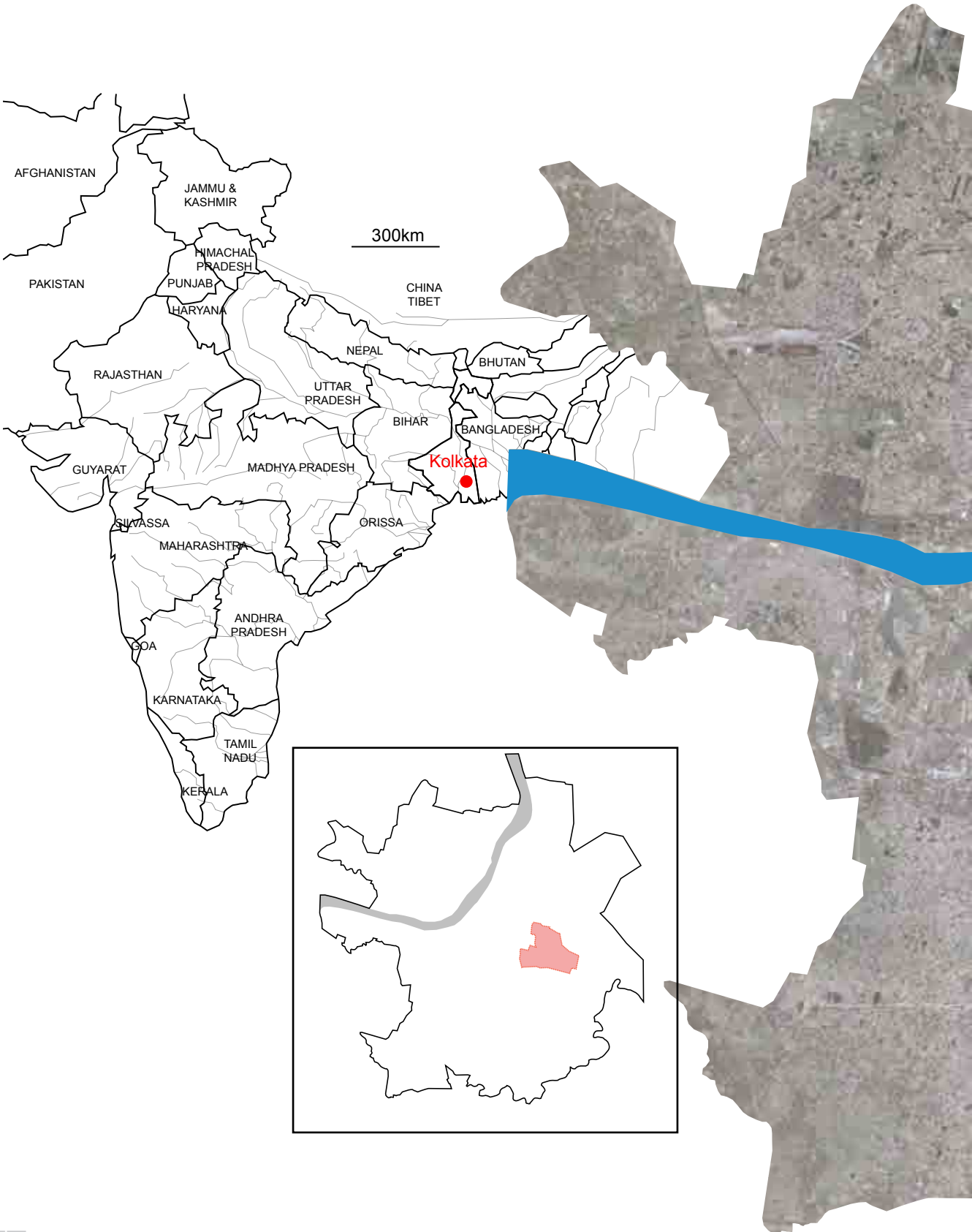
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Statement




dangerous why do you want to go  
there neighbourly criminal not part  
of the town why do you not study salt  
lake poor unnotified notified it is a  
normal place do not go there alone  
fuzzy unaccepted illegal it is a nice  
place to live privacy slum squatter  
bustee they serve the rich identity  
sweat shops informal refugees  
resettlement not graspable hindu  
gated safest place in  
groups i have never been there  
multistorey lovely different same  
borders em bypass vertical slum  
mosque industrial heterogeneity  
subjective vicious circle temple

**URBAN CONTEXT**  
Images and Prejudices



## INTRODUCTION



Being in Kolkata, we immediately got to know many different voices about the area of Tiljala. People spread mostly negative images, telling us about danger and criminality. We had the feeling that no one could understand why we intended to go there, even we were suggested to study other topics such as the colonial buildings of the town. It was difficult to find a guide leading us through the settlements, because nobody thought about going there voluntarily. This place was just avoided if possible. Certainly, going there without a translator was not an optimal option for us. Asking for information, we often got short and not very helpful answers stating that one has never worked on the topic or the interviewed just tried to continue with another, in his eyes nicer one. Even in several libraries there was rarely information about slums in Kolkata, the name Tiljala could hardly be found anywhere. There is a willingness of turning a blind eye to that topic by the ones who can afford to live in higher income areas. Almost none of the diploma theses from Jadavpur University dealt with a slum topic within the last 30 years.

A bit sceptic but still optimistic we were struggling for any kind of help and other impressions than only the negatives ones. We were lucky to find several people in the last days of our visit and therefore are glad to start this book not only containing one impression which might be a prejudice but with a variety of the colorful IMAGES OF TILJALA.



## CHANGING - place of transformation

Buildings under construction can be seen on several spots. The tendency goes to middle rises, partially even high-rises. It seems that this form of living gains popularity among the ones who used to live in low rise huts before. In some areas, there are even none of the onestorey huts left.







## UNACCEPTED - not part of the town

Finding a guide to accompany us to Tiljala turned out to be a difficult issue. We were asked why we want to go there and why we do not study a “nicer” area such as Salt Lake. The students and teachers preferably led us to Shopping Malls and colonial sights instead of showing how the majority of people lives and what actually defines the main part of the town. Tiljala was overall not accepted as a regular component of Kolkata.





*“Why do you want go there, it is not mainstream”* - Ifte Takar, Calcutta Walks



## Factory fire fans resident fears

Soumen Ghosh was enjoying the Kali puja evening with friends at a neighbourhood pandal when a friend rushed in with the news that the rubber factory next to his house had caught fire. When the 24-year-old rushed to his terrace around 8.30pm, he could not believe his eyes. The top floor of the three-storeyed factory in Tiljala, which was allegedly being run illegally, was up in flames. "The huge stock of finished goods and raw material was burning and the flames were fast spreading towards our house," Soumen recalled. The youth had every reason to fear for his life and that of his family members as parts of the factory were just 2 ft from his house. He asked his uncle and aunt whom he shares the house with to evacuate before rushing to the factory to help the firefighters. Women was not the only resident of Kustia Road who panicked at the sight of the fire. About 45 people live in five buildings that either share the boundary wall with the gutted Banik Rubber Industries Private Limited or are within 100 ft of it. "Earlier, there was a fan factory on the spot. One day we heard the plot had been sold and a huge rubber factory would come up on it. We were scared that rubber factories deal with inflammable material and ran from pillar to post, in vain, to stall the construction," said Binapani Hazra, who had to vacate her house and spend the night with her three children in the open. "The flames were leaping higher with every blast in the factory. Since the firemen were spraying water from the front, the blaze was moving backward towards our houses," said Soumitra Ghosh, who lives in a two-storeyed building just behind the factory. Five hours after the fire broke out, the fire department stored diesel in an office water on the containers storing the chemicals so that they did not explode in the heat. "The stock was enough to blow up the factory and the neighbouring buildings," said Gopal Bhattacharjee, the director-general of fire and emergency services. A complaint has been lodged with Tiljala police station against Banik Rubber Industries.

24102007

## Gangster gunshot kills Tiljala trader

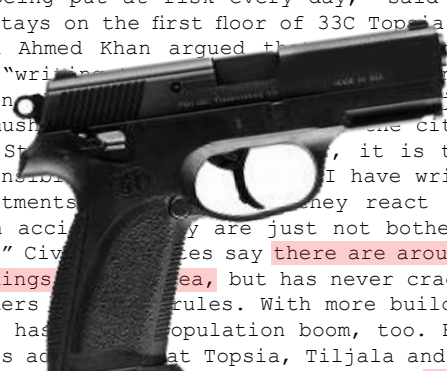
Tiljala trader was shot dead near his house early on Tuesday. Three youths have been detained and a search is on for the alleged mastermind. All four were with Mohammad Alimuddin, the victim, on Monday night. Police said Alimuddin, 25, who ran a bag-making unit at home, and the other four youths went to sleep on the roof of a three-storeyed building in Brick Field Lane, off GJ Khan Road. "My wife woke me up around 4.15am and told me that Alimuddin was shot dead," said Mohammad Salauddin, the victim's elder brother. "We ran to the roof and saw Alimuddin's blood-stained body. A bullet had pierced his forehead. Three of the youths who were with him were here, but the fourth, Sheikh Kalbia, was absconding. We suspect he was the mastermind behind the murder," Salauddin

## Sweatshop belt plays with fire & life

- Lessons from 2006 Topsisia Road tragedy forgotten; illegal businesses continue to thrive  
February 2004: A tannery in Tangra catches fire and becomes a gas chamber, in which two people die of suffocation and burns; six are injured.  
November 2006: A blaze in an illegal sweatshop at 33C Topsisia Road kills nine young workers who were locked in at night.  
March 2008: A leather factory in Tangra is gutted. Five persons are hospitalised with serious burn injuries.  
June 2008: Fire breaks out in an illegal leather-cutting unit in a Tiljala building; four persons injured.  
Frequent fire outbreaks and loss of lives and property since 2004 have failed to stunt the growth of sweatshops in the dingy lanes of Tiljala, Topsisia and Tangra. Businesses, in fact, thriving and residents say someone opens a sweatshop in a soot-laced building in one of these localities almost every day. "Nothing has changed here. It is a win-win situation for the landlord and the proprietor of the sweatshop. The landlord asks for and gets higher rent and the owner of the sweatshop does not have to make any fire-fighting arrangements. He can indulge in power theft, too. The losers are the workers and residents of such buildings, because they are the ones who will be at risk in the event of fire," said Rahmat Ali, who runs NGO Muhafiz helps educate children employed in the sweatshops. According to a conservative estimate, there are nearly 10,000 sweatshops in Tiljala, Topsisia and Tangra. The number does not include the leather and PVC factories and tanneries in these areas. Child workers churn out leather goods in most of these sweatshops. At 33 Topsisia Road, the site of the biggest sweatshop tragedy in Calcutta, nothing has changed since November

*"Probably Tiljala is the safest place in Kolkata. Criminals come from there and work elsewhere."*

promised as they workers none of ration, compli- everyone forgot about the loss of lives later, said a resident of a building that is a stone's throw from the one where disaster struck. The factory at 33C Topsisia Road has been sealed, but residents say the owner now operates from another address in the same area. "More and more sweatshops are being opened in residential buildings and more lives are being put at risk every day," said Mohammad Karim, who stays on the first floor of 33C Topsisia Road. Local MLA Javed Ahmed Khan argued that the responsibility ended with "writing a report" to initiate action in Tiljala? Sweatshops are mushrooming in the city, from BB Ganguly Street. "I have written to all the departments. They react only when there is an accident. They are just not bothered rest of the time." Civic bodies say there are around 2,000 illegal buildings in the area, but has never cracked the whip on builders and owners. With more buildings coming up, there has been a population boom, too. Fire brigade officials admit that Topsisia, Tiljala and Tangra were the most disaster-prone areas of the city. "Every week, there are at least three to four fires in this belt. Most of them go unreported because there is no loss of life. But these incidents can get big any time and cause much damage. Nothing will change unless there is systematic vigi-



26122008

## Baby boy left to die in Tiljala litter bin

Not all babies born on Christmas are wanted by their parents. An infant, barely a few hours old, was found in a garbage bin on Tiljala Road on Thursday morning. No one would touch him; some kind-hearted resident simply called up the police around 9.30 in the morning. By the time policemen responded to the call and came and took the baby boy to Calcutta National Medical College and Hospital, he was dead. "We arrived on the spot within half an hour of the call and found the baby wrapped in a piece of cloth. No one had picked it up from the garbage bin and it lay motionless in the trash," a Beniapukur police station official said later in the day. "Our men recovered the body and sent it to Calcutta National Medical College and Hospital, where the baby was pronounced brought dead by the attendant doctors. We tried to find out the child's parents but not one resident of the area could give us a satisfactory answer. We also made inquiries in the neighbourhood nursing homes, but could find no leads," the thana official added. Local residents were clueless and claimed the baby boy did not belong to anyone in the locality. "We neighbours each other and the baby belonged to one of us, but we could not find out the culprit. It is beyond imagination how anyone could throw away an innocent baby, especially one of the residents of the slum area. Police, too, could not find the view. It cannot belong to anyone from the locality. The area is dotted with private clinics and nursing homes and it could be that someone had come to get rid of the baby. It was found in the bin at night when there were no witnesses," Singh added. Deputy commissioner of police (North) H. Singh said the body had been sent for post-mortem. Beniapukur police have been asked to find out how the baby reached the garbage bin. "There is only a slim chance of getting to know the baby's parentage, given these circumstances. Usually, people do not desert babies at a known spot as there are chances of being recognised by a passerby. It must belong to someone from another locality," Singh said.



24062008

## Toughs hit trader with revolver butt

A gang of four extortionists struck a Tiljala trader on his head with a revolver butt on Sunday night for declining to pay them Rs 5,000, after having met their demand twice. The gangsters also beat up two others, who tried to come to Ram Paras Singh's rescue. Three of the four criminals - all are absconding - have been identified as Manoj, Puran and Jibat. Police said the gang had raided Singh's fodder shop on Tiljala Road on Friday and Saturday night and forced him to cough up Rs 2,000 and Rs 5,000, respectively. "On Sunday, they came around 9.40pm, held me at gun-point and demanded Rs 5,000. I turned down their demand as I had already paid them Rs 7,000. My refusal made them furious and one of the youths hit me on my head with a revolver butt. The gang also beat up two others, who came to my rescue," recalled Singh. Around 200 residents blocked Tiljala Road around 1pm, protesting police apathy in arresting the extortionists. The blockade was lifted after two hours, following an assurance of prompt action from officers of Tiljala police station. "The youths have unleashed terror in our neighbourhood. They

**DANGEROUS - 80% criminals**

"You should not go there alone, it is very dangerous" was a sentence we did not only hear once. Many experts describe Tiljala as a dangerous area, full of criminals and daily committed crimes. Indeed, this image is also generated by the media. The main newspapers "The Statesman" and "Telegraph" will deliver lurid headlines when searching for articles about Tiljala. One expert told us, that eight out of ten people from the area are criminals, another one said, that it might be the safest place in town, because the criminals only live there but leave the place to commit crimes.

27092008

## Tiljala trail in Dum Dum murder

From Dum Dum to Tiljala, from Sailen Das to Parthapratin Roy Burman, the police have traced a common link. Interrogation of Biswajit Burman, a private investigator, revealed a case who was established in Tiljala. Biswajit Burman learnt that in Tiljala underworld, a daring August 13 operation at Das' P.K. Guha Lane doorstep "Biswajit had good contacts, which he used to flee the city to a safe house in New Delhi, before proceeding to Ajmer," said superintendent of police (North 24 Parganas) M. Harisena Verma. Biswajit shot into prominence last year after killing Karaya criminal Vijay Yadav. That killing helped him re-establish his links with the Tiljala underworld, as he managed to evade arrest by slipping into the area's murky bylanes. "Biswajit started frequenting Tiljala more often since then," officer-in-charge of Karaya police station Subrata Ghosh said. "That he was hired for the job explains the kind of reputation he had among criminals," Ghosh added. Sustained interrogation during the past 24 hours in Ajmer has revealed that Biswajit was contacted by Bhava, son of a police constable, with a "fake offer" of Rs 2 lakh to kill Das. "I was told that he wanted someone from south Calcutta to carry out the job to evade detection," Burman told his interrogators. Babulal Sharma, a Dum Dum-based promoter, had asked Bhava to hire him for the job, as he "was swift and a good marksman", according to Biswajit. Police learnt that Bhava met Biswajit and Chhotka, a close associate, "several times in Tiljala" for dry runs before they were invited to visit P.K. Guha Lane. It was Bhava again, a trusted police source, who introduced Biswajit to Ibrahim, the man who supplied the motorcycle used by the killers to reach Das' residence. "I told them I needed a few other men for the operation, which they initially refused. They agreed after I told them I was not conversant with the topography of Dum Dum Cantonment," Biswajit told his interrogators. He had roped in Ismail and Bachchan for the operation by August 1. Biswajit met Ibrahim at his Dum Dum

*"Eight out of ten criminals come from this area"*





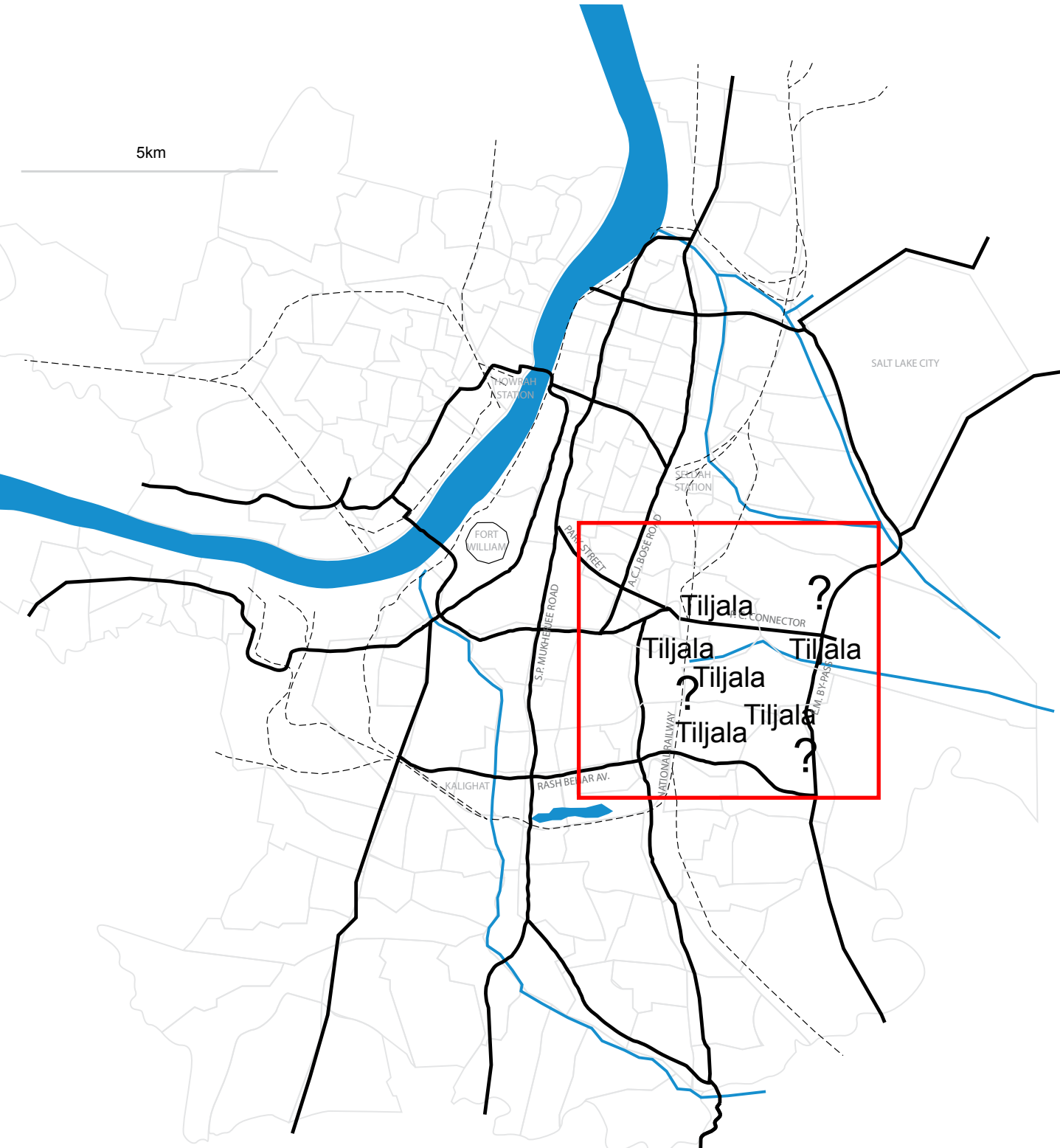




# URBAN CONTEXT

Where is Tiljala?



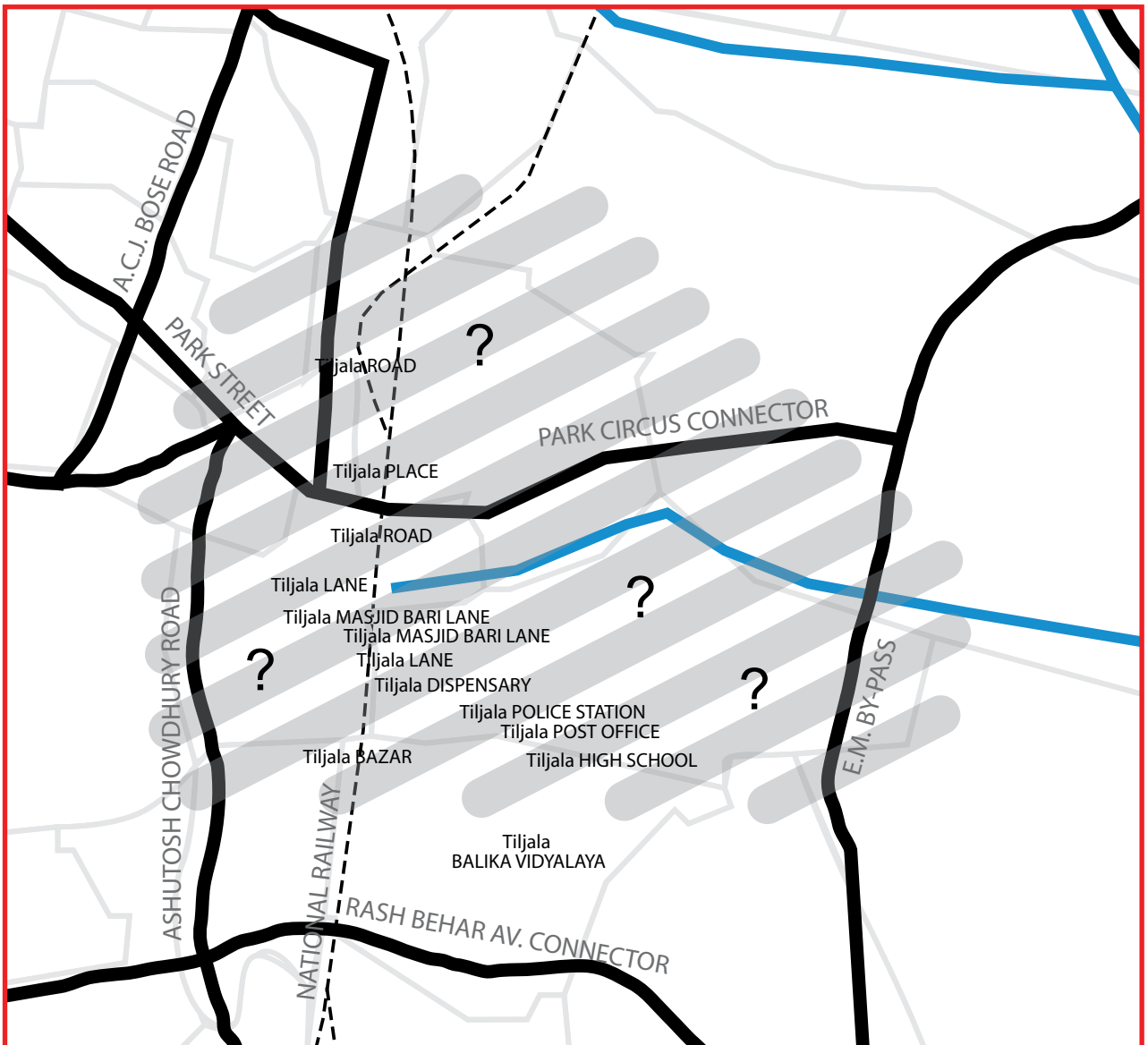


Tiljala on different maps in various locations

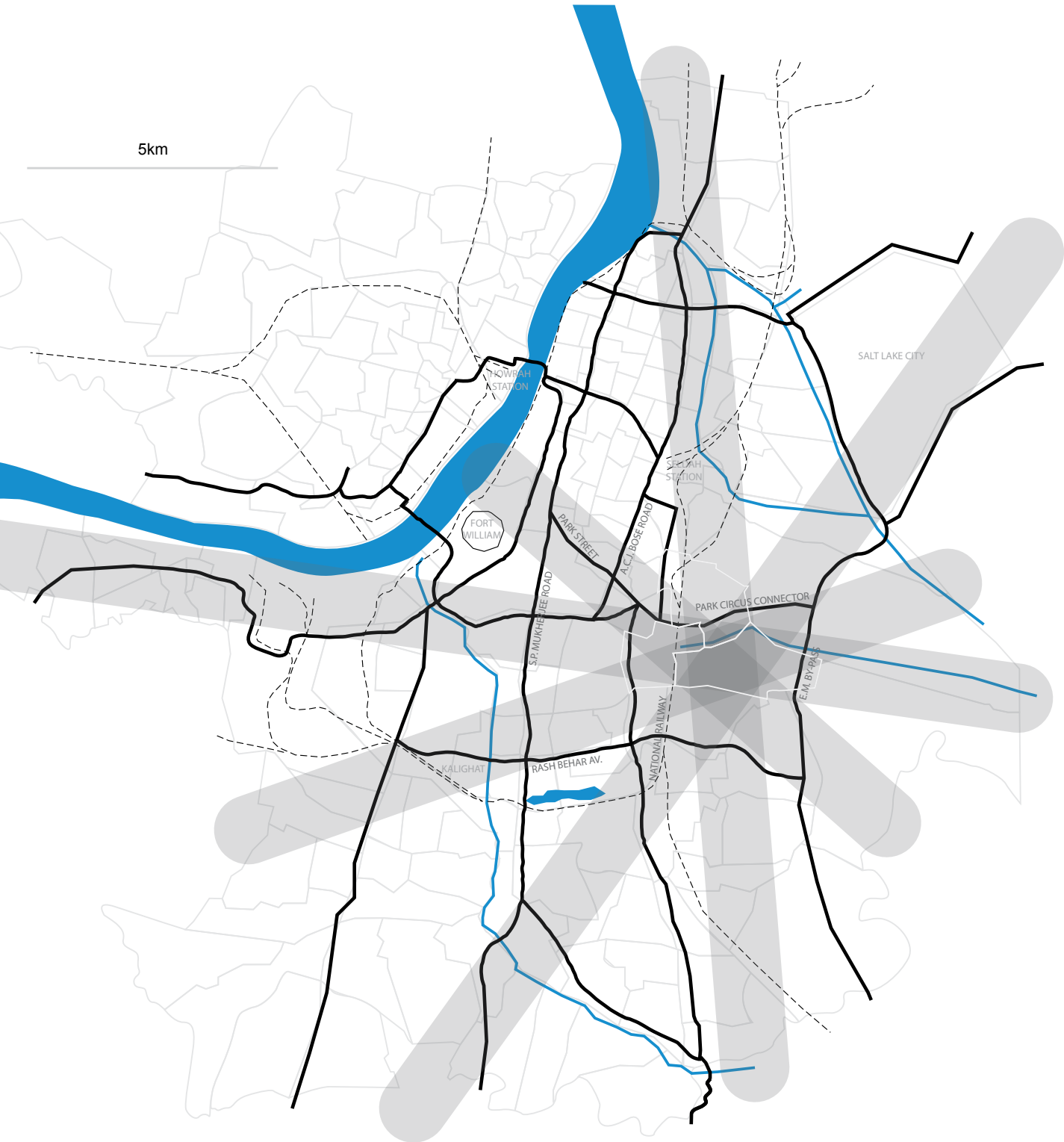


## LOCATION

Different maps show the name Tiljala on different spots. Even when talking to experts, it was never clear where exactly it is or which wards it contains. No one could tell us the clear borders. Often the name was connected somehow with the neighbouring areas of Tangra, Topsia and Kasba. For the facilitation of our research, we decided to focus on the wards 59, 65 and 66. Broadly speaking, about the area between the National Railway (west), Eastern Metropolitan Bypass (east), Parc Circus connector and Stormwater Canal (north) and Picnic Garden Road (south). Caused by the city's recent expansion towards east, the area is more and more becoming central. It could possibly play a much more important role in the future using this spatial advantage strategically.



Fuzzy area

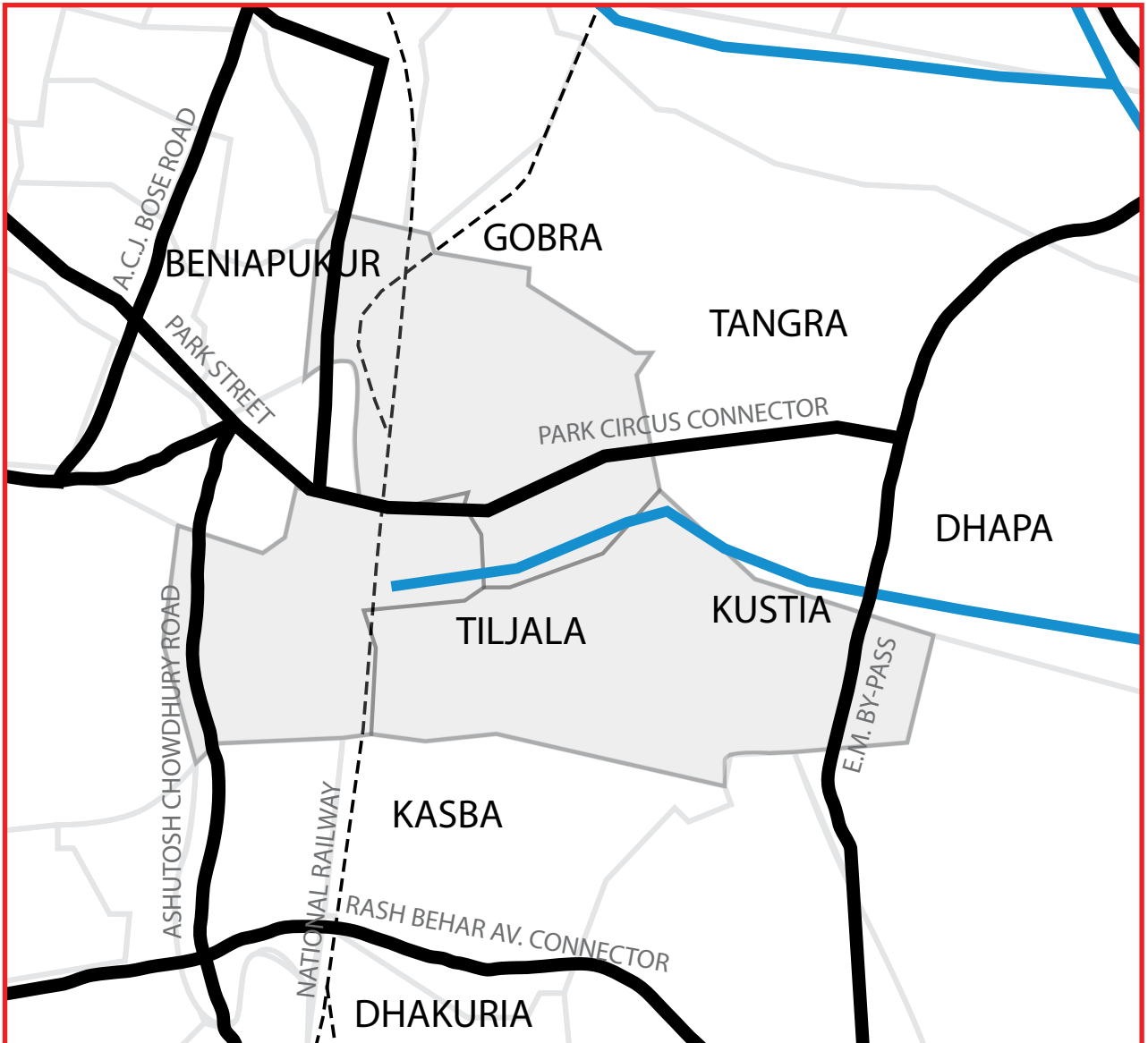


The centre of Kolkata?

## BORDERS



Even though on the map the borders of Tiljala are fuzzy, both the local inhabitants and Kolkatans from outside the area feel distant from each other. For the Muslim population it is hard to move out of Tiljala as in Kolkata they are a minority but in the area a majority. Muslims settled in different areas of Kolkata speak either Urdu or Bengali because of their different origins. Therefore it would not be easy for them find a culturally similar place to live.



Wardlines and surrounding areas



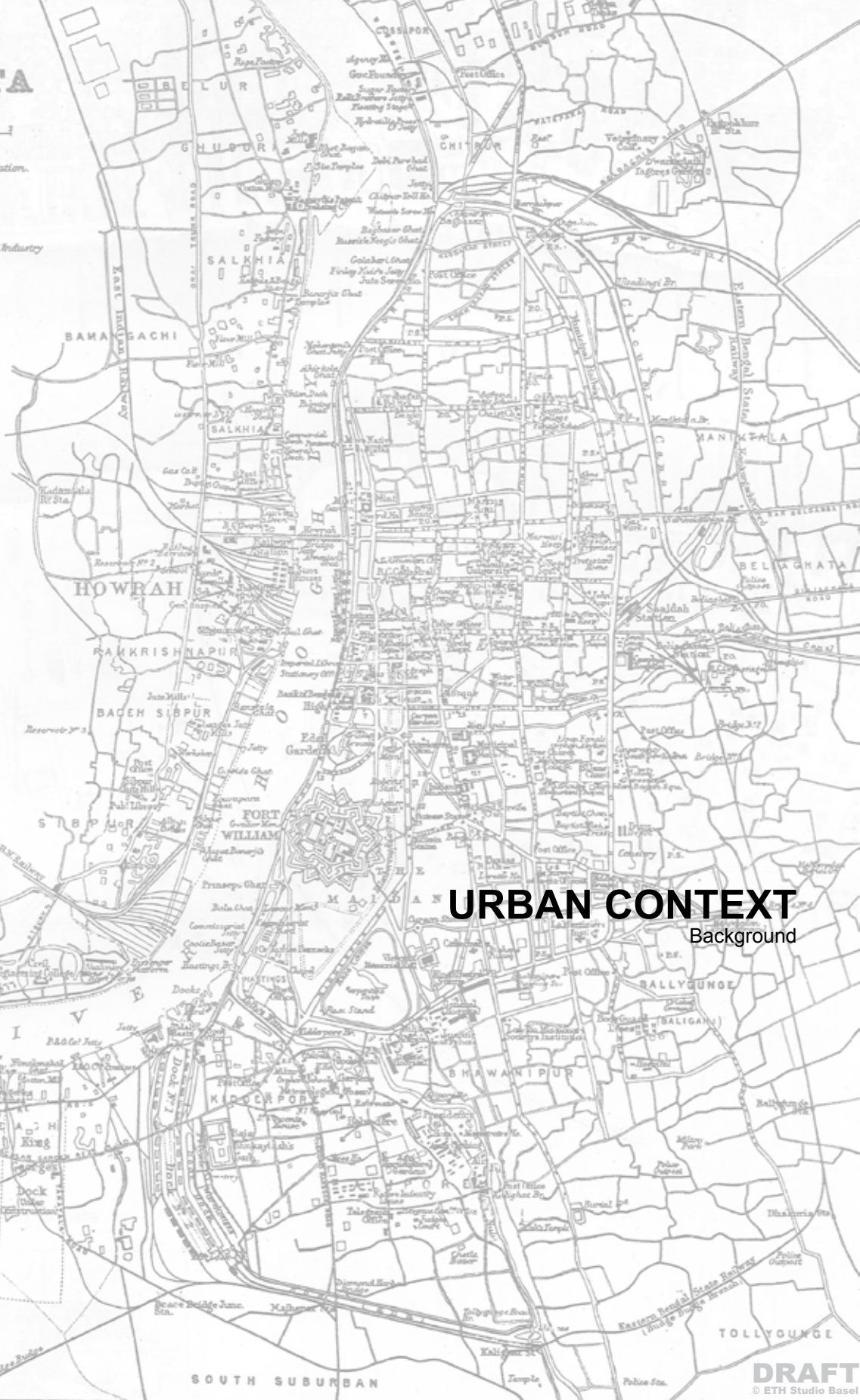
# CALCUTTA

One English Mile  
0 1/2 1

P.O. Post Office, P.S. Police Station.

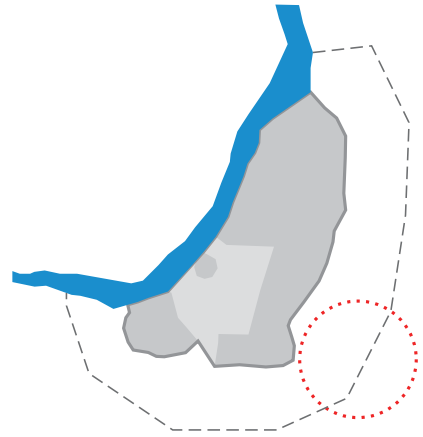
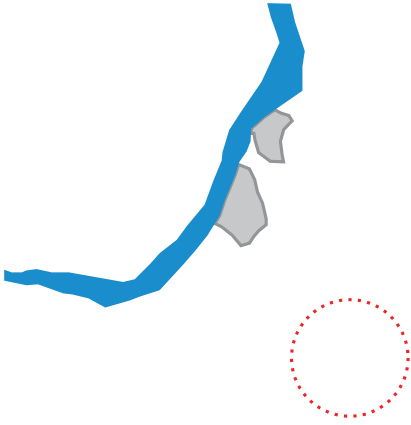
## References

- 1 Economic Museum
  - 2 Dalhousie Institute
  - 3 Government Dispensary
  - 4 Department of Commerce & Industry
  - 5 Military & Foreign
  - 6 St. Xavier's College
- ### Monuments
- 7 Lord Bentinck's Statue
  - 8 Lord Auckland's
  - 9 Lord Canning's
  - 10 Lord Hardinge's
  - 11 Lord Lawrence's
  - 12 Lord Mayo's
  - 13 Sir W. Peck
  - 14 Napier's
  - 21 Lord Lansdowne's
  - 22 Lord Hirst's
  - 23 Lord Ripon's
- ### Theatres
- 15 Corinthian Theatre
  - 16 Theatre Royal
  - 17 Opera House
  - 18 Empire Theatre
- 
- 19 Asiatic Society
  - 20 Site of 'The Black Hole'



**URBAN CONTEXT**  
Background





## 18TH CENTURY

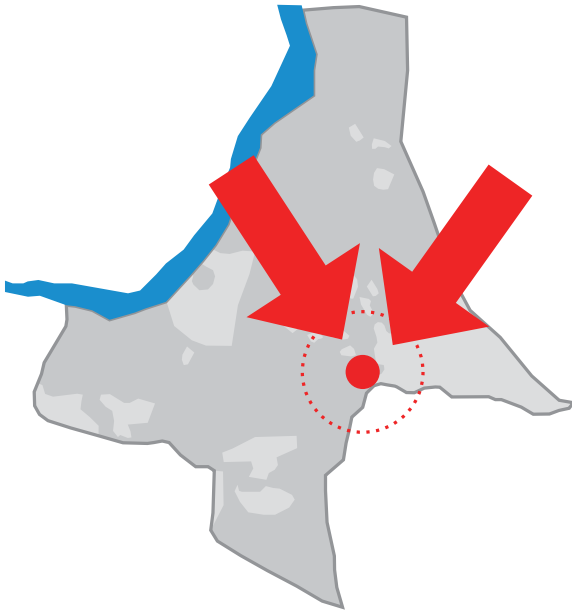
The area was wet and partly agricultural land. But mostly empty.

## 19TH CENTURY

During the 19th century the amount of cultivated land increased. On 19th century maps the area is considered to be a suburb of Kolkata, for example on year 1817 map it is shown to be mostly inside of the "Proposed Embankment around the suburbs of Calcutta".



## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF TILJALA



### MID 20TH CENTURY

During the 1950s migrants from the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh came south along the railway, settled and built up the main - and partly still existent - structure of Tiljala. Broadly speaking, this was the most important influence on the area. Most of them started working in Chinese tanneries nearby.



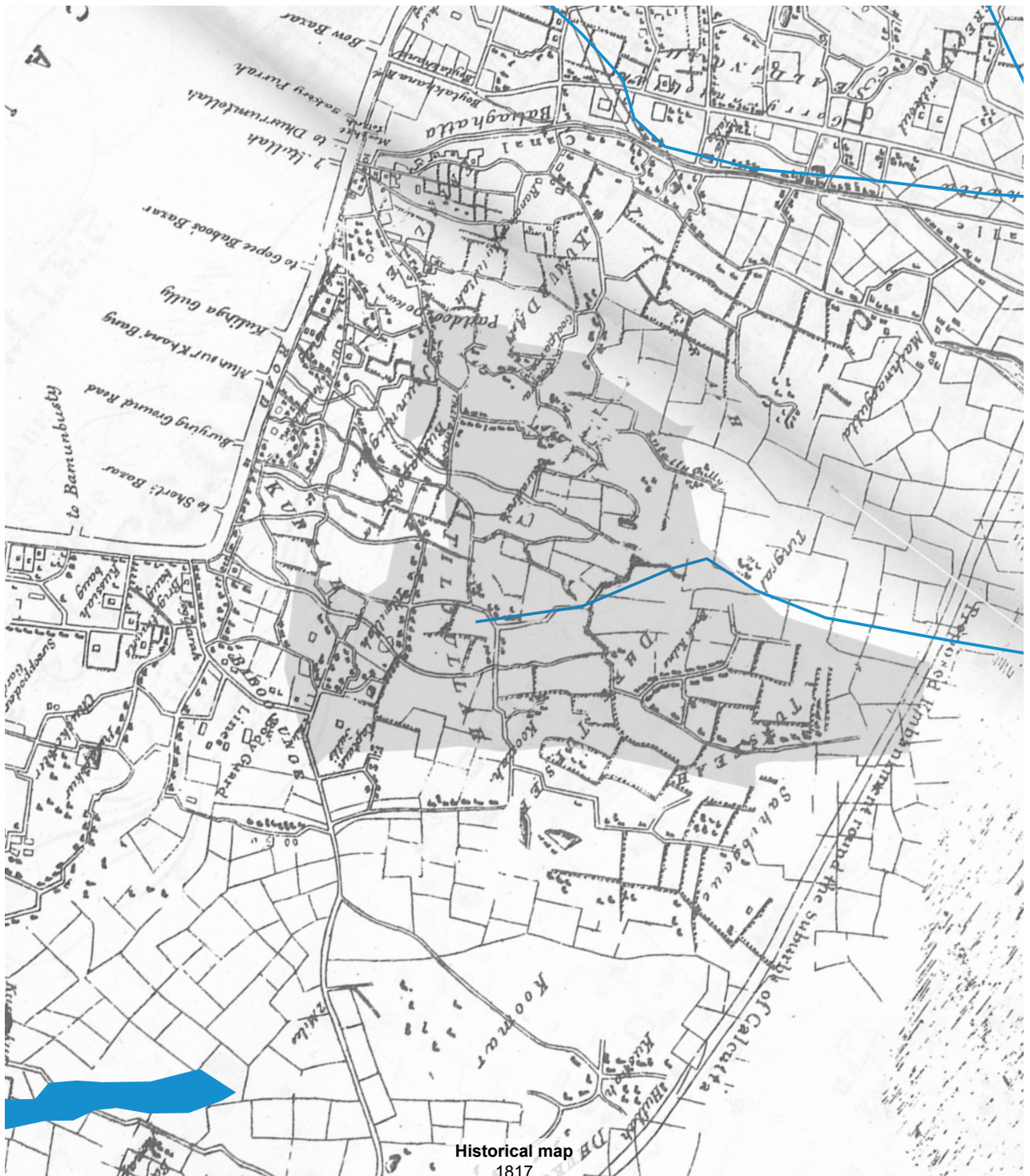
### END OF 20TH CENTURY

A massive expansion and densification of the inner city took place in the 1980s. Caused by the expansion to the west of the town, Tiljala is becoming more and more central.



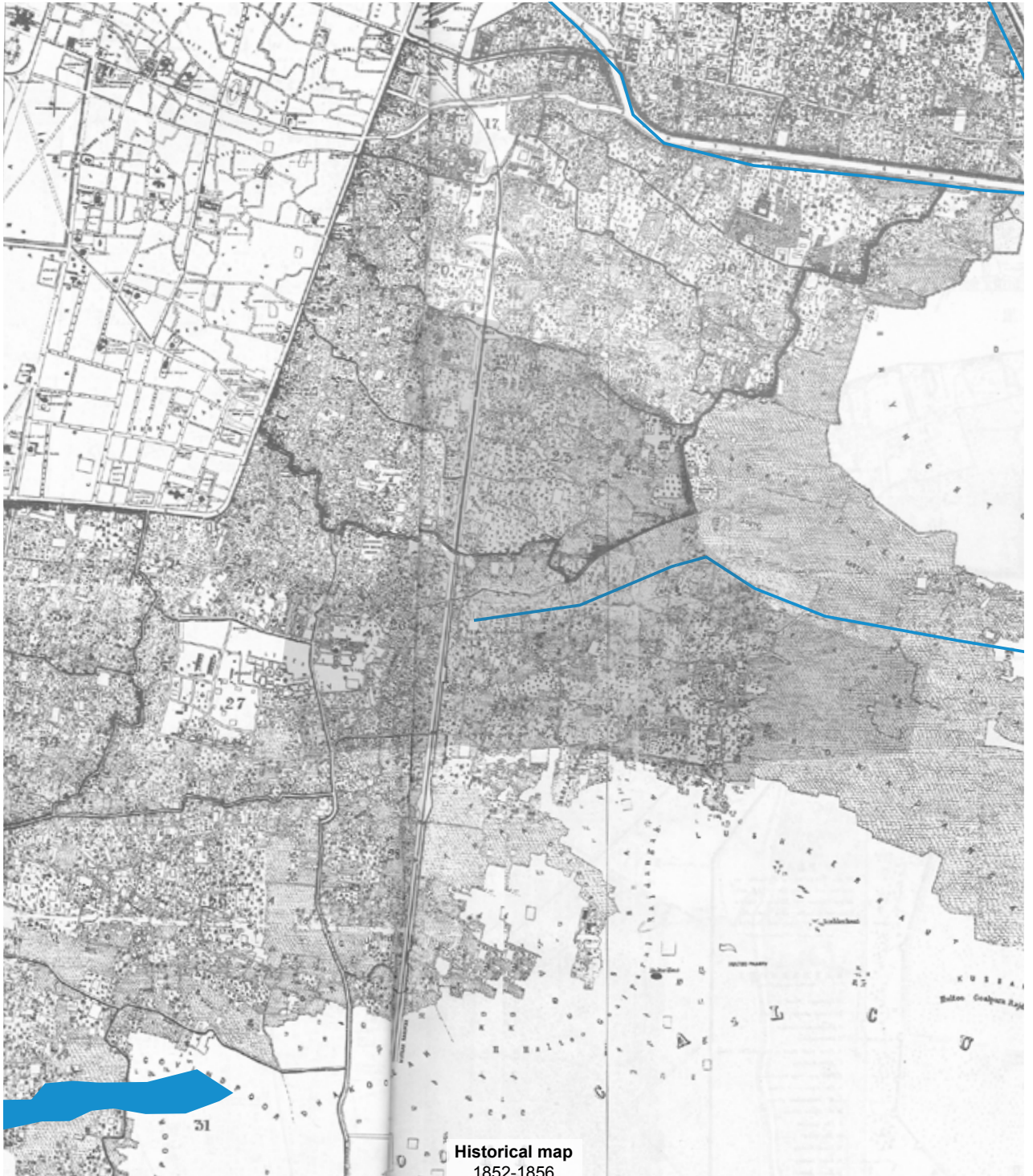
Source: pictures from [www.martinfrost.ws](http://www.martinfrost.ws), [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)





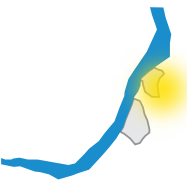
Historical map  
1817





Historical map  
1852-1856

Source: The Historical Atlas of Calcutta, pictures: [www.martinfrost.ws](http://www.martinfrost.ws), [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)



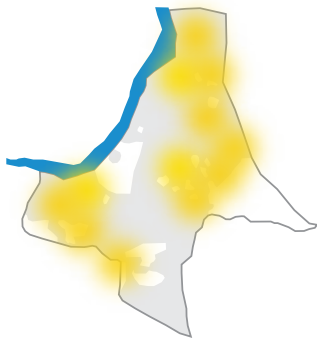
**18TH CENTURY**

some settlements in the Indian town; dwellers mostly work for the English



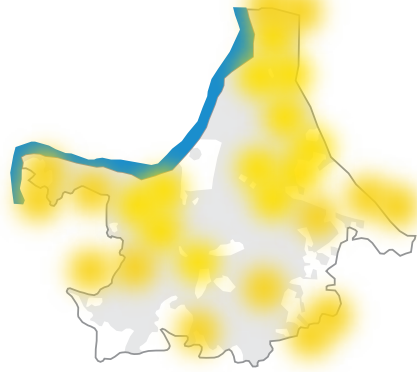
**19TH CENTURY**

beginning of industrialization; settlements near factories, port and railway



**first half of 20TH CENTURY**

rural migration and war refugees settle on the edge of town and near industrial areas

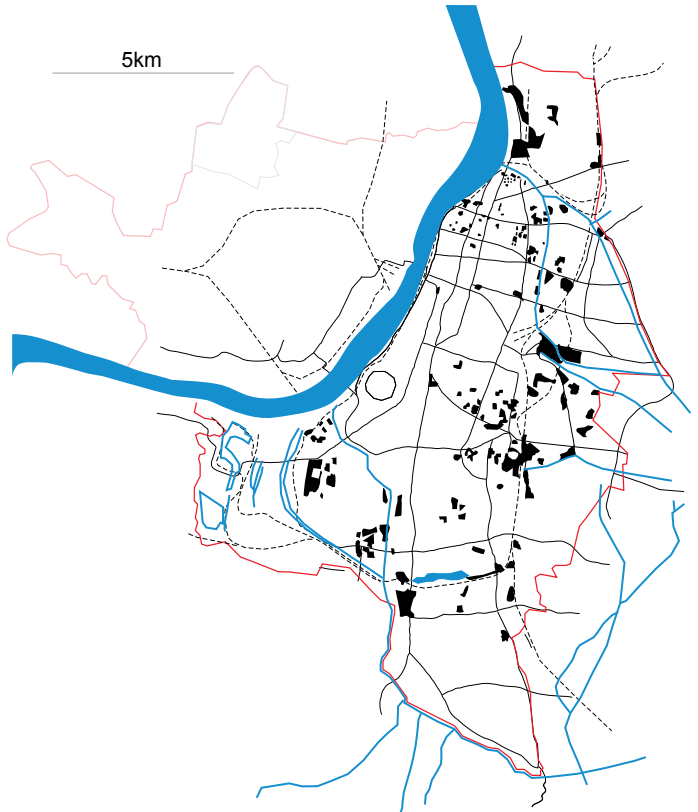


**end of 20TH CENTURY**

rural migration continues; new settlements on the edges, old inner city settlements pressured by the growing city



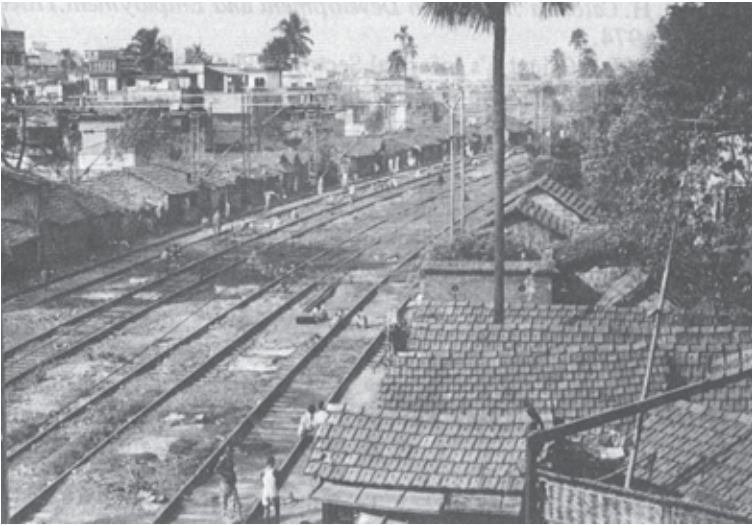
1966



1981



## INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN KOLKATA



Informal settlements have been an inevitable part of Kolkata over its history. They are of a distinct character: small in size and spread all over the town. In 2001 there were counted approximately 3500 settlements. The settlements are divided to illegal squatter settlements, so called bustees notified by the municipality, refugee camps and street dwellers. Biggest increases in the number of people living in these have been in 19th century because of the industrialization and in the middle of 20th century because the influx of refugees and rural migration. The biggest areas of informal settlements are seen in northern part (near factories), south-western part (near the port) and eastern part (i.e. Tiljala, also where there are many factories) of Kolkata.

### DEFINITIONS OF A SLUM

UN Habitat 2003

“a group of individuals living under the same roof that lack one or more of the following conditions: access to safe water; access to sanitation; secure tenure; durability of housing; and sufficient living area.”

Characteristics: Inadequate access to safe water; inadequate access to sanitation and other infrastructure; poor structural quality of housing; overcrowding and insecure residential status.

Census of India 2001

“... A compact area of at least 300 population or about 60-70 households of poorly built congested tenements, in unhygienic environment usually with inadequate infrastructure and lacking in proper sanitary and drinking water facilities.”

Merriam-Websters online dictionary 12/2008

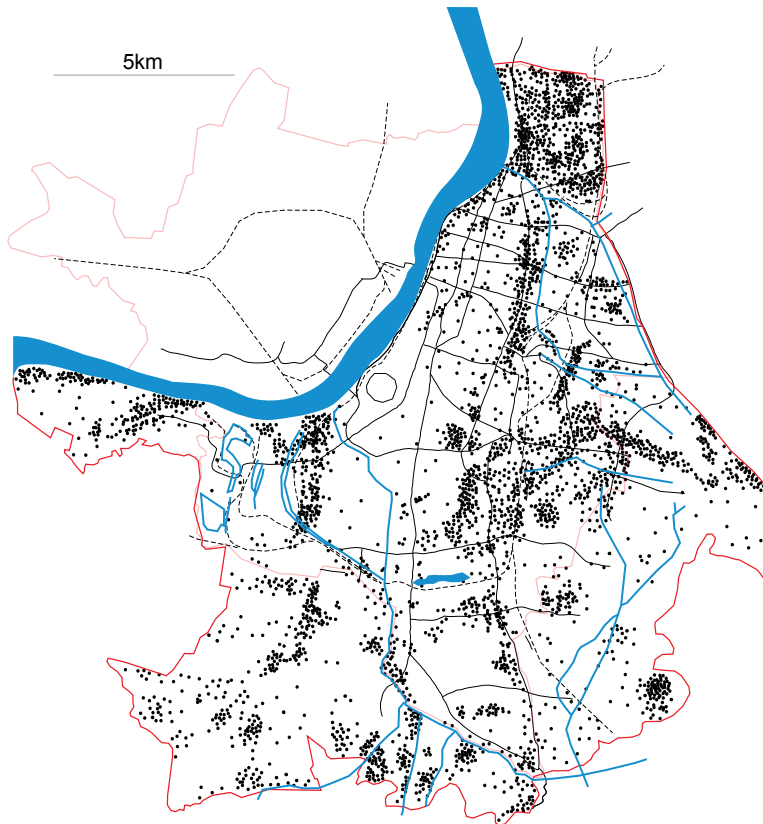
“A densely populated usually urban area marked by crowding, dirty run-down housing, poverty, and social disorganization.”

Calcutta Municipal Act 1899

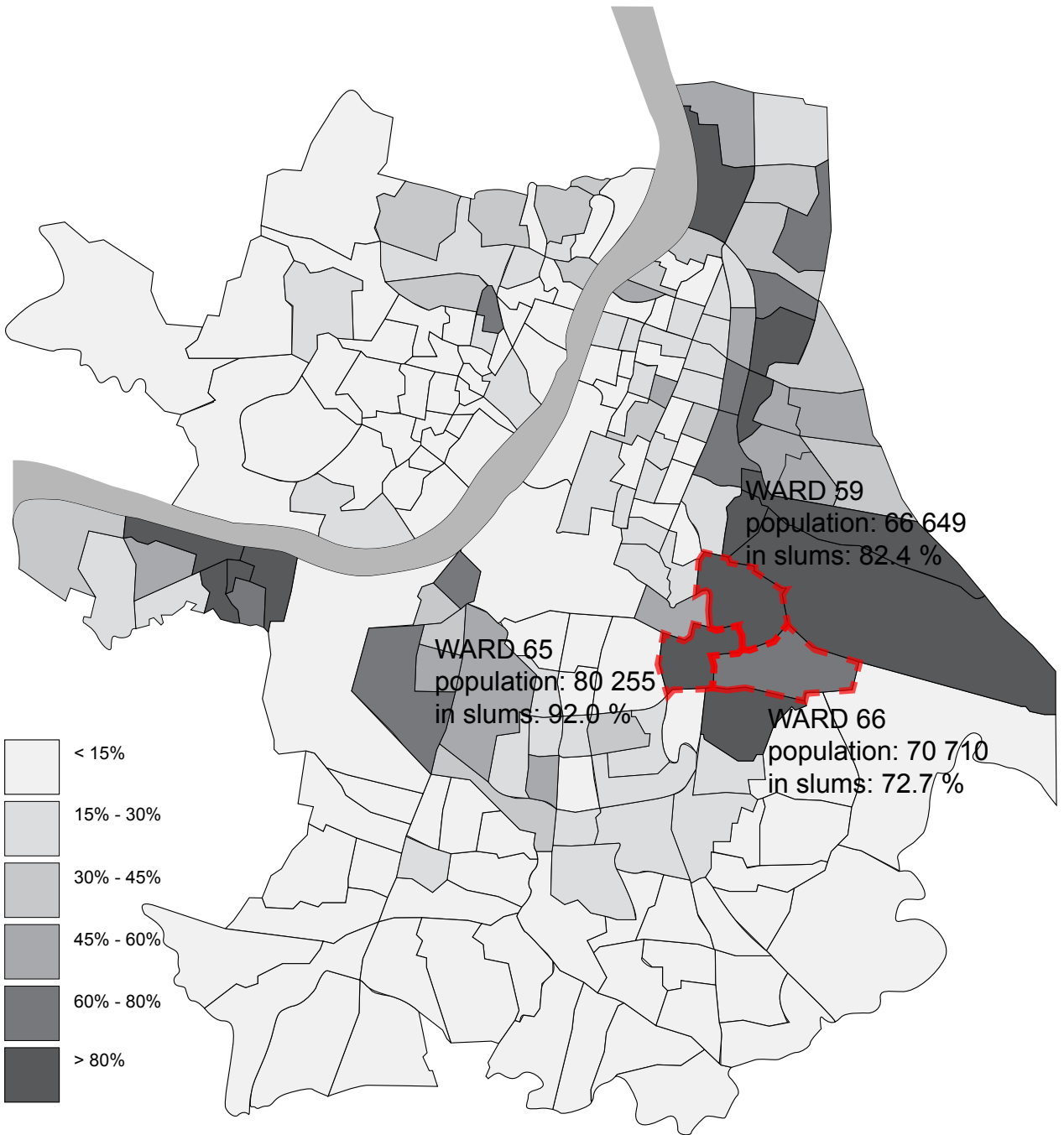
“A cluster of huts or structures occupying an area of at least 10 kathas (about 1/6th of an acre) of land, bearing a premises number or occupying two or more plots of land which are adjacent to one another and not exceeding in aggregate, area of one bigha (1/3rd acre).”

Mike Davis in “Planet of Slums” 2006

„Formal: Tenements (hand-me-ons, built for poor); Public housing, hostels, flophouses, etc.  
Informal: Squatters (authorized/unauthorized); Pavement Dwellers“



2001



Distribution of slum population

## INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN TILJALA

There is a comparatively high number of slums in wards 59, 65 and 66 than in other wards. In all of them slum population makes over 70%, in ward 65 it is even more than 90%. Informal settlements started to grow in the 1950s and still do so in recent times. Since 1986 no slums were notified anymore by the government. Although being left winged, there is the willingness to neglect the poor. By that time 2011 formal and 3500 informal slums were counted within the town.



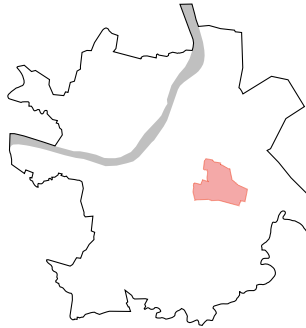
Saturating the red channel of the satellite picture - most pucca huts have red tile-roofs.





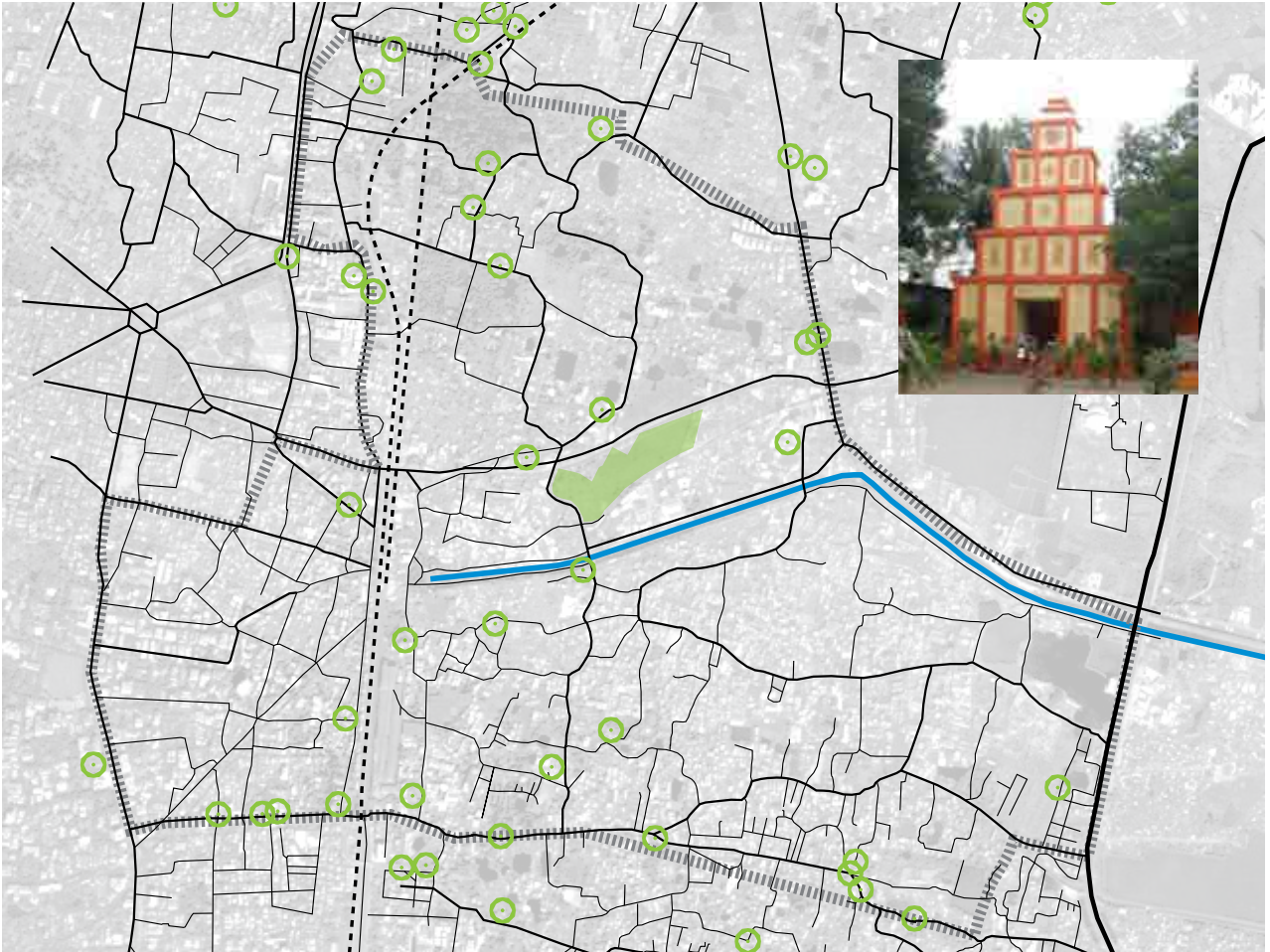
Muslim mosques and burial grounds

## DISTRIBUTION OF RELIGIONS



Tiljala can be described as a Muslim dominated area. One can see at least the amount of mosques as Hindu temples with a specially high concentration in the Park Circus area.

Even though officially all Hindus and Muslims are considered to be equal, it is said that less investments and facilities (as schools and hospitals) are provided to largely Muslim areas like Tiljala. As religion turned out to be a delicate issue, no official Census data was gathered about the exact number of Hindus and Muslims in India. Therefore no exact number about the size of the Muslim population in Tiljala is available.



Hindu temples and burial grounds



*„The area of Tiljala definitely has a concentration of the Muslim population above all others“ - Ifte Takar*



Mosque in Tiljala



# اردو      বাংলা

URDU

BENGALI

The most common languages spoken in Kolkata are Bengali and Hindi. Because of the different origin of Muslim population inhabitants of Tiljala speak Urdu – a language of Arabic origin – while others (i.e. Muslims in Park Circus or Garden Reach area) speak Bengali – West-Bengali local language of Sanskrit origin.



Mosque in Tiljala

*„Mostly people speak Urdu“* - Haider Ali

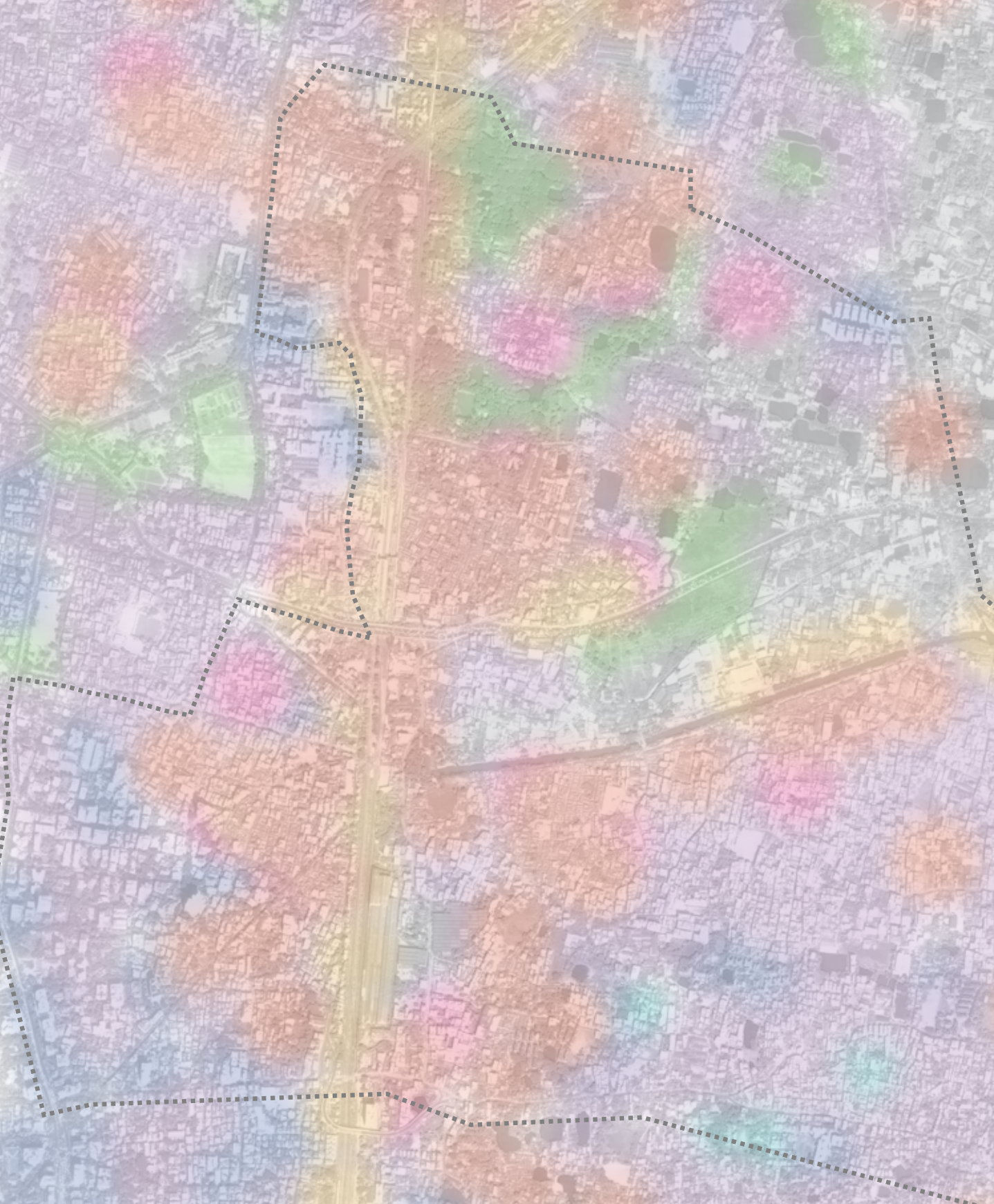




# URBAN ACTIVITIES

Living











Approximate locations of different housing types  
based on Google Satellite Picture 2008



## LIVING

The types of existent houses can be divided into six different groups from very poor to middle income group.

1. Kutcha hut 
2. Pucca hut 
3. "Vertical slum" 
4. Lower middle income flat 
5. Middle income flat 
6. Private house 

We observed that mostly the area consists of Pucca huts and dense middle rise structures such as lower middle income flats.

### "Calcutta Poor" Definitions

PUCCA or PACCA - built with good materials, designed to endure i.e. „mature“, „cooked“ in Bengali

KUTCHA or KATCHA - mainly built of mud, brick, bamboo or thatch i.e. „crude“, „unripe“ in Bengali. Also temporary materials as plastic, jute, textiles

BUSTEE or BASTI - legally recognized and registered settlement. Bustee holdings – which are the units for purposes of registration – are taxed. Otherwise the settlement is a SQUATTER COLONY – officially illegal and universally disparaged.

Source: Frederic Thomas, Calcutta Poor, 1997

### VERTICAL SLUM

Living conditions comparable to Kutcha huts: many people on few space, shared bathroom and toilet, lack of privacy and hygiene, but increased footprint. Higher density per square meter total ground area.

Table. KMDA's classification of the proportion of different income groups in Kolkata (monthly household income) and percentage of households in KMA

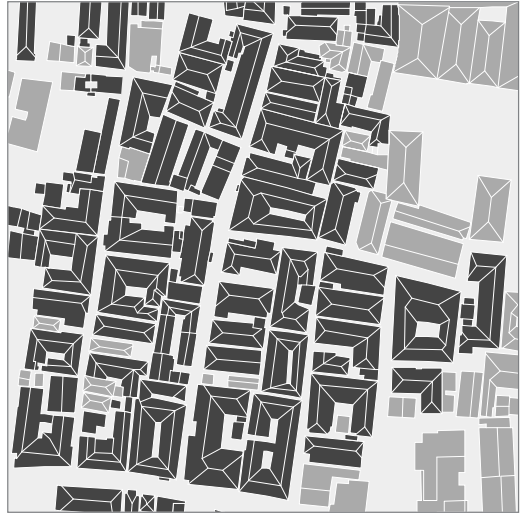
Economically weaker section (EWS) < 2000 INR (US\$ 44)	27.4%
Low income group (LIG) 2000 - 5000 INR (US\$ 44 - 110)	53.3%
Middle income group (MIG) 5000 - 10000 INR (US\$ 110 - 220)	16.4%
High income group (HIG) > 10000 INR (US\$ 220)	2.9%

Source: KMDA (2000)

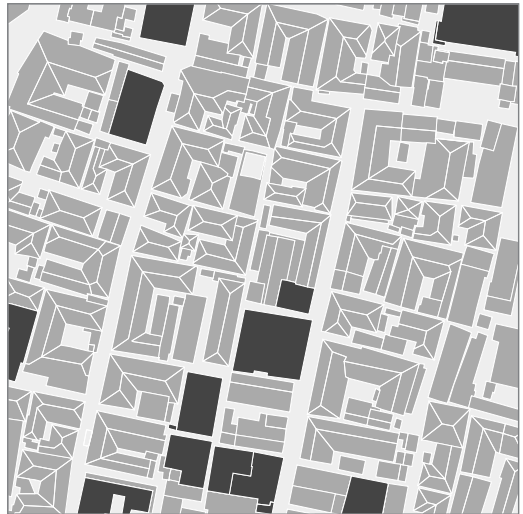
Kutcha hut



Pucca hut



“Vertical slum”







Lower middle income flat



Middle income flat



Private house

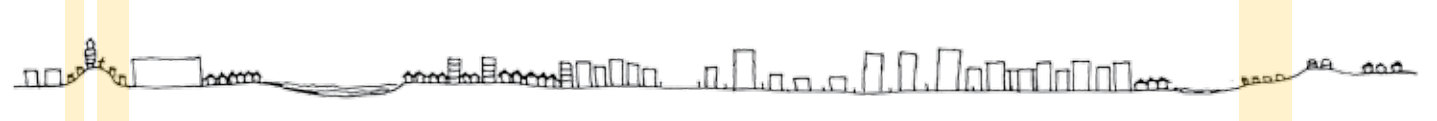
Source: KEIP ward maps (except kutcha huts - locations and size are approximate)



# KUTCHA HUT

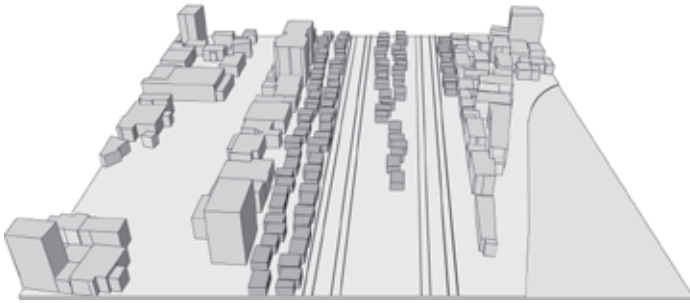






Approximate locations





Source: KEIP ward maps (kutchra locations and sizes are approximate, heights estimated)

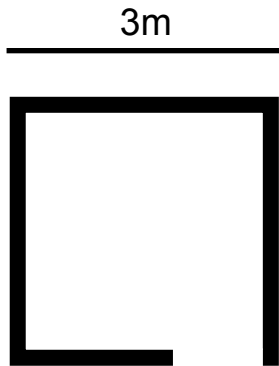


1:2000



## SIZE AND FLOORPLAN

The huts have minimal space for maximal people. In a space of three times three metres for example, there are 10 people living. Some sleep on an sort of wooden bed, some sleep on the blank floor. The cooking place is outside. All the families property is somehow stored inside, sometimes with little furniture, sometimes integrated in the walls and roof.



## MATERIALS USED

The kutcha huts are made of temporary material such as plastic canvas, paper, jutes and other textiles and garbage.



Kutcha, tents



Illegal



Shared



Shared









Kutcha huts



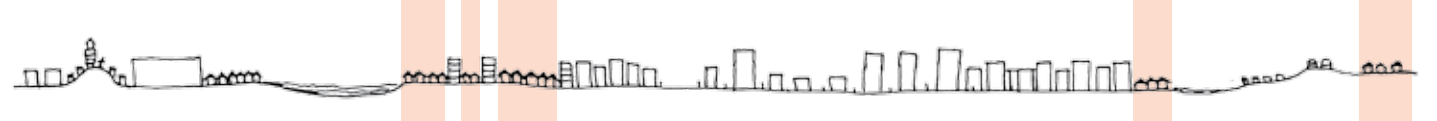




# PUCCA HUT

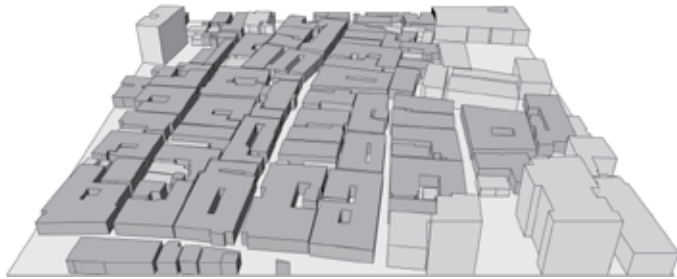




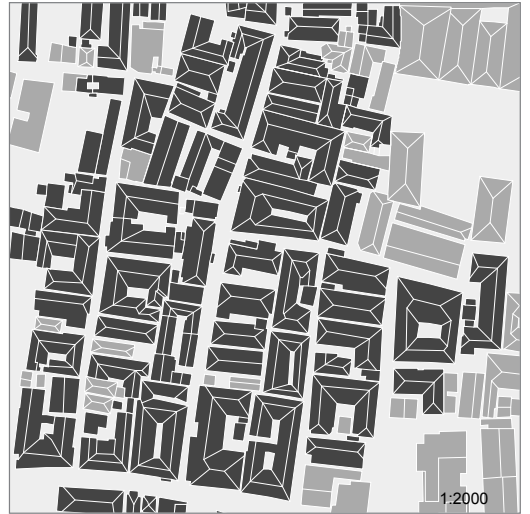


Approximate locations





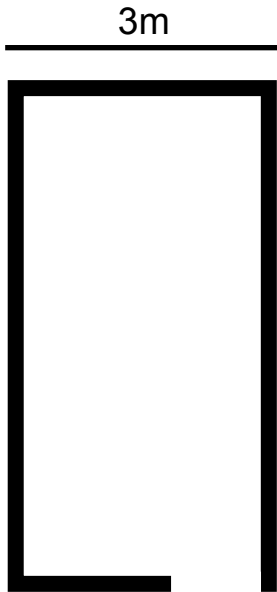
Source: KEIP ward maps (building heights estimated)





## SIZE AND FLOORPLAN

The pucca huts are mostly a little bigger than the kutcha huts and in better condition. Still there can be many people living on this space, five or six. There can be walls which separate into different rooms or parts. Mostly they are connected to electricity and water.



## MATERIALS USED

The pucca huts are made of permanent material as bricks, cement and concrete. They are furnished with wooden beds, shelves and cupboards. Often they even have a television and a ventilator inside. There are paved floors and permanent roofs.



Pucca



Legal



Shared



Private







Pucca huts





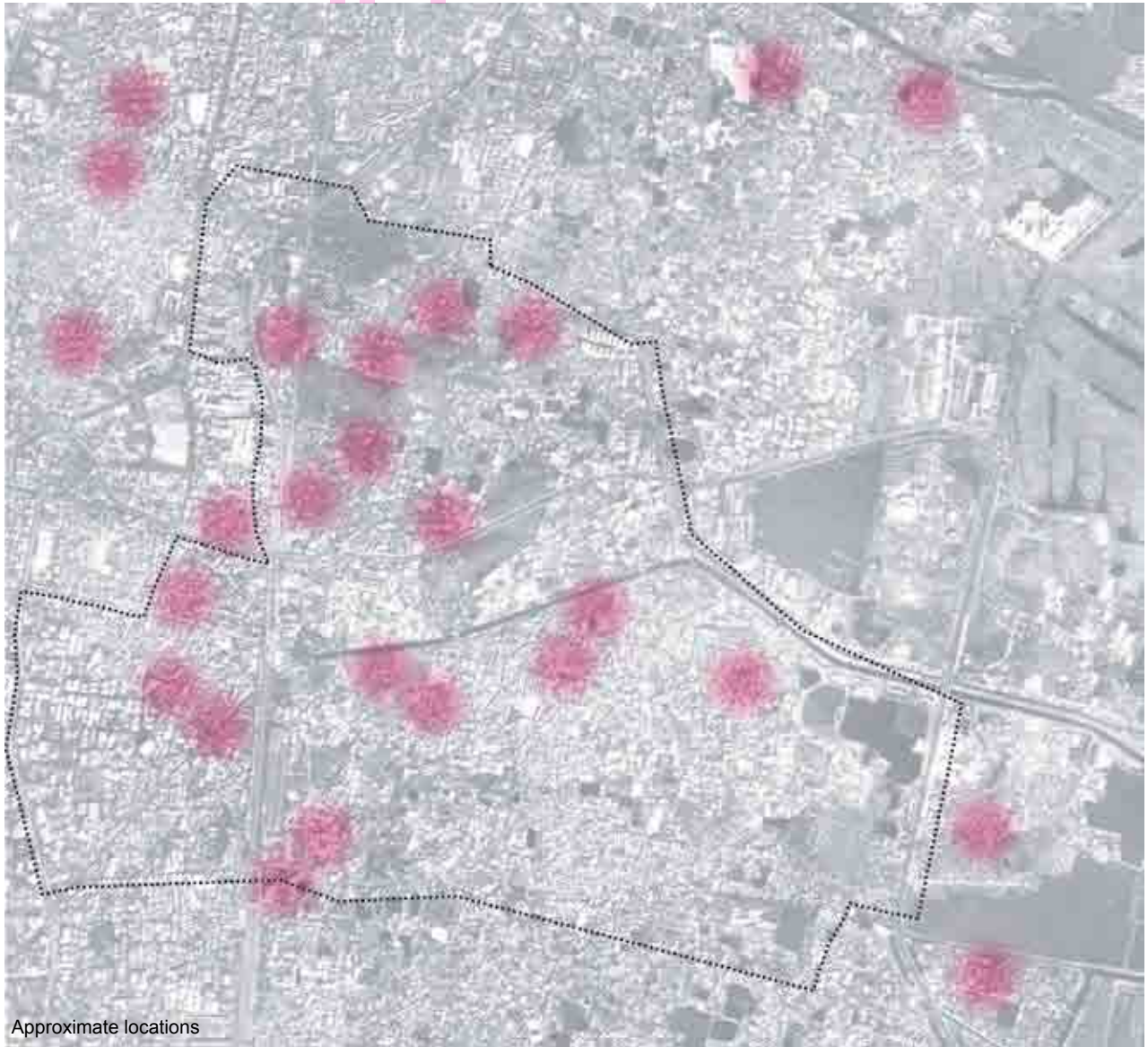
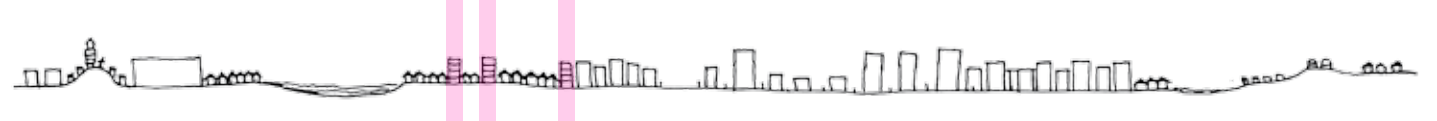


**“VERTICAL SLUM”**



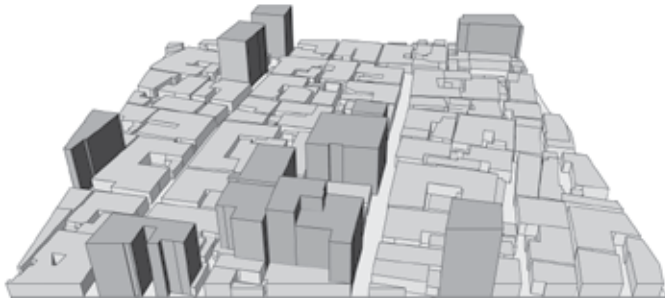




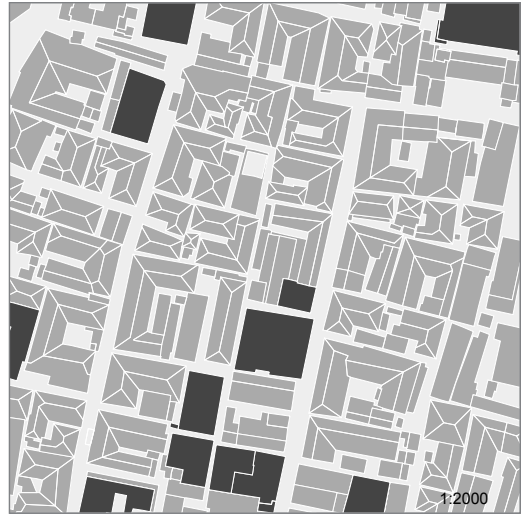


Approximate locations





Source: KEIP ward maps (building heights estimated)











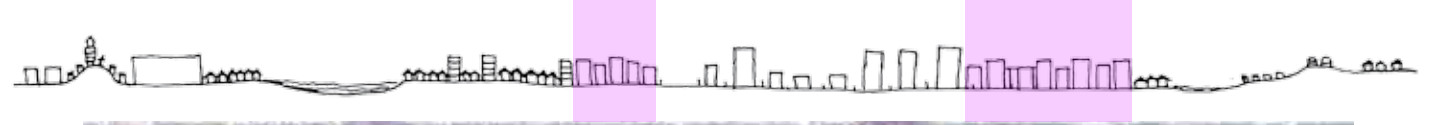


**LOWER MIDDLE INCOME FLAT**

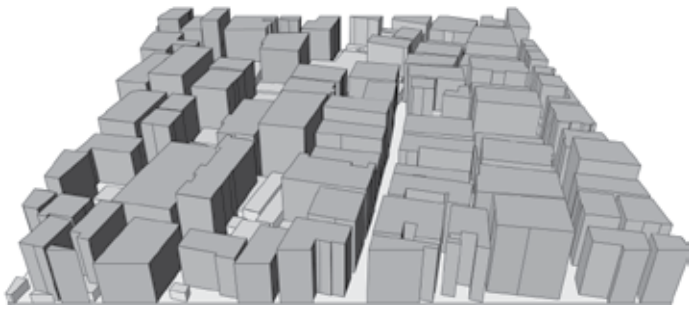








Approximate locations



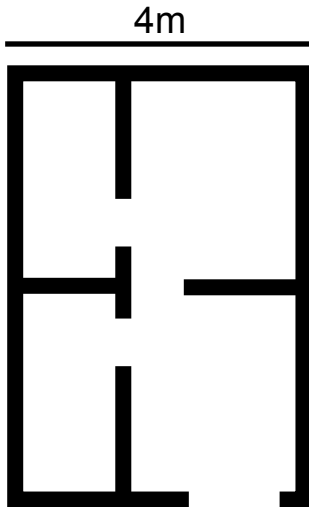
Source: KEIP ward maps (building heights estimated)





## SIZE AND FLOORPLAN

The flats are smaller than the middle income flats, older and often in a good but not excellent condition. There is a connection to water and electricity which supplies a private kitchen and bathroom. Mainly there is only a small amount of people living in this space.



## MATERIALS USED

The multistoreys are made of a framed structure of concrete. This is often neither painted nor pargetted. Because of almost no renovation work done, the flats are often in bad conditions only after few years.



Pucca



Legal



Private



Private







Lower middle income flats





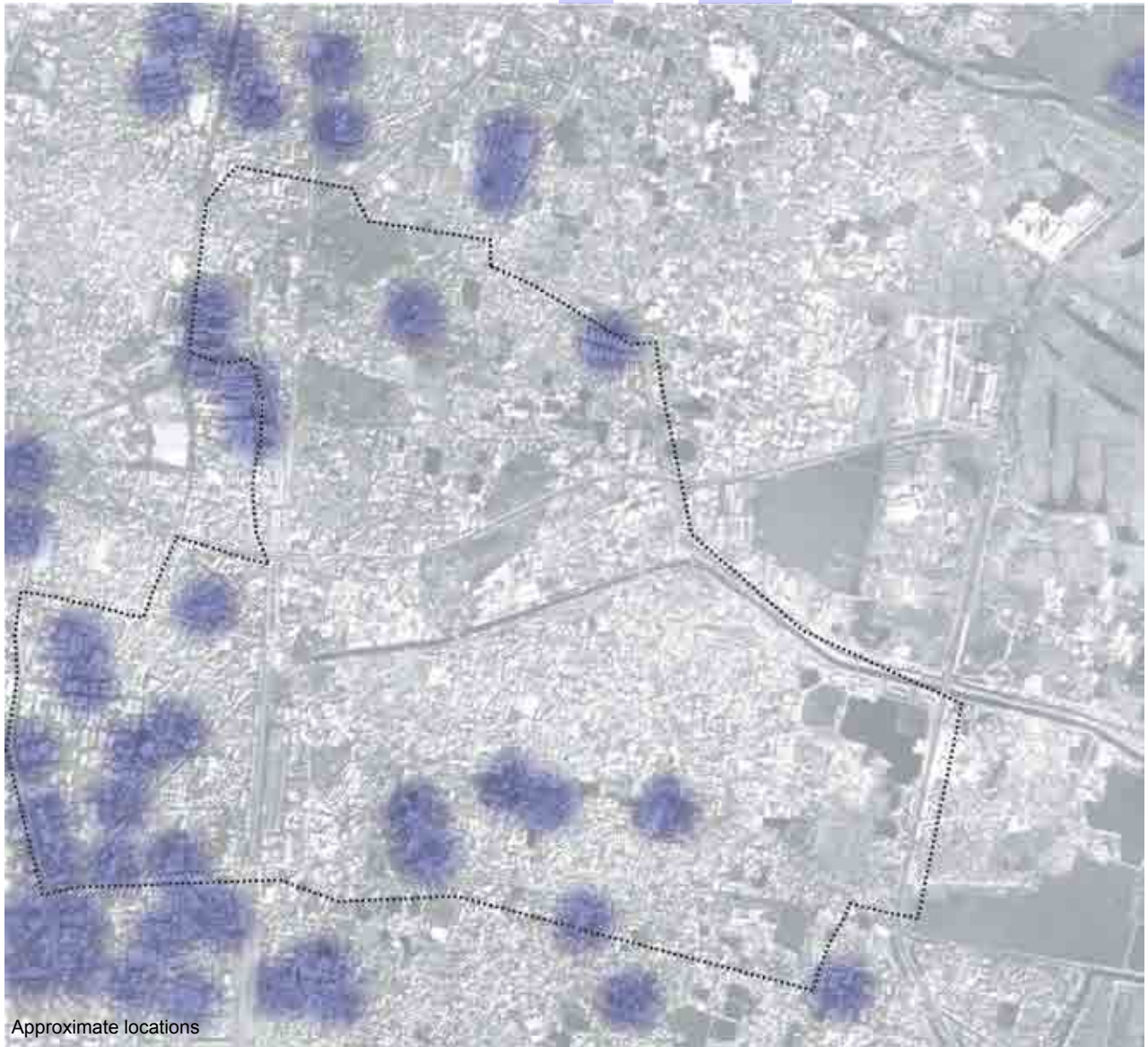
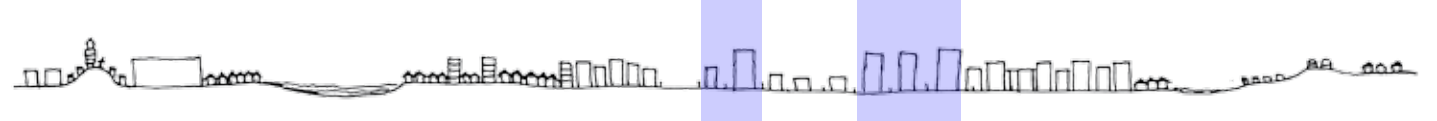




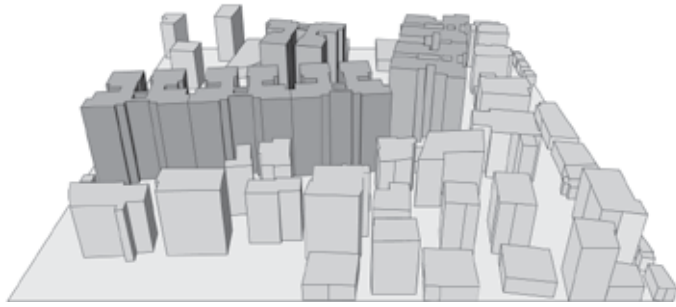
# MIDDLE INCOME FLAT



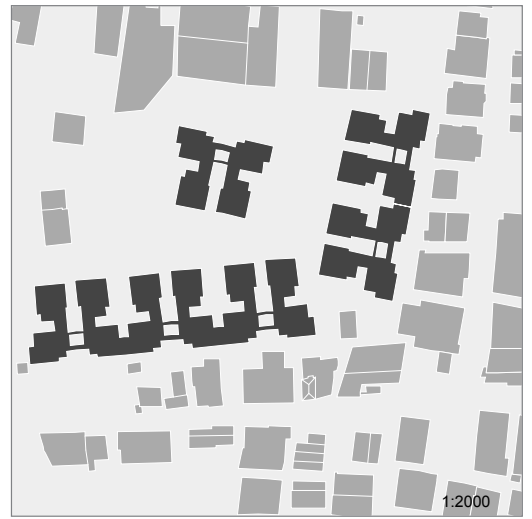




Approximate locations



Source: KEIP ward maps (building heights estimated)

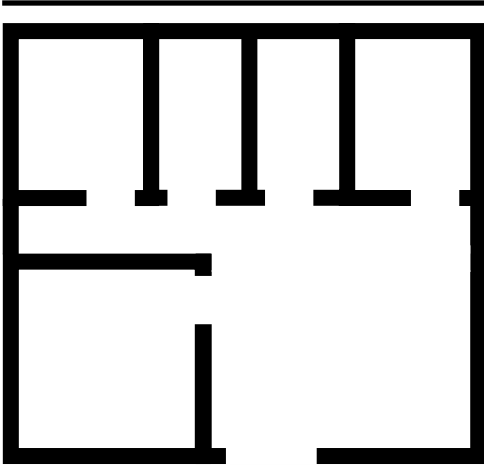




## SIZE AND FLOORPLAN

The flats are an enormous contrast to the huts. Having several bedrooms, a private bathroom with water-closet and basin as well as a modern kitchen. They are well-furnished and air conditioned and allow the inhabitants to live in privacy and best hygienic conditions. Some of them have generous green spaces outside.

6m



## MATERIALS USED

The middle income apartments are usually made of concrete and bricks. They use glass windows, marble floors and mostly wooden furniture.



Pucca



Legal



Private



Private



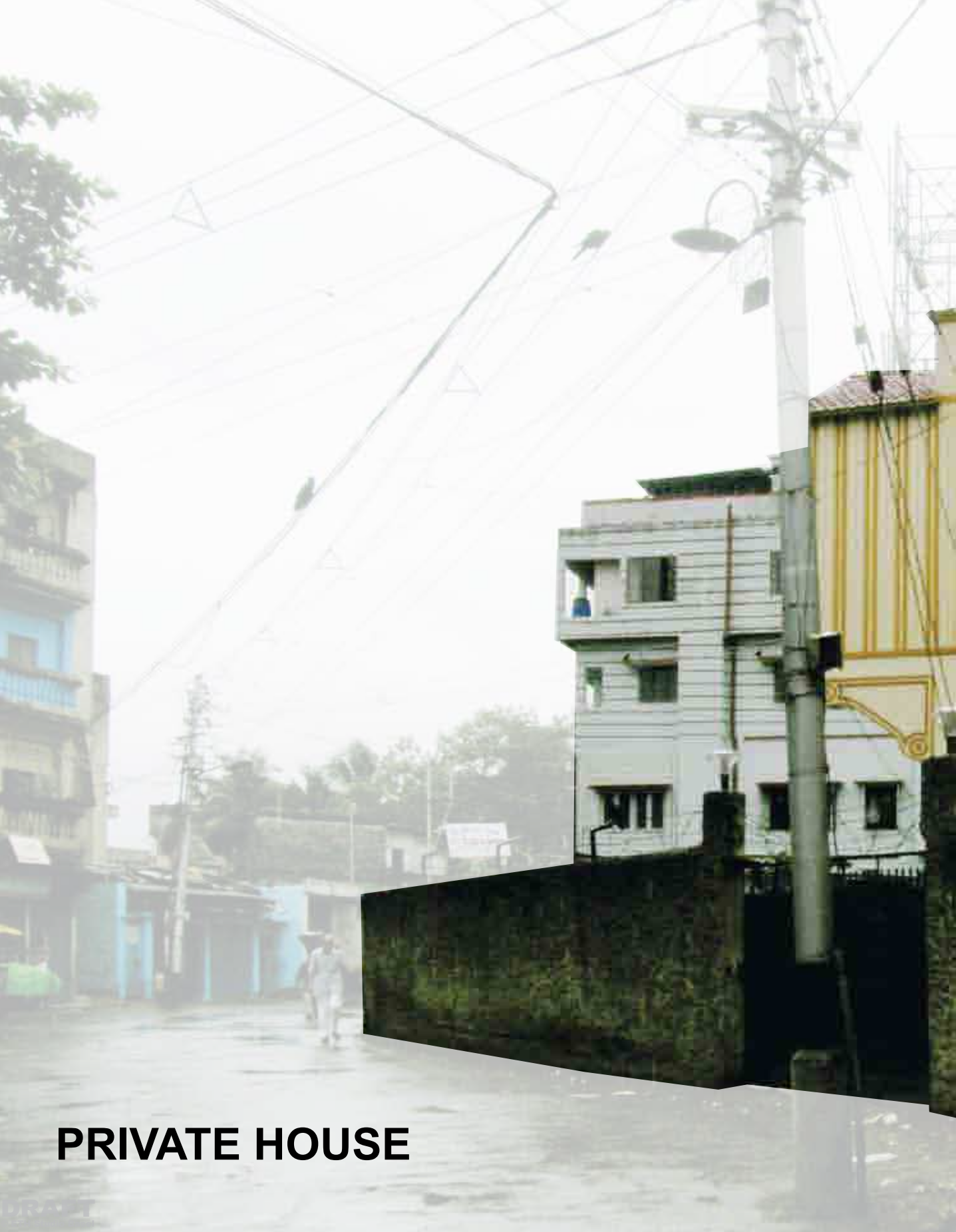








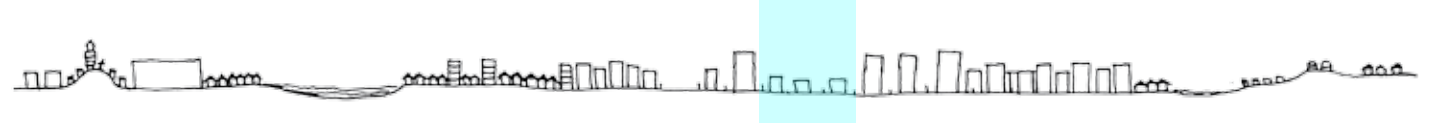




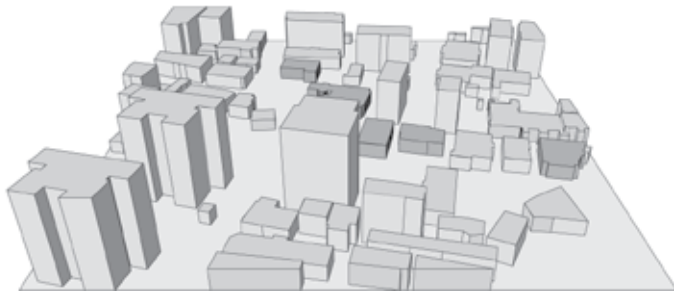
**PRIVATE HOUSE**







Approximate locations

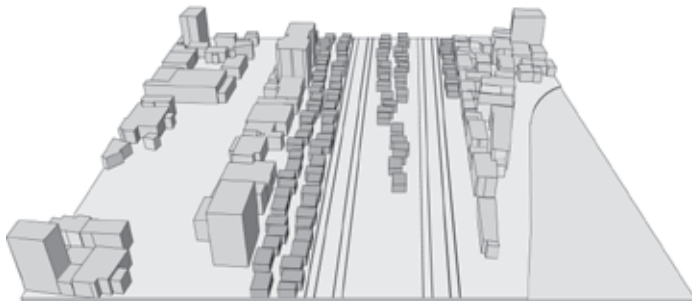


Source: KEIP ward maps (building heights estimated)

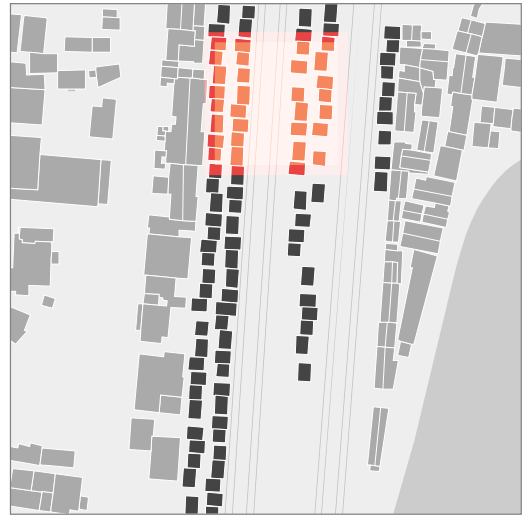




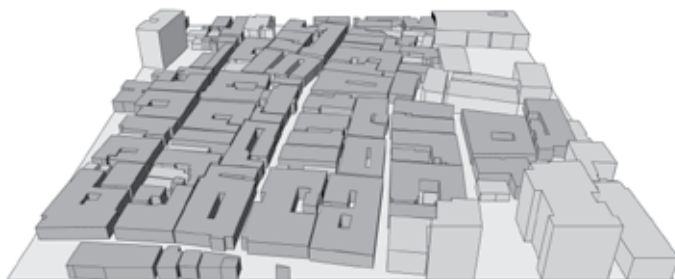
100 sq m - 33 huts - 8 people each  
**260 people** 2,6 people/sq m



Kutcha hut



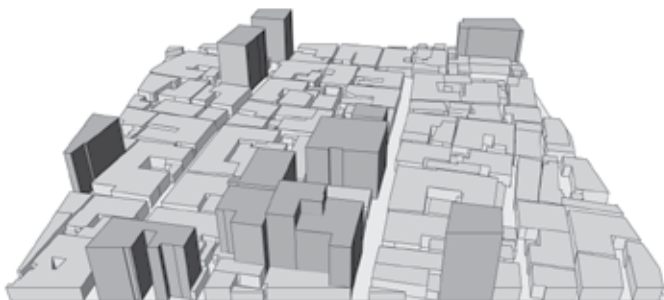
100 sq m - 11 huts - 4 people each  
**44 people** 0,44 people/sq m



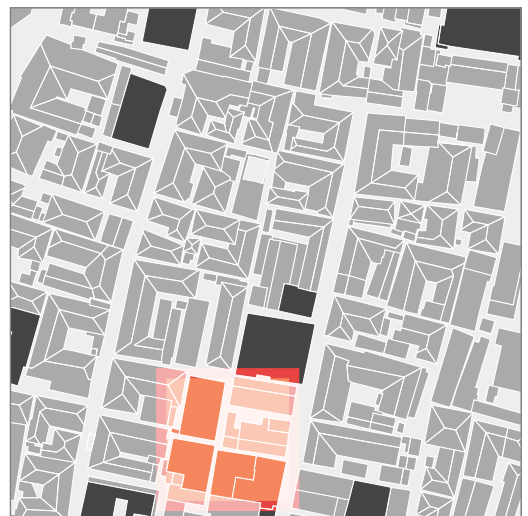
Pucca hut



100 sq m - 3 multistoreys - 5 floors - 15 people each  
**225 people** 2,25 people/sq m

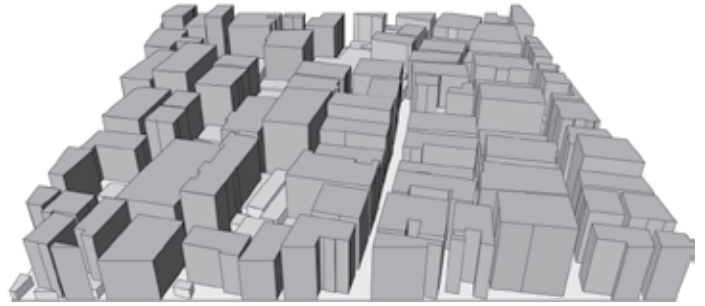


"Vertical slum"

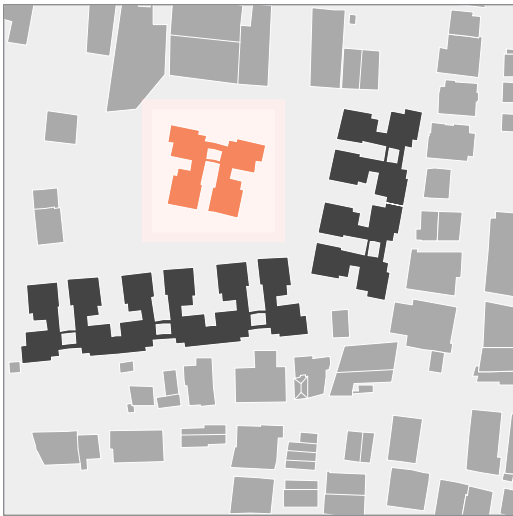




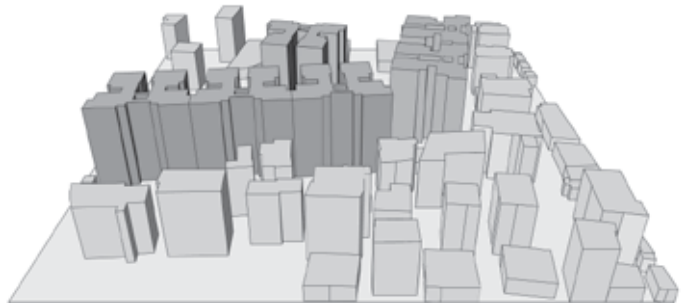
100 sq m - 6 multistoreys - 5 floors - 10 people each  
**300 people** 3 people/sq m



Lower middle income flat



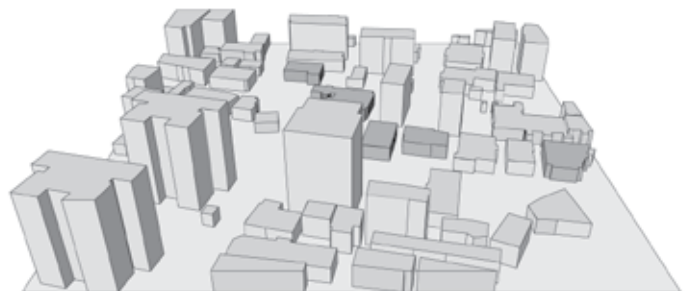
100 sq m - 1 multistorey - 5 floors - 10 people each  
**50 people** 0.5 people/sq m



Middle income flat



100 sq m - 2 private houses - 4 people each  
**8 people** 0.08 people/sq m



Private house



**A beautiful duplex house for Sale** (Individual Houses)

**Posted by:** Individual

**Ad Id: 3154047** Posted by a.k.banerjee on **Nov 24, 2008**

Duplex house for sale in Kolkata,5BHK with dining room,8000 sq ft area, fully furnished with wardrobe, wooden work a modular kitchen,with all other amenities,in a good locality,bungalow type,car parking,with servants quarters,with beautiful gar...

**Location:** Tiljala

**Buildup Area:** 8000 Sq Feet

**Land Area:** 6500 Sq Feet

**Transaction Type:** Resale

**Price:** Rs.1.15 Crores

**Rooms:** 4 BHK

**Rajarhat 3 B/R Ind. House for sale** (Individual Houses)

**Posted by:** Builder

**Ad Id: 3077871** Posted by Manmeet on **Oct 25, 2008**

Independent House at Action area III,Rajarhat 3 bedroom 1966 Sqft Unfurnished,New Property & New construction is available for sale at best price Rs.68,46,950

**Location:** Rajarhat

**Buildup Area:** 1966 Sq Feet

**Land Area:** 1966 Sq Feet

**Transaction Type:** New

**Price:** Rs.68.47 Lakh

**Rooms:** 3 BHK

**Ballygunge 3 B/R Ind. House for sale** (Individual Houses)

**Posted by:** Builder

**Ad Id: 3077881** Posted by Somani on **Oct 25, 2008**

Independent House at Near Ballygunj Phari, Ballygunge 3 bedroom Plot area 18 chatak & covered area 7600 Sqft new property & construction is available for sale at best price Rs.3,04,00,000

**Location:** Ballygunge

**Buildup Area:** 7600 Sq Feet

**Land Area:** 7600 Sq Feet

**Transaction Type:** New

**Price:** Rs.3.04 Crores

**Rooms:** 3 BHK

**EM Bypass 3 B/R Ind. House for sale** (Individual Houses)

**Posted by:** Broker

**Ad Id: 3077877** Posted by Sukhdev on **Oct 25, 2008**

Independent House at Villa in EM Bypass 3 bedroom 1728 sqft 5-10 years old with all amenities is available for sale at best price Rs.1.04 Crores

**Location:** EM Bypass

**Buildup Area:** 1728 Sq Feet

**Land Area:** 1728 Sq Feet

**Transaction Type:** Resale

**Price:** Rs.1.04 Crores

**Rooms:** 3 BHK

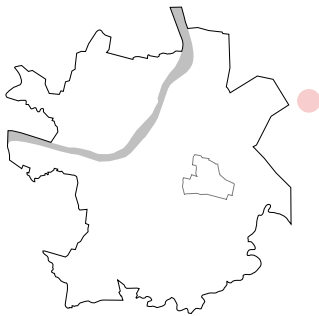
*„For the price of ten houses in Tiljala, you can not buy a house in Chowringhee“* - Haider Ali



## Tiljala

1437 INR/sq ft (30 US\$)

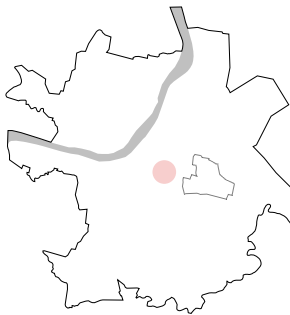
15807 INR/sq m (325 US\$)



## Rajarhat

3480 INR/sq ft (70 US\$)

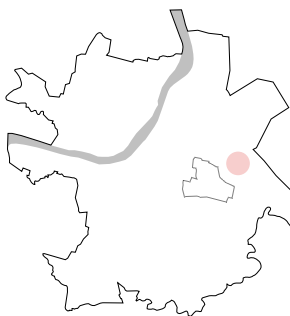
38280 INR/sq m (790 US\$)



## Ballygunge

4000 INR/sq ft (80 US\$)

44000 INR/sq m (905 US\$)



## EM Bypass

6018 INR/sq ft (124 US\$)

66198 INR/sq m (1360 US\$)

House at Lake Zürich 8850 US\$/sq m







**SANITATION, WATER  
AND WASTE MANAGEMENT**



## WASTE

The disposal of waste is an urgent problem in Kolkata and mostly concerns the areas with a dense population. There are official dumping grounds, cleaned regularly by a KMC garbage collection vehicle but there are also the unofficial ones where the inhabitants just dump their waste illegally. They are sometimes cleaned, too but most often the waste just stays for a very long time there. Children are playing on it or some people are gathering the still useful materials. There are initiatives to collect the garbage: separated and bunched it can be brought to certain collection point where it is weighted and dumped. Doing this, the collector can learn how to keep the environment clean and earn a little money.



**Problem of Waste**  
dumped everywhere









**Waste**  
Official dumping ground



**Waste**  
Inofficial dumping ground





Different forms of sanitation

## SANITATION

Private toilets are still very rare. Most of the poorer families share one public latrine with 30 people or even more. There are improvements like toilets financed and installed by KMC which can be used by four or five families which can be considered as almost private in this case. They are taught how to use it and keep it clean. Public urination is common for men and also done by children.

However, there is still a lack in the sewage system, which is not disposed properly. That means it is running everywhere visibly and smelly, often even close next to the hut.



Open sewerage canal







**Sanitation**  
KMC Pay and Use toilet



**Sanitation**  
Child pees on tracks





**Water Tank**  
Near Topsia Road

## WATER ACCESSIBILITY

The most common form to access water are tubewells or hand pump stations. Only few families have a private pipeline for running water within their house. And although the water should be safe and clean, it is often contaminated as during floods in the rainy season, the pipelines for drinking water and sewerage can get mixed. There is a lack of water from time to time and so it is also not always coming regularly. At some places people have to wait several hours until they can collect it in plastic buckets to carry it home.



Waiting for water  
near Stormwater Canal





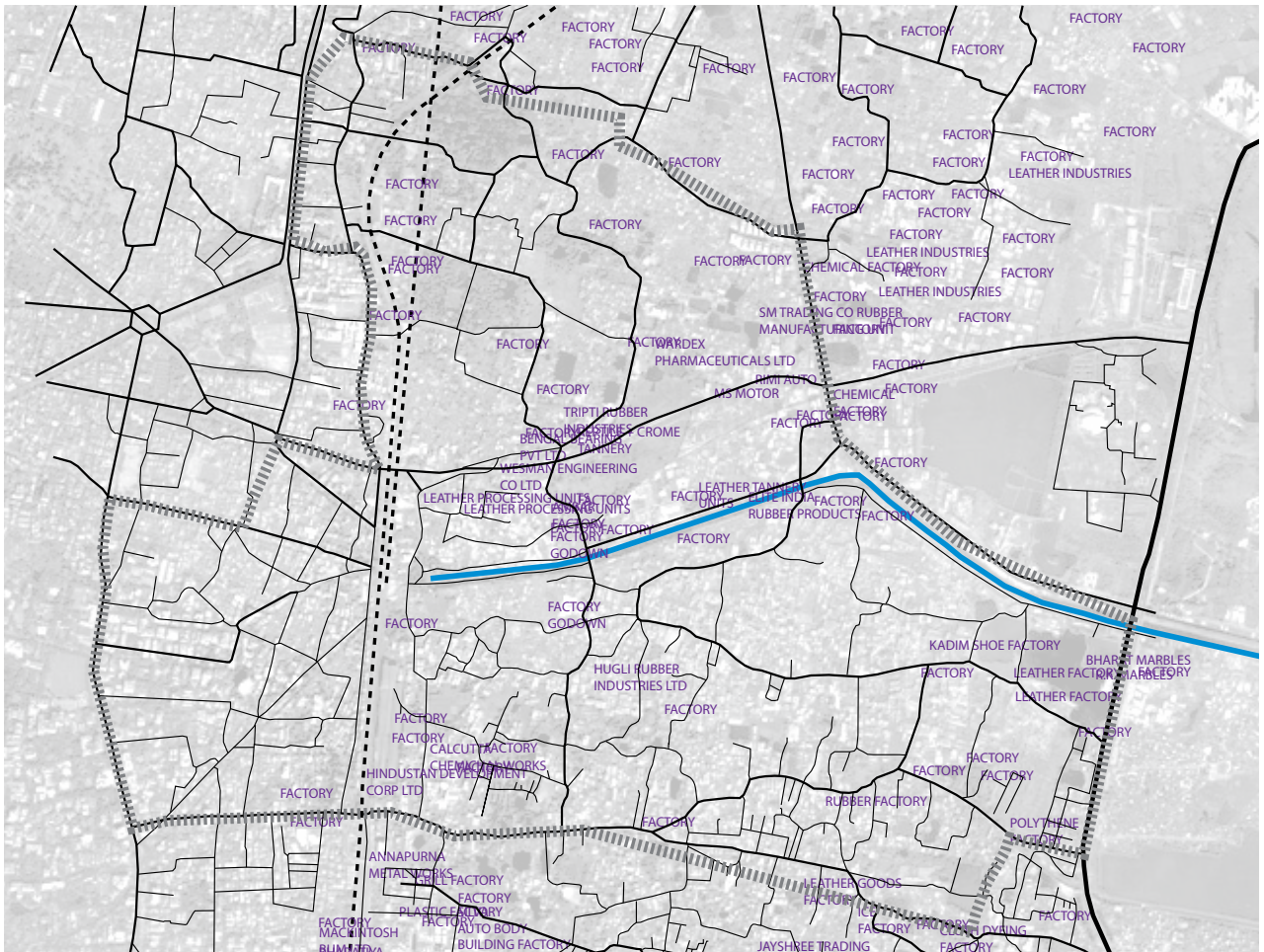


## URBAN ACTIVITIES

Working



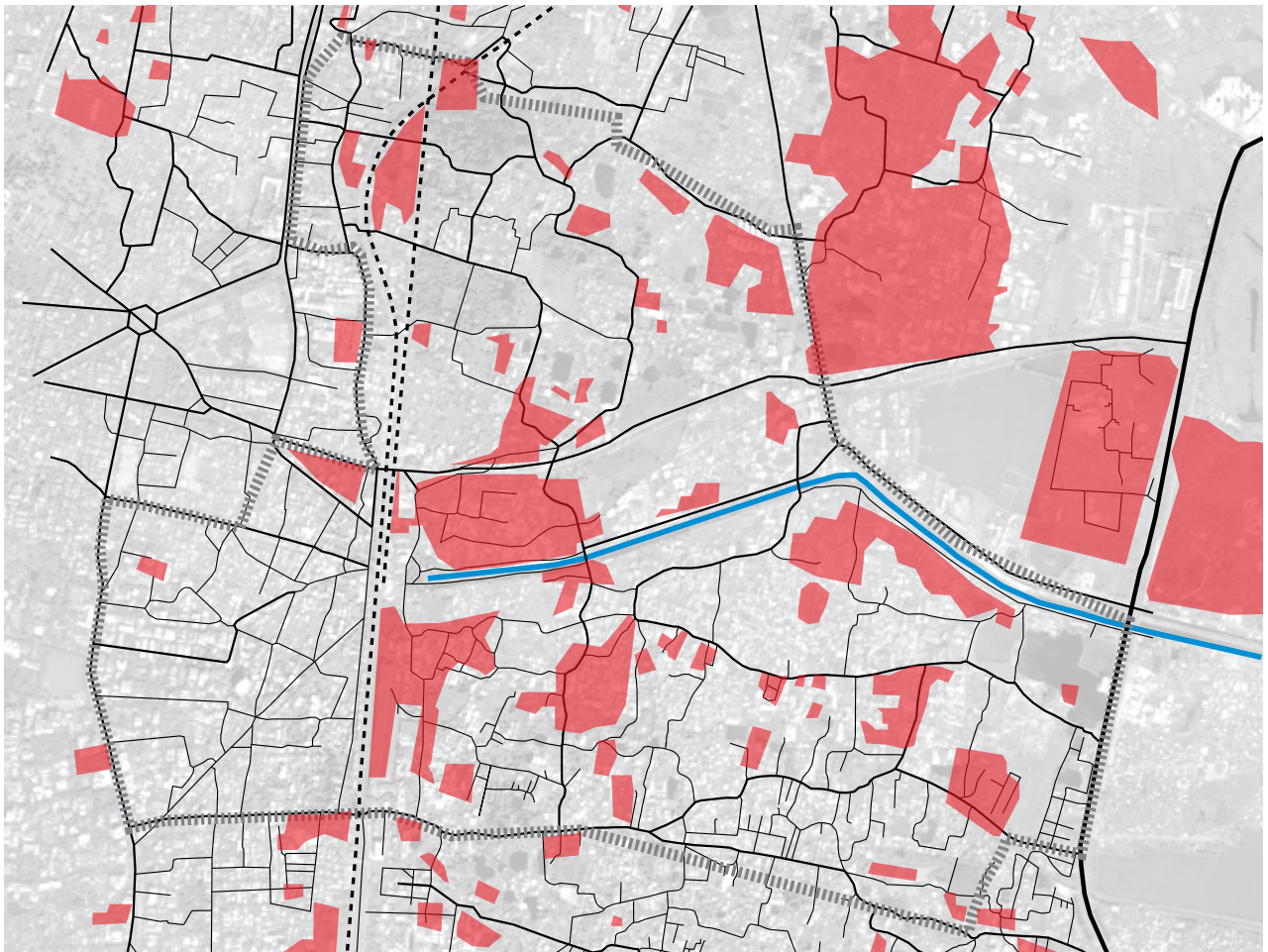
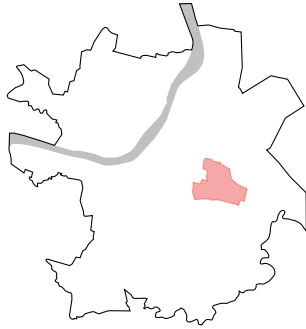
„Nearly three lakh people are directly and indirectly employed in bustee-based manufacture of basic items in the city’s economy “ - Economic and Political Weekly, 09/2008



Location of industries  
“The Atlas of Kolkata”

“Zones like Tiljala serve the rich” - Ayan Senn  
 Besides the aspect of housing, the area of Tiljala also contains all kinds of economic sectors. Gaining raw materials, converting them to goods and also the service sector plays an important role. Though most of the factories are producing illegally and sometimes exploiting their employees - these are so called Sweat Shops.

The tanneries run by chinese played a major role in the past and also today as many of Tiljala's inhabitants work there. They are - as most of the factories - located mainly in the east of the area. Without the factories and workers of Tiljala, Kolkata would lack a huge amount of goods like rubber, wood, metal, leather. Furthermore there are kite factories, production of building materials, cigarette makers etc.



**Landuse Map 1998**  
 NATMO “Urban Landuse. Calcutta City” 1998





Tailor  
Between Pucca huts

## SERVICES

The third economic sector plays a major role. Professions such as Rikshaw driver or puller, tailor, bike fixer, knife sharpener, taxi maintenance services but also copy and photo shops, internet cafes, call centres, banks, parlours and language schools can be spotted. Food sold in restaurants and smaller snack bars can be seen in every corner and in the majority of cases those places are well attended.



*„Workplace and residence are inter-woven“*

-Economic and Political Weekly, 09/2008





Rikshaw pullers  
Near Park Circus









**Rubber and Metal Industry**  
Close to Picnic Garden Road







Wood industry and production of furniture  
In Picnic Garden Road





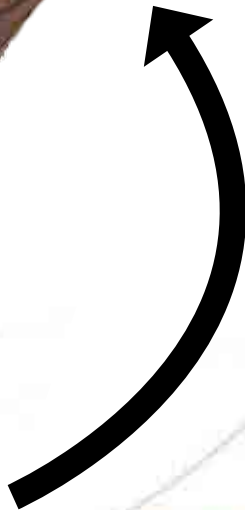


## LEATHER INDUSTRY

In former times, Chinese used to run tanneries, located mostly in Tiljala. Most of those factories were forced to move to the east of town because of the pollution they caused - and so did the Chinese. The cheap workers in those tanneries were and are mainly Muslims.

Banthala - the new township of tanneries - is located over ten kilometres away from Tiljala and houses only the factories and no dwellings for the workers. Therefore this is seen as a major threat for the dwellers of Tiljala who are strongly related to the tanneries. Even if the workers in tanneries started to commute to Banthala every day. Those who are used to work in their huts making, for example leather gloves, might lose their source of livelihood as crude material is not easily accessible anymore.

In Tiljala there are both: leather processing factories but also a huge informal sector of single or groups of workers in huts and flats and even on the streets making products out of the material, i.e. wallets, shoes, gloves etc. Vast drying spaces are a significant indicator for the existence of leather industry.







Leather industry  
Different ways of converting









## URBAN ACTIVITIES

Moving





**Auto-Rikshaw**  
Popular transportation method and source of income

## TRANSPORT

Using the bus is the principal mode of transportation for traveling long distances, for recreational and social activities. Short distances are traveled in tricycle or auto-rikshaws. A few people own bikes, but many just walk as the markets for perishables or the working places are often in few minutes walking distance. Private cars are rare and the yellow cabs are only used by a small number of people. The rikshaws are an important source of income for many inhabitants of Tiljala.









## URBAN ACTIVITIES

Shopping





Fish sellers  
In Picnic Garden Road







## SHOPPING

Perishable goods such as vegetables are usually bought at nearby markets. Markets are also popular for buying clothes, flowers and similar things, only a few people like to go to the big shopping malls. One reason is, that the next malls are not reachable without a vehicle, another is that the markets usually are less expensive.

We focused on Picnic Garden Road as the main commercial road because there is a high number of shops and some markets, but definitely we can say there are places to shop and buy little things everywhere between the houses and in smaller streets. There are stores, chariots and the moving sellers. Special Ration- or Fair-Price-Shops run by KMC are open few hours a day and enable the poorer to buy groceries for a lower price.





Market and Goods  
In Picnic Garden Road







# URBAN ACTIVITIES

Learning





New Era Private school  
Children at lessons



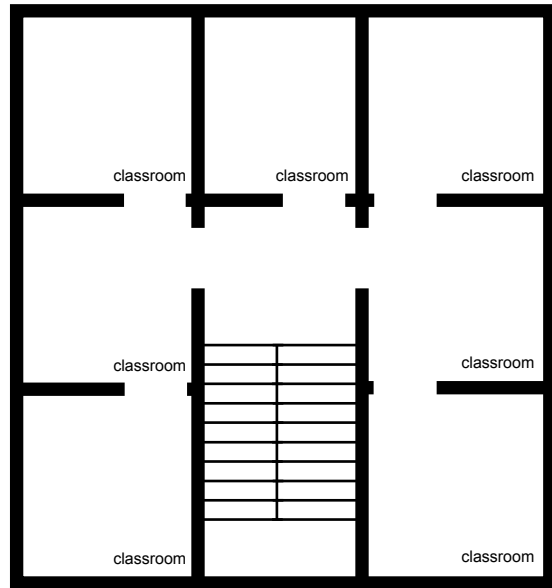


## EDUCATION

Only a small percentage of children have access to education - even though it is a fundamental right in the Constitution of India. Estimates say that only approximately 5% of the slum children can attend school. There are even whole generations which have never been to any school. Some experts say that all children go to school, but this is unfortunately not yet reality. In total there are about 40 schools. Only few are supported by NGOs which allows a small amount of children to go there without the need of paying for study fees, school uniforms or books.

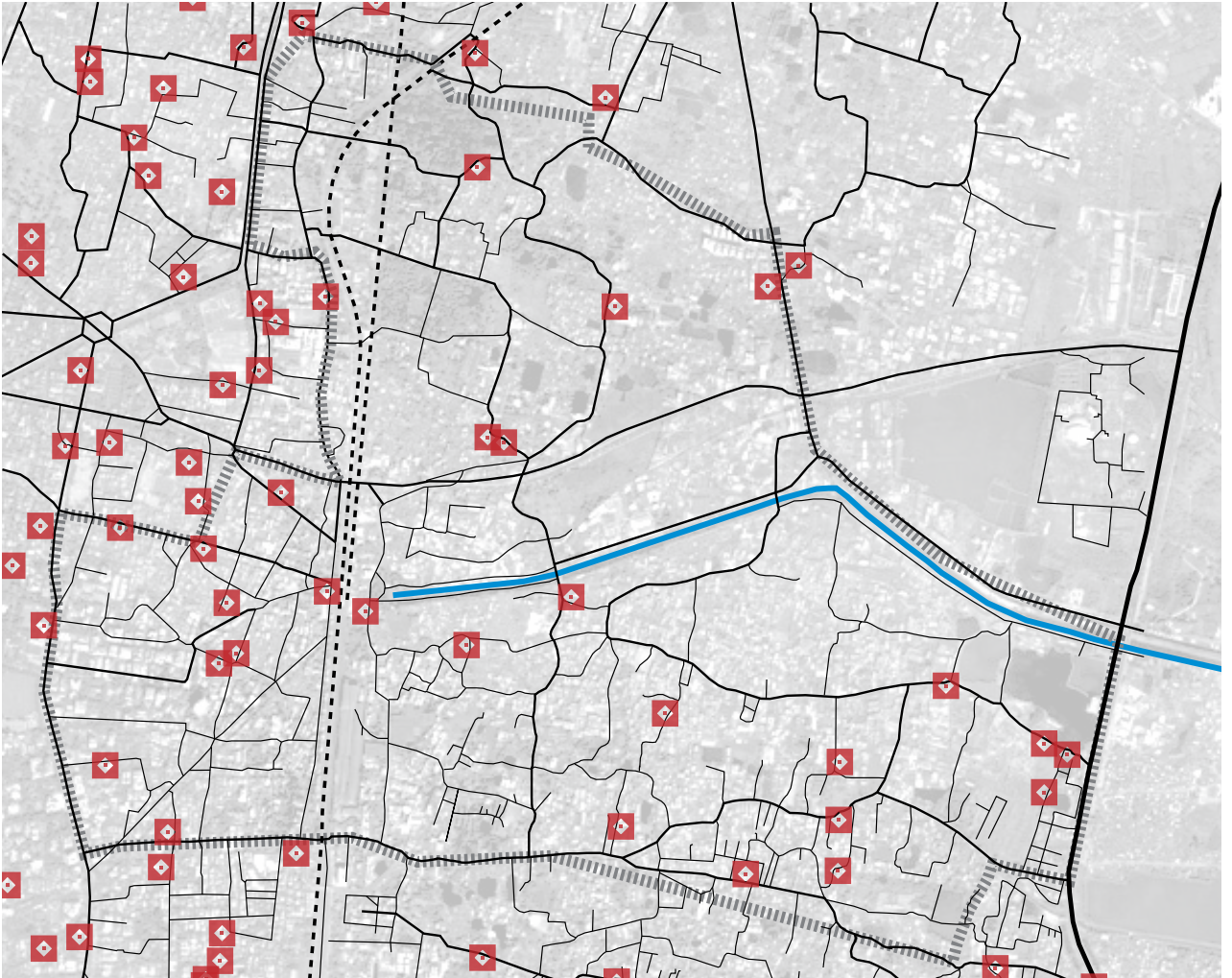
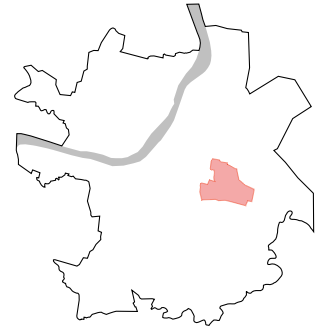
### **New Era High School (visited 24/10/2008)**

New Era High School has about 500 pupils, 16 teachers and is divided into a morning and a day shift. The first shift (English medium) teaches English as first language, the second (Hindi medium) Hindi. It includes children from nursery up to class ten. Each class has about 20 students who have their own classroom with the size of circa 12 square meters. The school was founded in 2004 and is financed by study fees and own investment. The pupils all come from the surrounding areas of Kustia and Tiljala. The fee is 150 INR per month, which does not include any food neither books or uniforms. They cost - depending on the class - 200 to 400 INR extra monthly. It is a mixed school with a little higher amount of boys, it is private and the number of students is limited. Subjects taught are: English, Bengali, Hindi, history, geography, maths, life sciences, physical sciences, general knowledge, drawing, crafts. There is no subject of sports. The school is located in a dwelling house and therefore there are five flats in the same building.



**New Era Private school**  
floor plan





Location of educational facilities







# URBAN ACTIVITIES

Recreating





## RECREATION

On several spots between the houses one can see smaller and bigger green spaces which are used for playing soccer or just hanging out by people of all ages. Bigger parks such as Park Circus Maidan are outside of the area but nearby. Several burialgrounds are located in the area, both muslim and hindu. The big number of small water bodies and vegetation around them create gaps in otherwise quite dense urban structure.









Childrens playground  
Near Park Circus Railway Station











**PORTRAITS**







## Mohammed

Mohammed and his family live in a kutchra hut close to Tiljala Road. They are eleven members of which seven are male and four female. He has lived there since 1965 after the migration from Bihar. Now there are already three generations living in this same place which was chosen because it was the only vacant space. Their relatives live in other parts of Kolkata. The hut is about three times three metres big and constructed with temporary materials as plastic canvas covers, bamboo and jute. They share a bathroom with the rest of the community. The family has three earning members, they all work as rikshaw pullers and earn about 50 rupees a day each. This means the household income is about 4500 rupees per month. The rikshaws park in a place nearby, so their way to work is less than one minute. The rent is 100 rupees monthly and paid to the government. None of the family members has ever been to school although want to, but it is not possible.

They mentioned no specific social activities. A doctor can be reached after a five minutes walk and costs from 80 to 200 rupees per visit. A bazaar is also in walking distance. Mohammed appointed that they would like to move from this place to have more space and more amenities but they simply cannot afford.

\* We could not have a look inside the hut but similar ones have shown, they are sparsely furnished mostly with a divan bed and some shelves or cupboards. Some steal electricity to run a TV inside.

 90 US\$  
household/month



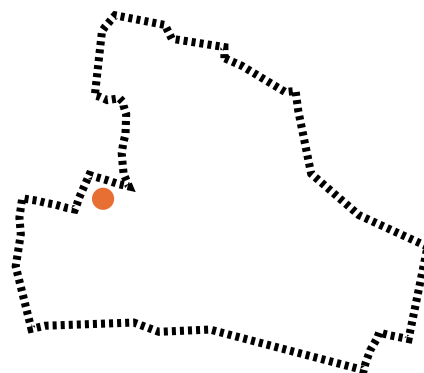
Rent paid



Shared



Shared



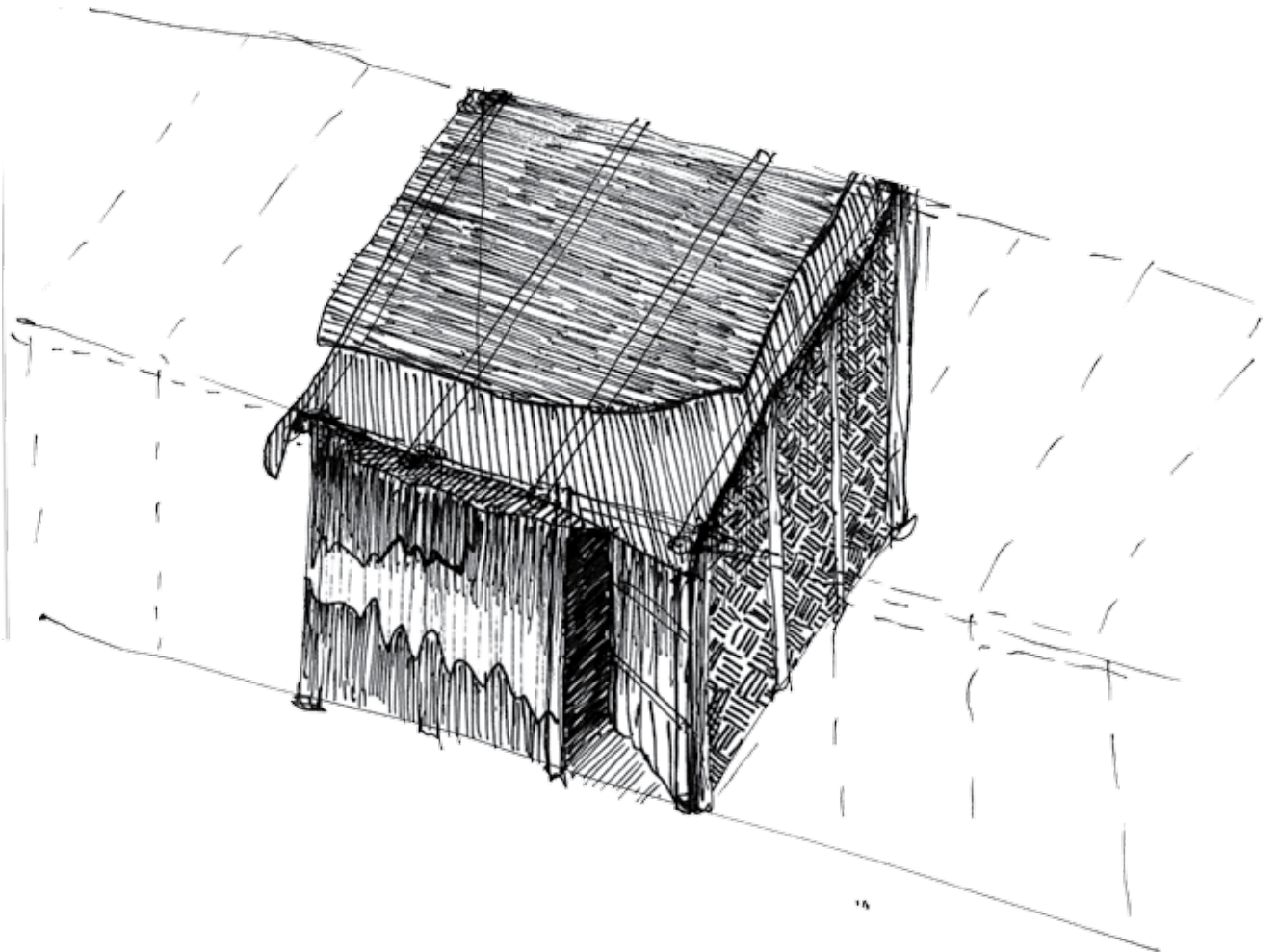
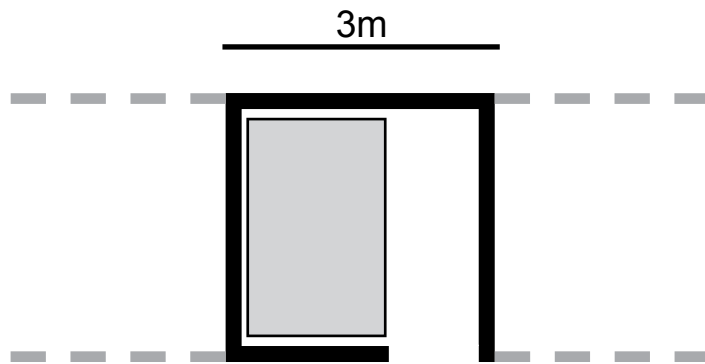




Shared latrines



Cooking place in front of kutcha hut









## Mangal Chandra Das and Sikha Das

The retired couple lives since 1947 in Tiljala when the house was built by his father Neow Manick Das. The former mud house now consists of wood and cement and his about 8x3 metres big. Bathroom and toilet are shared with three families.

Mangal and Sikha have three daughters who are all married and live somewhere else in town. They are often visited by them and especially their granddaughter Tania. She attends a christian school. Their other relatives live all over town. Originally the family lived in Tollygunge but they like Tiljala because everything is so close and in walking distance.

Mangal used to work as medical manager in the company DEYs but he is now retired. He earned 18000 rupees per month. He went to work by a fifteen minutes walk or by bike.

They pay no rent because they own the hut. Anyhow they have to pay about 300 rupees per month for electricity.

Their social activities are watching TV or playing carrom. In former times, Mangal used to go to gym continously. He even made the first position in the Body Building Competition of West Bengal.

A doctor and shopping facilities, for example a vegetarian market, are in walking distance.

The couple bought a new flat - also in Tiljala, although they confirmed to like the old pucca and to still keep it. The reason for moving out is to have more space for visitors: the new flat has four rooms and 1000 square feet.



370 US\$  
household/month



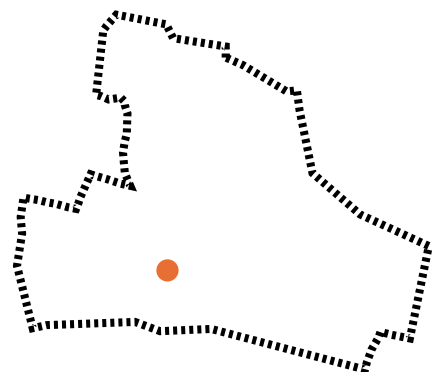
Owned



Shared



Private





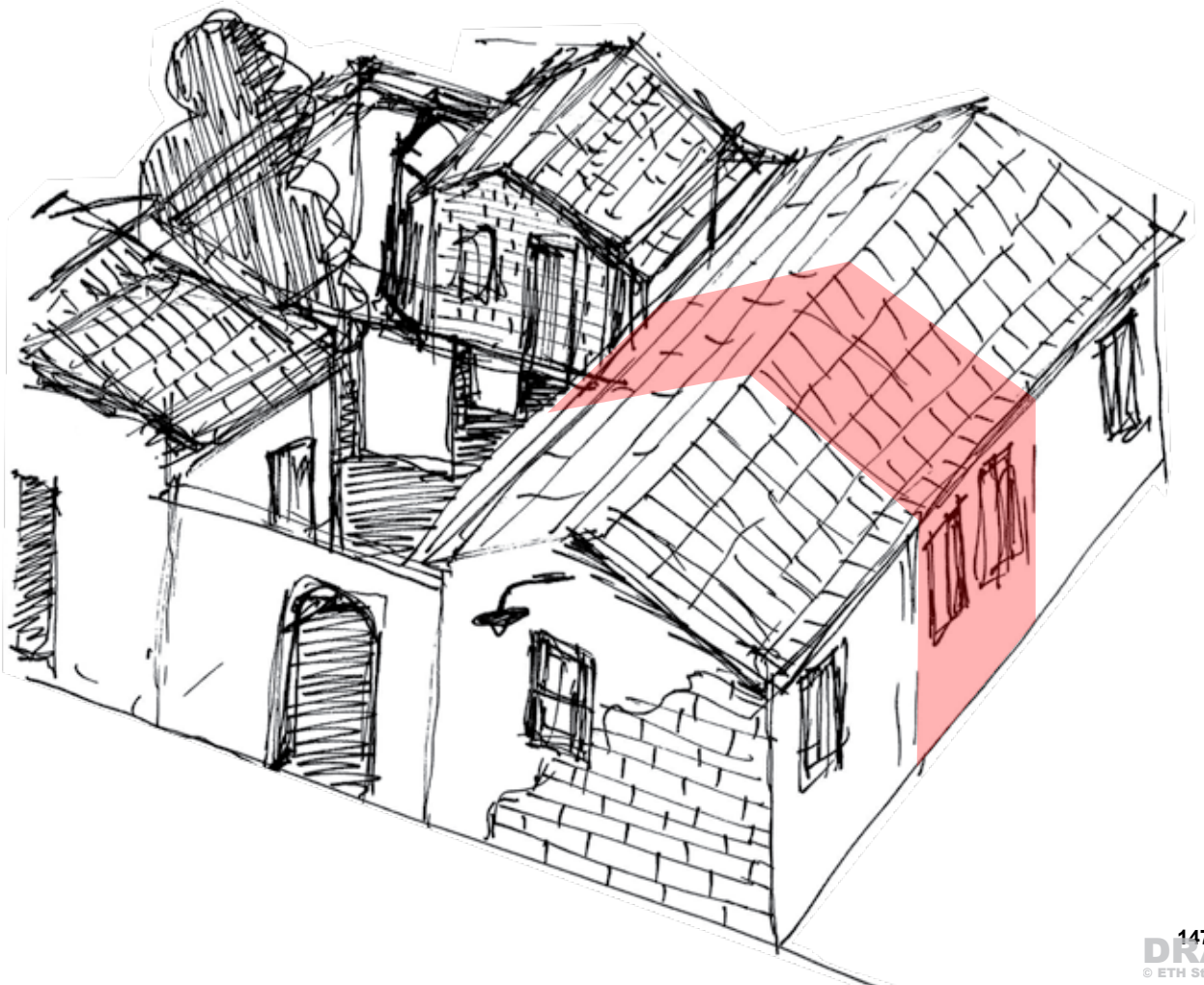
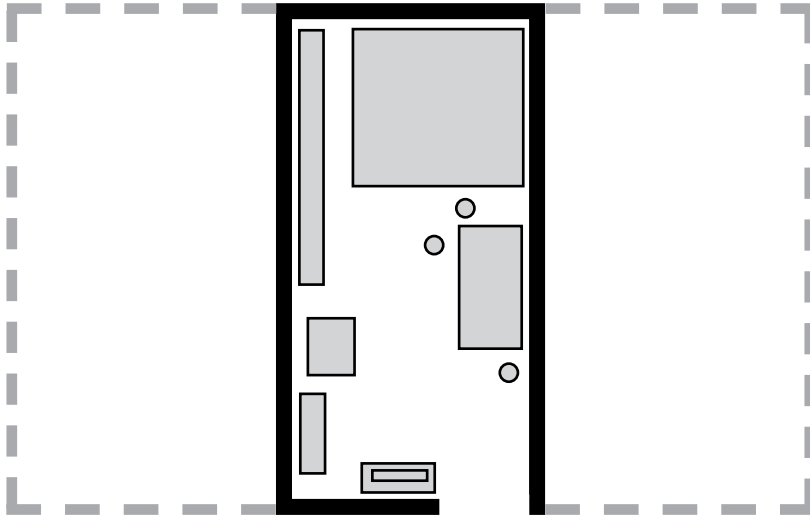


Shared toilet



Cooking place inside pucca hut

3m









## Soumen Bhaskar

Soumen Bhaskar is 26 years old and works in a reliance business as financial accountant. He goes to work in sector 5 in Salt Lake city by bus and his shift is 5am-12:30pm. He has a diploma in finance, accounting, computer sciences and MBA. His brother (31 years) makes marble and other statues, therefore he uses one of the flat's rooms as working room. Soumen earns about 7500rs a month, his brother a little more. Their parents and a younger brother live in the village in Moshedabad, other relatives in other parts of Kolkata and India. They have another married sister. The brothers have lived in Tiljala for ten years. They like it because there are friendly people living in the neighbourhood. Within Kolkata it is their favourite place to live.

First when moving to Tiljala they rented a flat, eight years ago they bought this – which was then newly built - 325 square feet flat for the price of 225 000rs and were the first ones inhabiting the building. About ten years ago there were huts on the same plot. The landlord, who used to live in a hut there - then built these flats and moved out of Tiljala. Anyway there was a lot of observable change in the last ten years. With exactly this flat, they are not satisfied, because they will not be enough space for their future families. Therefore they are looking for a bigger flat somewhere near the current one.

In his spare time Soumen likes to be with friends – to go out in the centre Park street area, watch TV or listen to music. He participated in building a temporary shrine for Dawali Puja. During holidays he visits other big towns and approximately once a month he visits his parents. He buys his clothes in a mall more far away but all food from the nearby market. They use a shared water tank for drinking water but have a private shower and toilet in the flat. From time to time there are problems with the lack of water. They also have a telephone. As a disadvantage he mentioned that there is no hospital in the neighbourhood.



165 US\$  
household/month



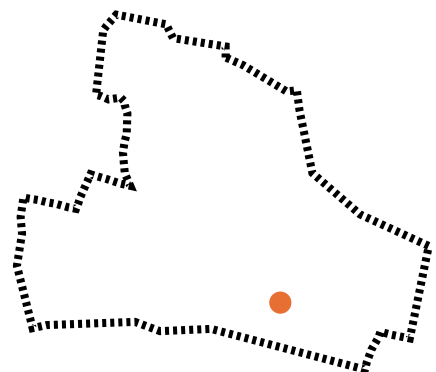
Owned



Private



Private





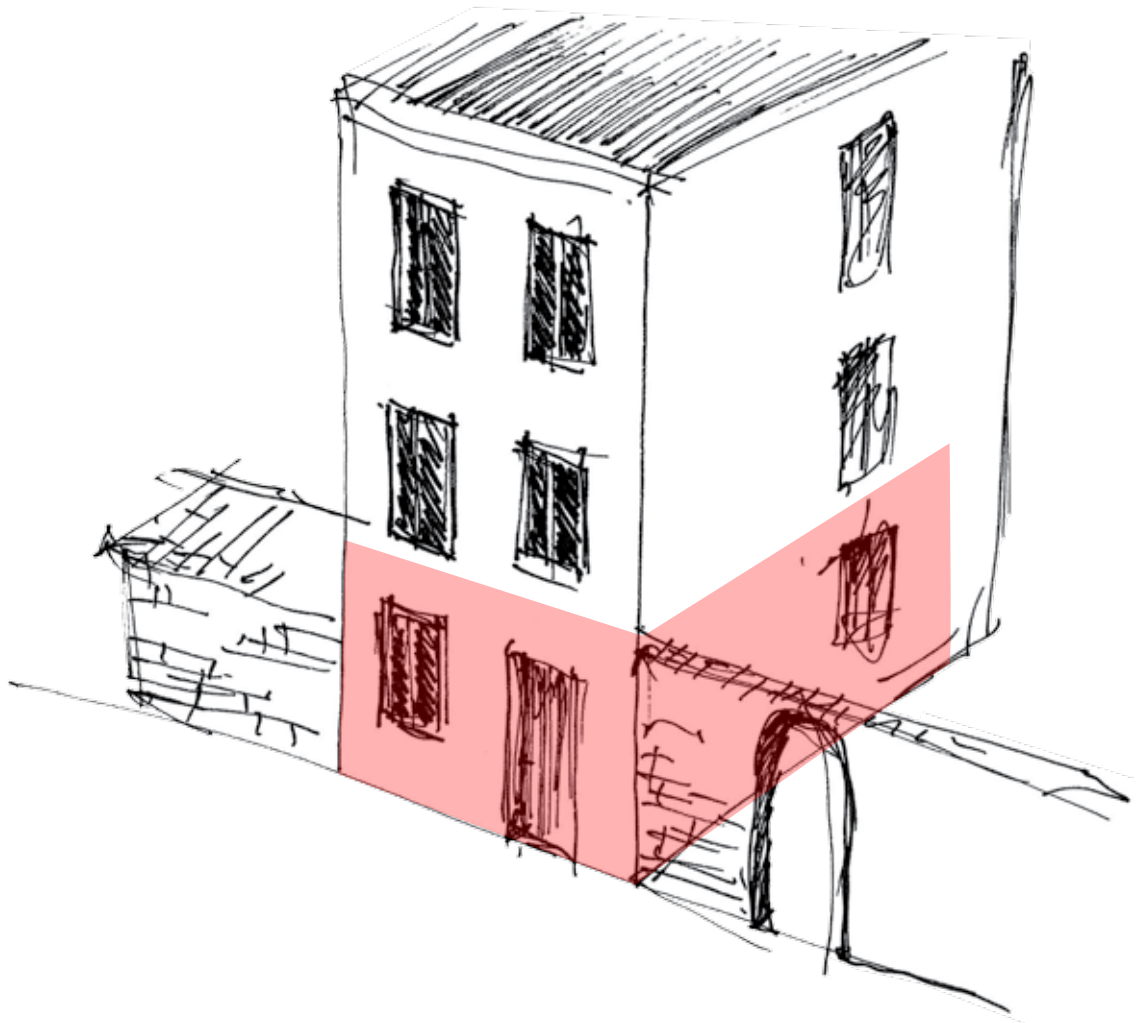
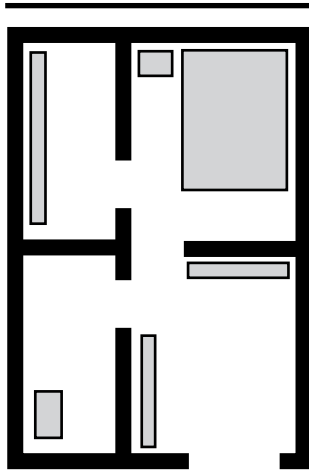


Private toilet



Private kitchen

4m









**Alfaz, Naspin, Attasan, Khadiza, Ashif**

The muslim family has five members, three males - two of them are earning - and two females. Their apartment has four rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom. The main construction is made of bricks and a framed structure of concrete. The house was built in 2006 and will be finished in 2009, there live 4 families now, it can be 12. There is also a small wallet producing company.

The family has lived in Tiljala since 2006, in total they lived since seven years in Kolkata. They originally lived in Pandva Hooghly. Asking them why they moved to Tiljala, they stated that they just like it there. None of their relatives live here.

The older brother works as an accountant in a financial global bank close to Esplanade. The total household income is between 20 000 and 30 000 rupees per month. Their way to work is fifteen minutes and they usually go by bus or autorikshaw.

They bought the flat for 20 000 000 rupees, therefore they do not pay rent. All of the member have attended school. In their free time they especially like to watch and play cricket in Maidan.

A private doctor whom they consult is five minutes away and costs 100 to 200 rupees per visit.

They do not like to go to malls but the markets nearby. There are no community places connected with the flat.

The place used to be a slum three years ago.



**500 US\$**  
household/month



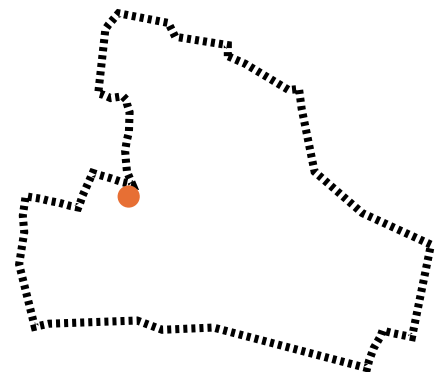
Owned



Private



Private





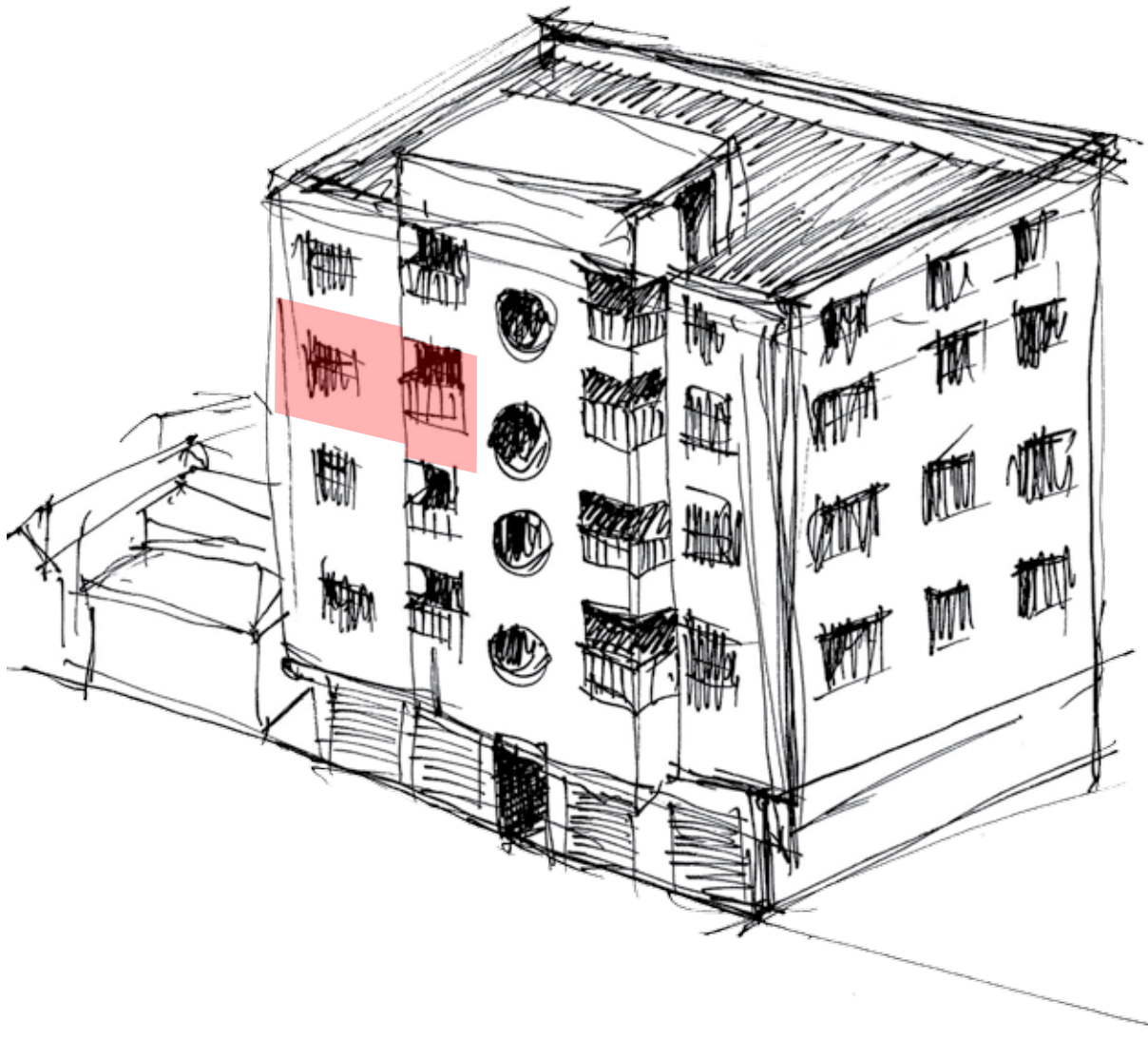
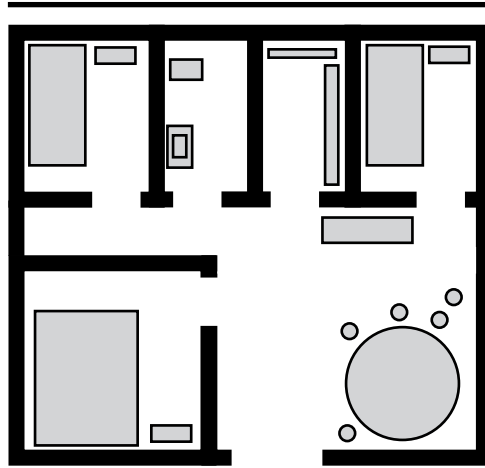


Private high standard bathroom



Private high standard kitchen

6m









# CHANGE OF ENVIRONMENT

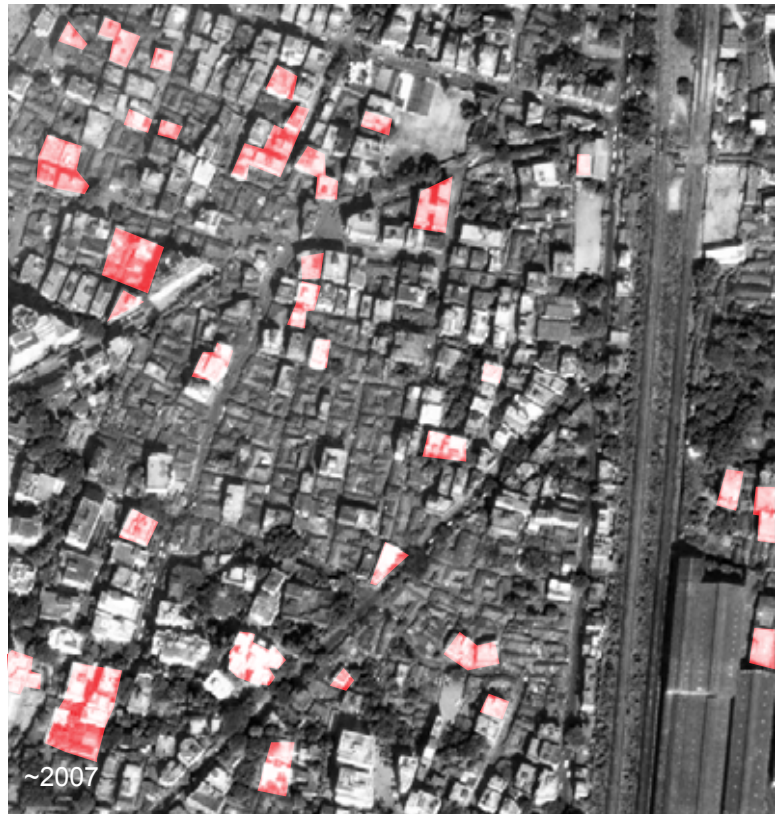
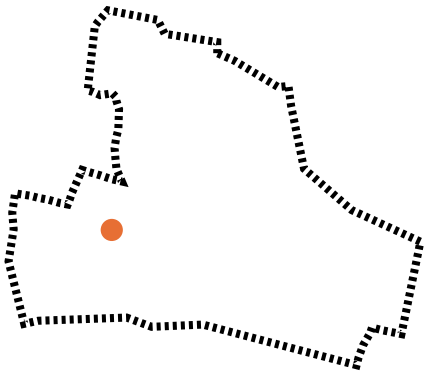
Physical change



### EXAMPLE 1

Next to Tiljala Road in Ward 65

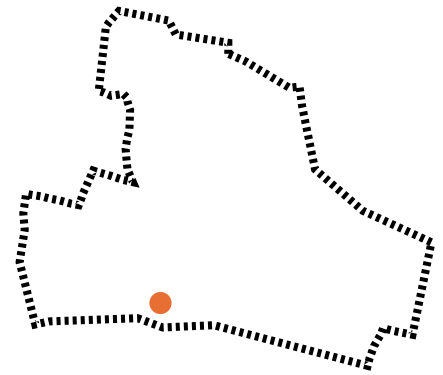
As seen when comparing different satellite images of differing times (~1997 and ~2007) the low city structure - mostly red-roofed pucca huts - is changing into multistorey houses. The latter can be, as seen in Tiljala, either good standard apartment buildings or simply stacked floors of bustees - the so called "vertical slums".



## EXAMPLE 2

### Blondel Road - Picnic Garden Road new bridge

New roads are provided between both sides of the National Railway. That causes a better connection of Tiljala with the centre of the town. Crossing that bridge Park Circus is only about five minutes drive away. The change in the built structure which is partly triggered by the better connections is seen around the "entrance" of Picnic Garden Road.



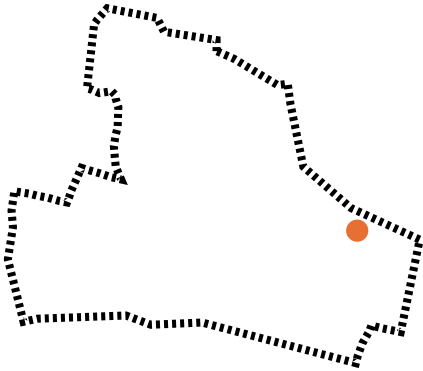
Source: maps.live.com and maps.google.com (December 2008)



### EXAMPLE 3

Industrial area near Eastern Metropolitan By-pass

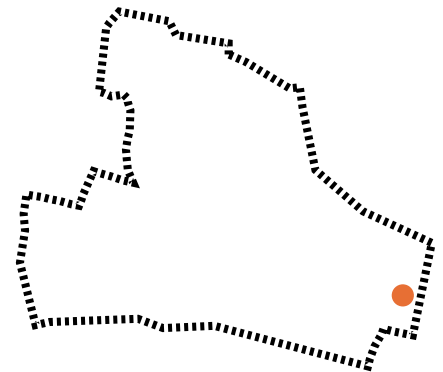
In the area man has always taken land from the water. This is observable today. Smaller or bigger bodies of water are filled and soon built up for either residential or industrial use. It would be interesting to know if this is legal and conducted by the municipality or not.



#### EXAMPLE 4

Informal settlement along Eastern Metropolitan  
By-pass

The informal settlements are expanding to the east. It is seen that between the years when these images were taken, the built up area has increased almost twice. Unfortunately there is no information whether the dwellers who have moved there are from other areas of Tiljala - i.e. from the plots which are now built up as multistorey apartments.



Source: maps.live.com and maps.google.com (December 2008)



**WARD PROFILES**  
after KEIP materials

In a way one can see the stages of the change also when comparing these six areas of Tiljala: ward 59 east (1) and west (2) of railway and south of Park Circus Connector (3), ward 65 east (4) and west (5) of railway and ward 66 (6)

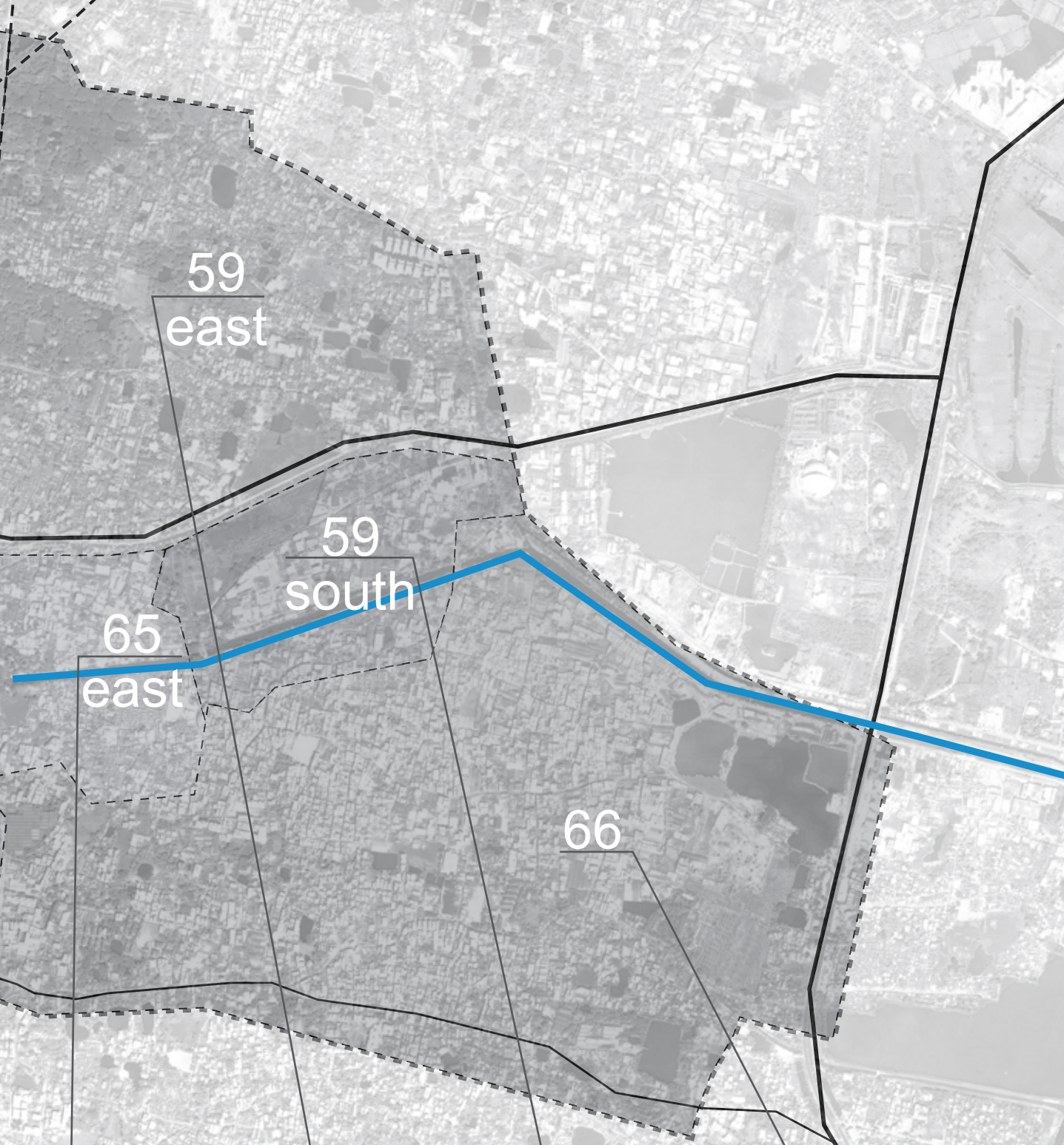
It is visible that areas west of the railway have wider streets, sufficient sewage lines etc. The eastern side is mostly bustee land with narrow streets and low structures. Exception are for example ward 66 and parts of 59 east which also have narrow streets but as seen before, mostly mid-rise structures.

It can be said that the western parts of the railway with its less dense built up area can be considered as the natural part of Kolkata's center. Ward 66 and ward 59 south are mostly gone through the change from low rise bustees to mid-rise extraordinarily dense city structure. Other areas are least developed - still much of the waste water is running in surface drains etc.



PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTIAL LAND		
AVERAGE ROAD WIDTH		
DRAINAGE TYPE		
WATER LOGGING PROBLEMS		

85%	90%
10-15m	7.5-10m
undeground	undeground
not considerable	minor



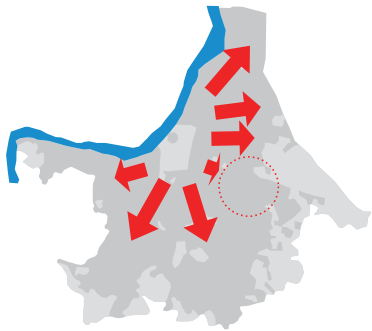
75%  
3.5/7.5m  
open drain  
not considerable

90%  
3.5-7.5m  
open/underground  
partly major

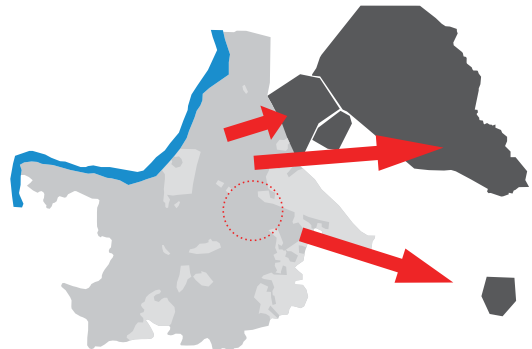
90%  
2.5-3.5m  
underground  
minor

90%  
3.5-7.5m  
underground  
major





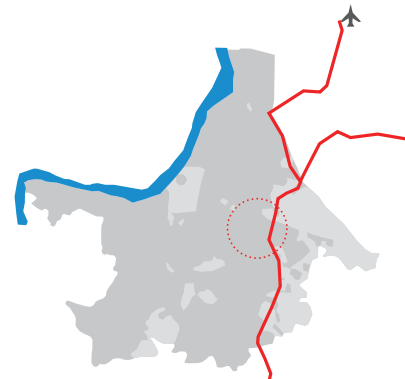
Kolkata's centre is expanding



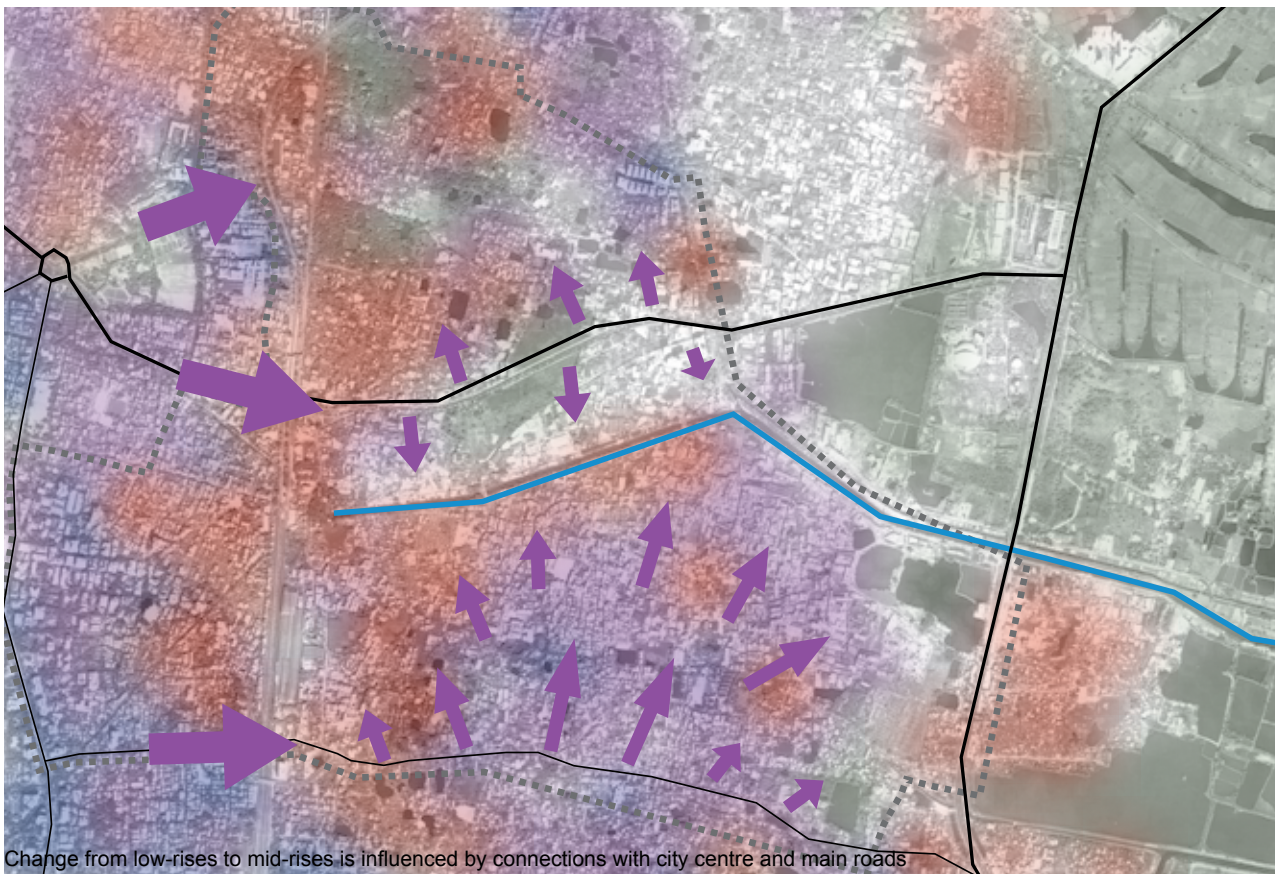
New townships in the East



Richer inhabitants of Tiljala want change

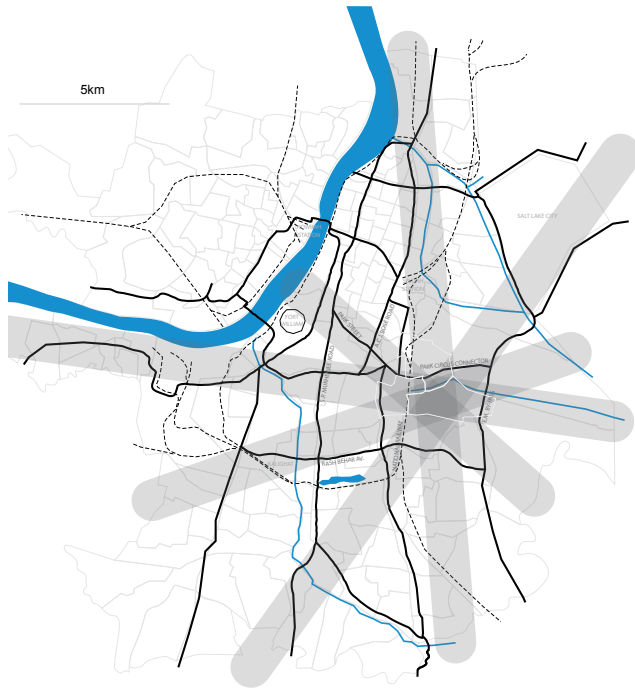


E.M. By-pass gives good connections to East



Change from low-rises to mid-rises is influenced by connections with city centre and main roads

## Tiljala is changing...

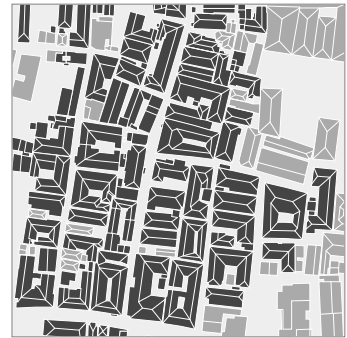
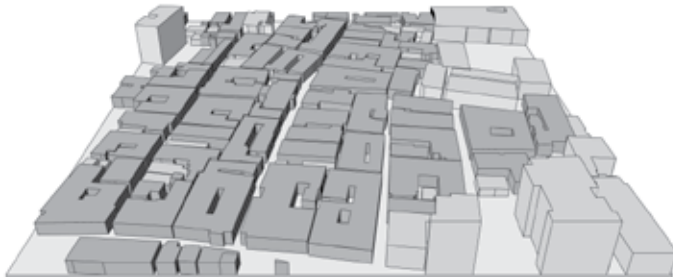


Mangal Chandra Das observed the first flat apartments appearing about fifteen, twenty years ago. Nowadays huge construction sites and advertisement for multistorey buildings cannot be overseen anymore. In some areas, there are only particular huts left between a quarter of multistoreys. This does not consequently imply an improvement of the living conditions, often they are just a sort of vertical slum, still inhabited by a high amount of people in a small space and shared bathrooms. Partly there are also new apartments with a good standard for the few ones who can afford. Those prefer to change from low-rise to high-rise although living next door to the very poor. Also Mangal Chandra Das and his wife are moving out of their former pucca hut to such a new four room apartment - but without leaving Tiljala.

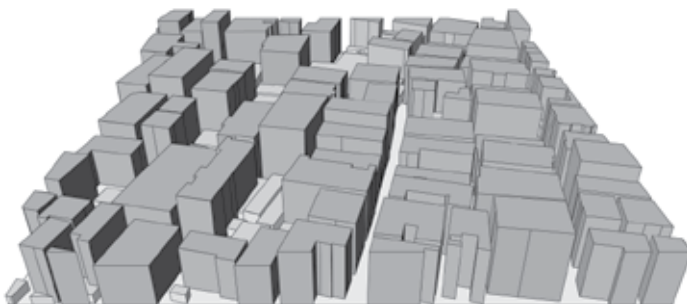
There are several engines expediting the process of changing: Tiljala's potential is the central location in town and - caused by the city's east expansion with Salt Lake and Rajarhat - it is even becoming more the middle of Kolkata. The closeness of the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass and the National Railway Track is another important factor.

The change is mostly taking place vertically. The grid of the built up structures - either one or multi-storey - stays quite much the same. In many cases it does not mean that infrastructure (pipelines, drainage) is sufficient for the new needs.

0,44 people/sq m



3 people/sq m





*„What we are experiencing in Kolkata are phenomena that are involving parts of both definitions“* - Pascal Kallenberger, ETH Zürich







## **GENTRIFICATION** *EXOGENEOUS*

Paul Knox: "Gentrification: The renovation and renewal of run-down inner-city environments through an influx of more affluent persons such as middle-class professionals. Has led to the displacement of poorer citizens."

It is suspected that this is also happening in Tiljala - that former inhabitants are displaced by wealthier income groups.

## **UPGRADING** *ENDOGENEOUS*

"Incumbent Upgrading (after "Bericht Entwicklung Langstrassenquartier 2008" [www.stadt-zuerich.ch](http://www.stadt-zuerich.ch)) is Caused by inhabitants and tenants of a certain area, renovation of space or social urban development."

This means investment into the built environment, not necessarily combined with the replacement of inhabitants. That is definitely seen in Tiljala as the infrastructure in the low rise bustees is developed and also when the former tenants of the huts move into mid-rise apartment buildings of better or not so good conditions.

It must be mentioned that both of these phenomena - gentrification and upgrading - are coming from western context and cannot thoroughly be used in Kolkata.





As a result of the upgrading and infrastructural improvement projects in bustees, the private entrepreneurs see it as a new land for real estate development. In addition it "opens the way for new illegal constructions" (V. Ramaswamy). With the increase of the density of dwellers, the water and sewage system are not sufficient anymore.

Henrike Donner (Urban anthropologist): "Tiljala is largely illegal and developed around cottage industries. [...] The whole area is classified as a slum, partly because there are indicators like persons per square mile and incomes that match, but also because it is legally, in terms of land rights etc. a slum - the tenancy agreements are slum tenancies."

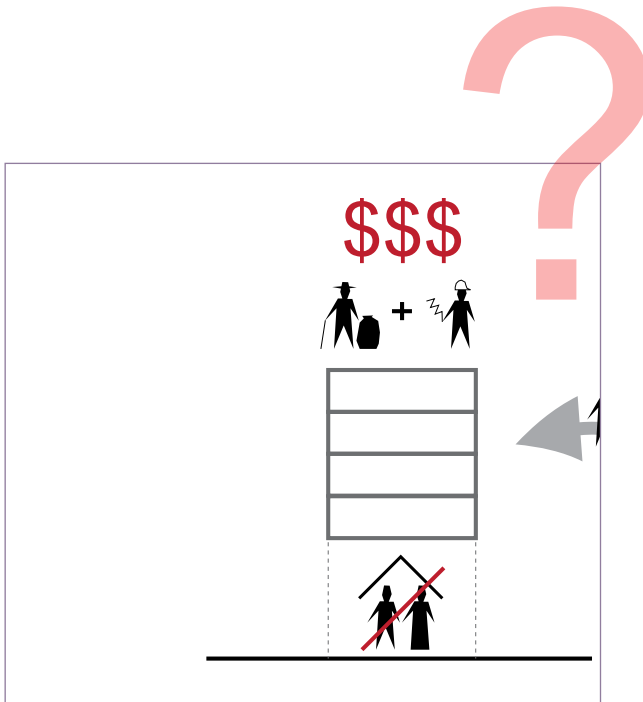
Even though almost all buildings in the area are illegally constructed it should not be thought that the dwellers themselves are illegal. Mostly they are citizens of India who can for example go voting.

In the past the municipality has legalized some informal settlements in Kolkata but since 1986 the practice is not carried out anymore as it is simply expensive as the municipality then is obliged to invest in the area, provide proper water and sewage lines etc. Henrike Donner: "One can legalise himself through being provided with connections of water and electricity by the municipality. Refugee communities used to be illegal once but were legalised later."

**LANDGRABBING?**

The topic of landgrabbing did not confront us until the return of our visit to Kolkata. Being there it has never been mentioned at all by anyone. Nonetheless, Western experts say that the poorer inhabitants of Tiljala are in some cases evicted and not indemnified correctly. Developers build new apartment houses on the former hut plot.

Definition after [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com):  
A usually swift acquisition of property (as land or patent rights) often by fraud or force.



*„Over the last 15 years or so, illegal construction has been taking place on a large-scale in bustee neighbourhoods”*

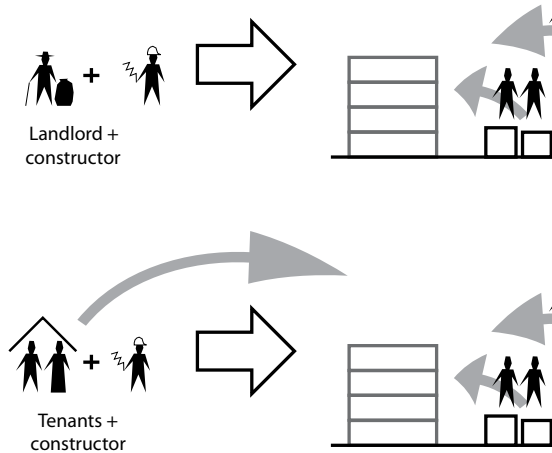
- V. Ramaswamy





*„For several years now, private builders and their consortiums have been eyeing bustee land, because their location makes them prime real estate” - V. Ramaswamy*

## DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES



The most ordinary schemes of development for the change from huts to multistorey buildings are

a) a thika tenant lets a developer build a flat house and both, former hut dwellers and new inhabitants (from inside or outside Tiljala) move to live there.

b) in the need for more space the richer local dwellers find a developer (or a developer comes to negotiate with the dwellers); the latter builds an apartment house where both the dwellers and new inhabitants from outside of the area move in.

Of course the poorer of those who have lived in the huts cannot afford to rent an apartment. In that case they are forced to move somewhere else as they have no power to offer resistance.

Often the built houses are of a poor quality as most of the money paid by the new dwellers goes into the developer's pocket. Also no new infrastructure is constituted: fresh water supplies can be insufficient and wastewater is often conducted into open drains.

## LANDOWNERSHIP

Most of the bustees in Kolkata are on land under thika tenancy.

Definition of Thika Tenancy

Land owned by large landowners leased out to middlemen who raised "hutments" and collected rents. The middlemen gradually became the direct landowners paying tax to the KMC and collecting house rent. These pockets were later covered under the Thika Tenancy Act (1981) of the Government of West Bengal, protecting the residents from eviction. The residents pay land tax and can sublet rooms. These slums mainly have a high proportion of floating and seasonally migrating tenants.

Source: [www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu-projects/Global\\_Report/pdfs/Kolkata.pdf](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu-projects/Global_Report/pdfs/Kolkata.pdf)





# Basti Redevelopment in Kolkata

V RAMASWAMY

The proposal by the West Bengal government to permit multi-storeyed buildings on 'thika' tenancy land in Kolkata raises a lot of questions about the terms on which the land would be given to private builders and the fate of the present dwellers. Nearly three lakh people are directly and indirectly employed in basti-based manufacture of basic items in the city's economy.

**O**n February 21, 2008 *The Statesman* reported that the West Bengal land and land reforms minister had agreed to a proposal from the urban development department permitting multi-storeyed buildings on 'thika' (contract for temporary possession) tenancy land. The minister reportedly gave his approval provided the tenants agree to it.

Most of the slums or 'bastis' (low-income settlements) in Kolkata and Howrah are on land under thika tenancy. They occupy huge tracts of land spread all over the city. The 2001 Census estimated that about 1.5 million people in Kolkata lived in slums. There would be over half a million in Howrah. Thus, as a result of the new proposed policy, the habitation of about two million people of the conurbation spread across the two banks of the Hooghly is now threatened.

## Background

Basti land, formerly owned by landlords, is now largely owned by the state. On this land stand structures, typically tile-roofed, owned by the thika tenants. And in each such building live many tenant (or bharatiya or raiyat) households, each one typically occupying a small room. Following a high court order, the thika tenants cannot be ousted by the state. The tenant dwellers are protected too, by the tenancy laws and the slum act. The thika tenants also have limited development rights on their property.

Bastis are spread throughout the city. The city's labouring population, and the bulk of the urban poor reside here. But bastis are also the site of a lot of economic activities. Workplace and residence are inter-woven. A good part of the production of basic items in the city economy, like garments, footwear and paper products takes place in the bastis. Various trades are concentrated in specific areas, making location a crucial factor. As many as three lakh people may be directly and indirectly employed in basti-based manufacturing activity. Among the area where

large, old bastis are concentrated are Metiabruz, Rajabazar, Narkeldanga, Sealdah, Beckbagan and Tiljala-Topsia-Tangra.

The overwhelming majority of the Muslim population of Kolkata and Howrah lives in bastis, and these are among the oldest, largest and most degraded and poorly serviced slums of the city.

## Slum Improvement

Bastis had suffered long neglect, and by the early 1960s, were in a state of near collapse. Following the planning intervention of the Ford Foundation, through the 1970s and 1980s, the basti improvement programme financed by the World Bank was taken up in the slum localities. This involved conversion of service latrines, connection of water taps, surface drainage facilities, construction and widening of roads and pathways, and provision of street lighting and waste disposal facilities within the bastis. While living conditions in the bastis improved as a result, this also opened the way for new construction in bastis, principally of illegal buildings. Bastis improved under the programme are once again facing acute deficiencies in services.

## Illegal Construction

With terrible overcrowding in the bastis, and given the thika tenants' inability to extend their structures, over the last 15 years or so, illegal construction has been taking place on a large-scale in basti neighbourhoods. This happens through a nexus of builder-hoodlum-party cadres-police. The builder acts in the name of the thika tenant. He pockets the 'salami' (deposit) amount paid by the occupants of the new apartments, and receives the rent from the new occupants for some years. The buildings thus constructed are generally of a poor quality. They discharge toilet waste into the open drains. Population pressure also thus increases on the already overstretched basti services. Little wonder then that the combination of highly insufficient supply of drinking water and inadequate and poor sanitation emerges as the principal environmental health problem in Kolkata, resulting in gastro-intestinal and waterborne diseases, and afflicting principally the city's poor and low-income.

V Ramaswamy ([hpp@vsnl.com](mailto:hpp@vsnl.com)) is with the Howrah Pilot Project and is based in Kolkata.

For several years now, private builders and their consortiums have been eyeing basti land, because their location makes them prime real estate. The key question is: What happens to the dwellers? Would they get alternative shelter? Where? What kind of shelter? And under what terms? Would they, for instance, get title to the shelter units, like the refugee colony dwellers were granted title to land they had occupied? How exactly would the rights and interests of the dwellers be ensured? Can this be assumed to happen on its own? What would be the arrangement for temporary accommodation of the dwellers while construction takes place?

There is also the larger question of transparency in urban governance. What happens to the land? Under what terms would the land be handed over to the large private builders? What happens to the thousands of illegal buildings that have already come up in bastis? Would the appropriate resettlement of the erstwhile dwellers be part of the builders' project? Or would that be handled by the state, utilising subsidies from the centre, so that a promoter-friendly government and ruling party gifts the builders the opportunity to make lucrative profits?

### Dweller Security

Given the very attractive commercial potential from multi-storeyed constructions in the bastis, these areas would only become centres of frenzied activity by a range of vested interests, each seeking to grab a chunk of the golden pie. Hundreds of thousands of basti dwellers in Kolkata and Howrah eke out a marginal existence through manual labour. Their daily life circumstances mean that they are least empowered to stand up, be organised and secure their rights. On the face of it, it does appear that they will simply be swept away by the tidal wave of greed and deceit.

In the late 1990s, a proposal was prepared by Unnayan and Asian Coalition for Housing Rights for comprehensive renewal of the blighted canal-side area in Beliaghata-Manicktala. The late M S Moitra, a former chief engineer of the state public works department who retired as director general of the Kolkata Metropolitan

Development Authority, was one of the authors of the proposal. This too was about basti redevelopment, but here it was visualised as being done for the good of the city at large and of the basti dwellers in particular. Squatters earlier living along the canal were also to be rehabilitated within the proposed development. The indicative estimates made in the plan suggested that notwithstanding the social and public goals, the project could still yield attractive returns to builders. But such a project calls for a new generation of agencies and organisations, within state and local government, and at the grassroots level. These are all presently lacking.

### City Renewal

Since the basti is a unit in itself, both in legal terms and in regard to civic services infrastructure, it is pertinent to ask whether individual basti plots would be available for redevelopment or the basti as a whole. Redevelopment is not just a matter of construction on land. The requisite infrastructure for water, sewerage and drainage have all to be put in place. How far would the private developers' responsibility go? And what would the municipal corporation do? Would not basti redevelopment across the city require major city-wide infrastructure upgrading?

A blighted basti is typically at the core of a decaying locality. Upgrading the infrastructure of civic services in the basti site has to be part of a larger programme of upgrading the infrastructure of the whole locality. Thus, with blighted bastis spread all over the city, one has nodes of renewal across the city. Integrating all these nodes within a single, long-term, city renewal blueprint would effectively mean a vision for transforming the physical landscape of the city.

There is a huge human development gap between basti dwellers and the city's middle and affluent classes. The value of the land on which basti dwellers live is the only means of bridging that gap. Hence basti land should be auctioned by the state to the private developers and the money raised should be used to construct good quality apartment blocks for the dwellers on part of the land, with adequate open and community spaces. Alternatively, the construction for the basti dwellers could be part of the private developer's project. Squatter resettlement should also be undertaken in the redeveloped sites.

Given the huge volume of economic activity in bastis, spaces for production and marketing also need to be created. This would give a much-needed fillip to these trades, whose future is otherwise quite bleak.

A concerted effort needs to be made to ensure basti households are aware and fully informed of all matters, and participate in planning and design of the new housing. After having lived and worked for many decades in the basti – and in some places for over a century – and having suffered harsh living conditions, the households have a natural right to get title to their new apartments. A corpus should also be created for maintenance purposes and a management mechanism has to be set up, with the participation of the resident households.

This would ensure that the transformation of the physical landscape of the city is also accompanied by a transformation of its social landscape. Such a measure would significantly democratise property ownership in the city, while also strengthening the municipal corporation by enhancing its revenue base.

This is the challenge that the government should strive to realise.

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# CHANGE OF ENVIRONMENT

Improvement for the Poor



ACTORS



Kali Shankar Ghosh



Nipa Satpati

**KEIP**

The Kolkata Environmental Improvement Project was started in 1998 after a request of the Asian Development Bank to reverse the environmental degradation in India's cities.

KEIP is a multi-agency (ADB, DFID, the Government of West Bengal and Kolkata Municipal Corporation) endeavour to arrest environmental degradation and improve the quality of life in Kolkata. At present they are revamping and upgrading the sewerage and draining system, restoring city canals, making solid waste management efficient, providing affordable access to basic urban services in slums and improving outdoor recreation facilities in parks and water bodies.

SOCIAL and INFRASTRUCTURAL Improvement

Package	Zone	Plot and primary network works
10A	XI	711 - 714
	XIII	715, 716 - 722, and 722
10B	XIV	723 - 732
	XI	701, 702, and 710
10C	XII	703 - 709
10D	I	1 - 6
10E	XV	733 - 738
10F	VI	78 - 95, 96 and 97

Component	Amount (in Rs crore)	%
Sewerage & Draining works	71%	74
Canals rehabilitation works	10%	11
Slum Improvement works	2%	8
Solid Waste Management	6%	7



Conference at KEIP headquarter

### Tiljala SHED

Tiljala Society for Human and Educational Development is founded in 1987 by: Local Activists, Community Based Organisations, Social Workers and comitted and dedicated Volunteers

Tiljala Shed is a non-governmental organization (NGO) primarily devoted to help children in difficult socio-economic condition and vulnerable community people. Today 52 employees are working on various projects improving social conditions in the poor areas of Tangra, Topsia, Tollygunge and Park Circus. The initiator Mr. Mohammed Alamgir and his staff can help about 1600 people a year by enabling them access to primary education and healthcare. They are also taught how to establish a microlevel entreprise with loans given by Tiljala Shed. They are taught how to use sanitation properly and given a feeling for their own property. The organization runs Ration Shops where the poorer inhabitants can buy grocery for a lower price. They provide babies with birthcertificates - without them they would have no access to any school or health service.

In so called Self-Helf-Groups (SHG) three to four volunteer community members are given a loan in order to enhance their income creating their own microlevel entreprise. The programmes are called Trickle Ups. For rag pickers they secure economic self sufficiency to guarantee a fixed price e.g. per kilo garbage.

### SOCIAL IMPROVEMENT



Haider Ali

Aftabuddin Ahmed





**Social Improvement**  
Girl sewing for Rose Entreprise



**Social Improvement**  
School sponsored by Tiljala SHED





**Social Improvement**  
Volunteer doctor in squatter settlement



Social Improvement  
HIV prevention centre





Infrastructural Improvement  
Security lightning



Infrastructural Improvement  
Paved roads





**Infrastructural Improvement**  
Newly built toilet by KMC



**Infrastructural Improvement**  
Canal rehabilitation







# CONCLUSION

Statement



*„We are happy to live here“* - Sikha Das



## Tiljala is not dangerous...

At least it did not seem dangerous to us. In spite of all negative images dispersed from outside and the ones who do not live in the area, we could simply not experience any danger being on the field although we were clearly recognizable as foreigners. Our impression was Tiljala as a "normal" place like any other in town. Interviewed inhabitants - both Hindus and Muslims - always described Tiljala as neighbourly and they liked it there. Many of them could not even imagine to live somewhere else in town. The advantages they mentioned were that they have facilities for all daily needs in walking distance, their neighbours are friendly and helpful and their family lives nearby. Some of them have even lived there for generations already.

The negative image of Tiljala in the eyes of Kolkata's citizens is probably largely built up by the media and many urban myths. Many of the prejudiced voices have never even been to Tiljala. Muslims being criminal and poor people committing crimes for their daily life can not be assumed as reality.

*„Tiljala is my favourite place to live“* - Soumen Bhaskar





Jadavpur



Tiljala



Maniktala



Tiljala



Howrah



Tiljala

## Tiljala is like any other place...

Comparing cutouts of Salt Lake City, Howrah etc. and Tiljala we can not clearly make the difference between them. The houses and huts look very similar, it seems there can be no strict distinction. Tiljala is just like any part of Kolkata.



Near Park Street, west from Park Circus



Tiljala



Salt Lake City



Tiljala

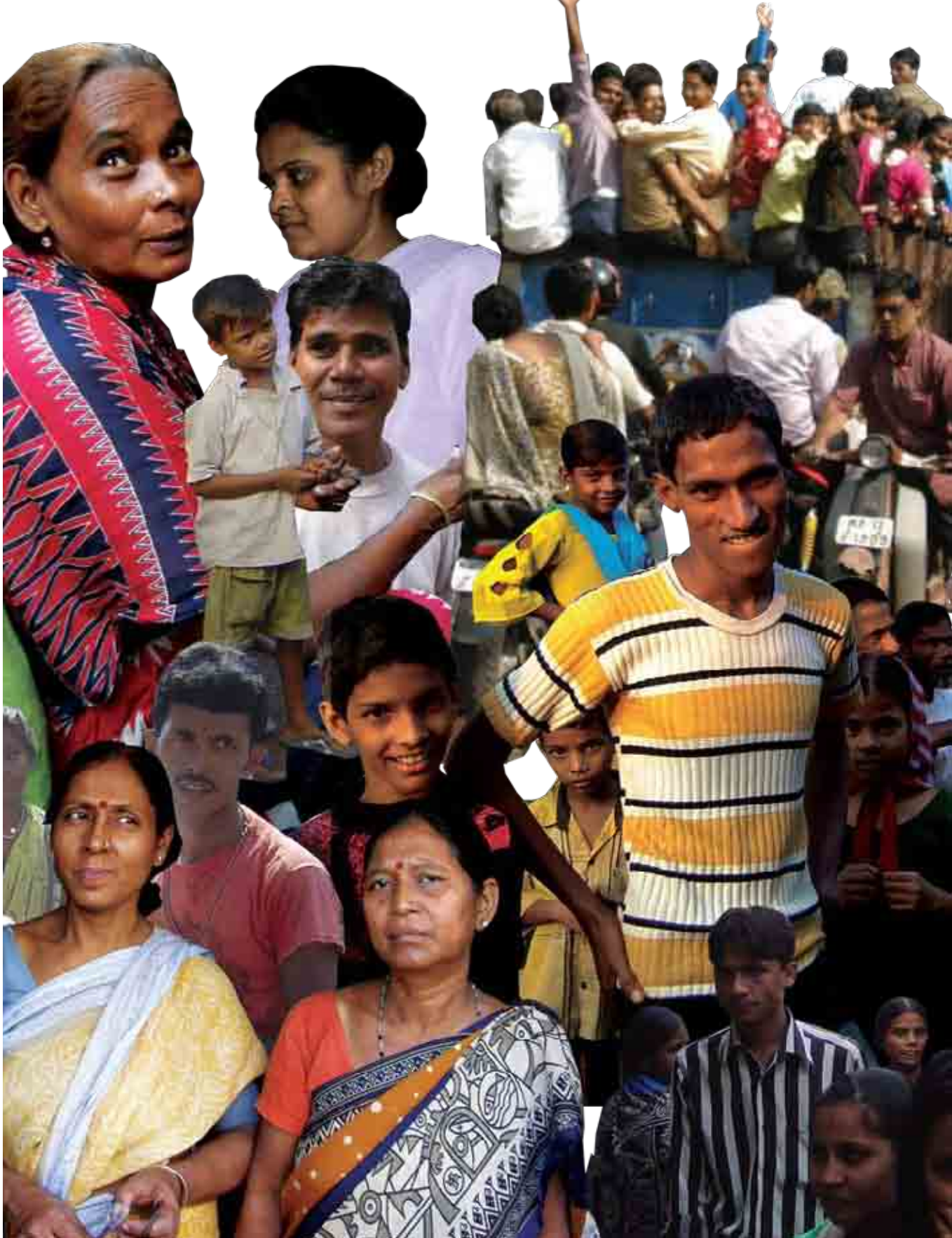


Salt Lake City



Tiljala







...or not:

What makes the difference is the illegal history of the area and the religious backgrounds - therefore varying habits. Probably only few of the buildings we have seen (either huts, flats or private houses) were built legally. This might also amplify the myth of being dangerous and lets the most Kolkatans avoid it.

### Tiljala's IDENTITY

Despite all, Tiljala has a strong character and its own identity constructed by the sum of individuals. The inhabitants are happy to live there and even if they had the possibilities, some of them would never choose to move out of the area. They like to be with their friends and families in an area where they have grown up, just like their parents and grandparents. Tiljala can exist as a little township itself, being in no need of a connection to the rest, but without the workforce living in this area, the city of Kolkata could not function in the way it does now. They play an important role in the city as a system and it is false to pretend that this part of the town is non-existent. The ongoing process of change might help to lose the image of being poor and criminal and consequently increase the acceptance by the citizens of Kolkata. Tiljala certainly has problems especially due to the mentioned living together of different ethnic groups which are not treated equally by the state. But nevertheless it has a potential to become a crucial part of the city in the future - and this is *not* only because of the central location.







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