Broadway in Irony: the Possibility to Build Social values and sense of Ownership with Physical Infrastructure

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Broadway in Irony

Broadway is one of contagious names we can see throughout the history of the journey of the British. In her 1832 book 'Domestic Manners of the Americans', Fanny Trollope wrote of her impressions of New York City in general and of Broadway in particular: "This noble street may vie with any I ever saw, for its length and breadth, its handsome shops, neat awnings, excellent trottoir, and well-dressed pedestrians. It has not the crowded glitter of Bond Street equipages, nor the gorgeous fronted palaces of Regent Street; but it is magnificent in its extend, and ornamented by several handsome buildings, some of them surrounded by grass and trees (Trollope, 1832)". The corridors of the beauty is widely opened in her analysis of Broadway, but there also exist a Broadway that is narrow in length and breadth, crowded, with unplanned shops, rush for living, a space of congestion which unfolds the untamed beauty of the market street (Chantha) and airs the smell of spices. To be specific, this is the image of the Ernakulam Broadway Market which is an antithesis ironically related to the literal meaning of the word. Named after the famous Scottish engineer John Loudon McAdam, the 19th century market provided satisfaction to the economic appetite of the people of Ernakulam or 'Kochikkar'. The economic aesthetics of Broadway market is currently sandwiched in between the Vembanad Lake in the west and big shopping complexes like the central square in the east. Some shop owners express their concern that the development of the big shopping malls and many new shops for wholesale and retail trade around the city have declined the trade in broadway. But still the market is one of the finest players with the legacy of wholesale and retail trade which forms the economic heart of Ernakulam.

The Market Space

While talking about the market space it is important to mention that it is one of the largest markets in Kerala which is situated in both sides of a road. The market works as the two arms of the body broadway. There are specific zone for specific items such as a vegetable market which sells veggies only and the meat market for meat products, along with fish market as well as textiles shops. It worked like a hypermarket with a sky open above it and the roads to puzzle the people who are especially first timers in the way. In the Eastern part the Meat, fish and vegetable markets are located and in the northern part textiles shops are situated.

Ernakulam broadway market, during Christmas eve.

Nowadays a huge market for cloth has emerged for satisfying the needs of migrant workers from particularly north and northeast India. From a comb to steel, everything we need is available here. This is not romanticizing the Broadway market but an effort to provide the picture of the spatial dimension of the market. Earlier times trade was mainly happening through the canal near broadway and nowadays with the development of Ernakulam as a town it had came to an end. The efforts to revive the old trade route as water metro as a new project of Kerala government will definitely attract more tourists to the market and it also enables travelling in a low cost without contributing more carbon emission. It is very necessary to do the same since people generally and the shop owners in particular use the canal to dumb their wastes. There also needs to be proper waste collection and waste management system particularly to deal with wastes (especially waste water) from the meat and fish market.

Into New Roof

The new project is said to transform the spatiality of the Broadway market into a three storey building with an underground parking area. This new complex is said to solve various issues in the Market including the waste management and provides a parking space which enables a good walkway to the people without heavy rush of vehicles. The plan of the building states that the first two floors of the complex are dedicated to the setting up of the vegetable, meat and fish markets respectively and the last floor is given to the Cochin corporation for other economic activities. With the setting up of such a space the issue of waste collection would become easier and the parking area would provide a better city for the vehicle owners and the footpath free of vehicles, for the pedestrians. But the most significant thing is to change the behavior of the people. If there are people still parking their vehicles in the footpath despite having a parking area for a fee it will not help the mission and vision of Kochi Corporation. The amalgamation of the wholesale vegetable market and retail meat/fish market will make waste collection form the workers and shop owners efficient, but what if the people still throw their wastes including plastic into the

sewage which blocks the flow of water and creates water logging. These are serious things to solve and it needs more effort than the introduction of new buildings. In other words the creation of values or the art of making people think that this is our city and it is our responsibility to protect it is the main challenge before the authorities. Education can be used as a means through which this end of creating value. In their work "Indian Development (1997)" Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen argue that with greater emphasis given to literacy from 1967 onwards Kerala advanced in the fields of education and public health including demography. As a matter of fact it is very imperative to point out that in Kerala people have personal hygiene alas having a poor pubic hygiene. And this is very problematic, in the sense that it is the after effect of the new model of economic growth and opening up of the economy. With the opening up of the Indian economy in 1991 new products began to flood into the market and it necessitates the creation of a new class of consumers. This process has eventually led to the culture of consumption but very different from the earlier notions where the rich were the main players. Nowadays there exists a middle income group which is large in number and who are very active in the market. One of the crucial questions is that were the people ready to welcome the flood of goods? And if one is answering this question by stepping their legs in today it will be a yes. Since people have more purchasing power and it is leading to more growth and prosperity no one can deny the fact that the opening up of the economy was right and there is no going back even if it is not. Indeed this openness has created today's Ernakulam and Broadway market. But the link missing here is what connects people and society. The focus on atomic individualism affects the publicness of our spaces and the huge availability of products creates prosperity along with huge waste and environmental deterioration. This practice should change at least by this decade when sustainability is discussed in detail. That is why the idea of education as a tool for transformation has been mentioned above as a key actor to change, through education it is possible to change the attitude of the young minds and preserve it for the future. Though this is a good method to change the attitude of the public it is a long term process and for the time being there is a dire need for short term measures. One of the things that can be done is to use social media to create awareness through sharing short films as messages about our public sphere and the duties of people to protect it. Every government program should be available to the public in respective websites and videos of the events like inauguration of new projects should be uploaded as videos. Authorities need to stress at every point that the public should be the owners of the public roads and infrastructure and there should be proper grievance mechanisms as well. A space to express public opinion should be provided in urban areas like the 'Gram Sabhas' in rural areas. Regional groupings can be used to formulate the sentiments of the people. This effort to bring the feeling of ownership into the people is necessary to make a smart public. And it should be genuinely followed by the transfer of ownership to the people from the trustees.

One of the significant points of concern along with the creation of values and environment is about public opinion. Do the public really needs what has been proposed as a new project, who need to bring the market under a roof, are the people who are working in the market really aware about the project? Such questions are very important in a democratic society. For answering the first part one must look into how plans are formulated in Kerala or India in general. With some

exceptions most of the plan formulation and implementation are happening in a top down approach, that is, authorities formulate the decision and the public will adjust with it and the spatiality will also change in accordance with the aesthetic sense of the planners. Most of the time the rule by aesthetics will not match ground realities and the opinion of the people living in that particular space. But in the case of the Broadway market transformation project, we can see an actor which is crucial in formulating both public opinion and policies, and that is the Centre of Indian Trade Union or CITU. The trade union is playing the role of a facilitator who connects the people with the government and since the left front is ruling the trade union will stand with them. Along with the trade union the Market Stall Owners Association and Kerala merchant Chambers of Commerce also played a key role in formulating a public opinion which is in favour of the planners. Now the market has been shifted to a temporary shelter and 213 merchants have been rehabilitated in this 5 crore project. Till the end of the project they are ready to work under temporary shelter even without knowing about what kind of a change will be there in the new market complex. Their faith in the trade union and the government is visible in their words as well as deeds. Significantly, this faith is seen to be the after effect of the constant struggles for rights and freedom of the workers by the trade union as well as the left front.

Nostalgia

Nostalgia is a lost feeling of a good past. One can find nostalgia in every good instance of our life and one day everything will become the same. The old Broadway market which was built by the British and given for trade to merchants by the Kochi Rajav (Cochin King) will leave its legacy of 150 years in a so-called pack of nostalgia. There will be consumers of this legacy in the future including those who have seen the old market and those who have not. But the openness of the market will be lost forever along with the anonymity of the people visiting the market since the proposed new market has 360 degree surveillance. Time necessitates things to become nostalgic and in the case of Broadway market there is a dire need to replace the old structure due to the 2019 fire breakout. Apart from waste collection and treatment this will create an order in the market, with basement parking and the two floors devoted to the 213 Merchants the total space available for public use increases. The new market also has the availability of tools to extinguish fire and other safety mechanisms as well. This will provide a better working condition for sure.

The newly proposed Ernakulam Market Complex.

The Cochin Smart Mission Limited (CSML) is on their way to attain the end of making a smart city and they will be building the market in accordance with their grand plan. This is expected to bring Cochin as the frontrunner in the country as the smartest city.

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