Entangled Urbanization in execution of participative governance
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Sometime in January 2005 as really expensive projects started to get initiated for the buildup to the commonwealth games, there was a lot of media hype. Ranging from metro trains, huge stadiums, flyovers and highways.

Funding all these projects made the poor in the city feel less important and regular slum evictions showed the inhuman side of the political class.

There was some discontent brewing in the commoner. The average Delhi citizen was unhappy despite large scale infrastructure projects being initiated in the city. A lot of people complained about the misuse of thousands of crores from the public exchequer.

This is when a bunch of right to information activists and anti-corruption campaigners came together to form a coalition that would become India's most powerful political movement post the national emergency in 1977.

India against corruption as it was known then-after 3 years of negotiations and activism became a political party from a pressure group.

The startup party -Aam Aadmi Party used the same energy it had mobilized during the agitation by sticking to the rules of not engaging in violent or casteist politics.

There was a very evident class war going on and the poor were very keen to fight corruption for access to basic services. This energy had the potential to transform our political system into a participative one.

What would be the best form of a fully functioning democracy? This is a question we used to think about 4 years back when we were activists. What is the optimal democratic form for the purest and powerful democracy.

Can democracy have the power to change and transform itself. Does our present democratic structure have the capacity to transform into another model of inclusive democracy?

A few of us had been witness to the complete transformation of Ralegan siddhi by participative methods. A village in Maharashtra popular as "Anna Hazare's village" We had heard and read about the Porto Alegre model of participative democracy in Brazil.

These instances and many others like the one is Oregon where in residents decides against a big player like Walmart opening shop gave the moral courage to pursue a dreams that the purest form of democracy would be when people had the right to vote on every local issue whether it is a expenditure or a land usage policy.

We all felt and accepted collectively that we were living in a powerless democracy. We had very little voice and absolutely no power of choice. This was also reflected in a couple of popular hindi movies made about 10 years back

There has been a feeling overwhelming feeling since the past few decades that the existing system was not working, mainly for two reasons. Firstly, the only ones who have power to get local civic works done are the rich and the politically connected. Secondly, local community expenditures is only a one small part of the existing corruption ecosystem. It is the everyday decisions which affects their lives community fund would be small but the overall state budget massive and very much prone to corrupt practices. Which meant that participative practices have to also be initiated for state level policy decision making not only for local community level problems. The current model from having a choice once in 5 years has to change.

There was no outlet for people to or any method to bring any process change in the existing political system.

The party's ideology was called swaraj which means "self-rule". It was term used quite frequently during the freedom struggle by Mahatma Gandhi. In 2013, the party had not won a majority and ended up with making a government only for 49 days. Subsequently, in 2015 it won 95 % of the seats which was 67 /70 seats. After 2015, it started its participative democratic exercise by asking citizens on how to spend the MLA (member of legislative assembly) local area development fund. Which is 4 Cr. annually.

The government of Delhi then started working on phase 2 of participatory democracy which is a new fund which would be spent only as per the wish of the people and would have no interference of the legislator or any elected representative. The process of having another fund started by dividing the geographical area of assembly constituencies, so as to make it give an additional local fund that will be allowed only for local expenses this fund would not need any consent of any MLA or government officer. It was finally happening! The change of governance model that we had spoken of and dreamt of for so long was finally going to become a mandatory law.

Each Legislator's assembly area was divided into 35-40 mohalla's based on the socio-economic characteristics of the area. This was an additional 5 crores which would be distributed in each of the mohallas. Which would be approx 12,50,000 per mohalla which is approx 20,000 USD annually. Initially 8-12 mohallas were planned in each assembly but the model evolved very quickly after feedback from legislators and citizens. There was a bill passed in the assembly and sent to the LG (Lieutenant Governor) as per the constitution, who happens to be a central government appointee. Meanwhile the AAP government started piloting the community budgeting process by a range of participative techniques to prepare local budgets.

The pilot was carried out only in 11 assembly constituencies of Delhi out of the total 70 by allocating 20 crores to each assembly.

The political leadership has been changing the participative process, to evolve the mohalla sabha model in the best possible one. There were signs that the evolution was going to take participative democracy to the most inclusive level possible. This would mean a complete power transfer from the legislator to the local communities (mohalla sabhas). This process also has some opposition from the Resident welfare associations (RWA's) as local resident associations felt that mohalla sabhas would be becoming more powerful. RWA's are local pressure groups of citizens which exert pressure on the local politicians which are the legislator and the counselor for local projects and seek permissions.

Before there could be any more evolution in the participation process. The LG has refused the bill on technical grounds and sent it back for review. He said it clashes with the 74th amendment and the state can't make a decision for issues on the concurrent list. Meanwhile, there were also some micro innovations like using technology for mahalla sabhas which after a long internal debate was essentially a website only to take requests for development projects and not for voting on the website or mobile app. An app for identifying one's mohalla demarcation using mobile based GPS has already been developed.

The second one was to gamify the process by making small groups and giving every group cards to prepare their own local "mohalla" expenditure plan. Delhi has an "complex entangled" 3 tier governance model, which comprises of the center, state and the municipality. Adding to the confusion are the courts and also the all-important Lieutenant Governor who has been given a powerful role by the courts after an appeal to minimize his role was squashed. The 2 tiers of centre and municipality are with the BJP, which is the right of centre - Bhartiya Janta Party. The BJP has been creating hurdles and obstacles using the writ of the central government in every possible way. They have gone to the extent of stalling projects for basic services like laying down pipelines and primary healthcare clinics. This is essential to their politics as the success of these projects would be electorally damaging both as it contradicts their propaganda and secondly it proves an alternate can change the governance quality in a big way. Every time there is a project that has potential electoral success like mohalla clinics (AAP's primary health care centre model) and right to service bill there would be serious blockages put in place very strategically, so the innovation would stay on paper and never get to the end of the tunnel.

It's a tough game. Everyday there is new challenge to fight. To give an example of how things have been in the slum pockets during the past 3-4 months.

The Delhi slum rehabilitation policy has mandated all slum dwellers living in the city before Feb 2015 would be rehabilitated into an apartment within 5 kms of radius. The Delhi Development Authority which is under the central government, despite having land refuses to give even a metre of land for slum rehabilitation. Instead they go to court seeking demolition orders regularly.

Secondly, the municipal corporation of Delhi which is also run by the MCD has refused to pick up solid waste from slum areas resulting in Dengue and Chickungunya becoming epidemics year after year. A recent study shows that the number of cases and deaths due to vector borne diseases is twice in slum areas compared to planned colonies. Bureaucratic blockages are not the only means to stop and halt local projects for public welfare. Complementing the blockages is the heavy-duty propaganda war unleashed to the dismiss and discredit the performance of the state government in slums. The continuous radio / television and newspaper ads were rolled made the poor believe the alternate was just as lazy, corrupt and self-serving. Not just local area work for provisioning basic services like water supply and sanitation were stopped but even macro policies of slum rehab were also jammed by not providing even a centimetre of land for building flats for slum dwellers. As law and order continues to deteriorate simultaneously with lack of basic services. people have started to get frustrated in supporting the alternate

One would imagine after the huge electoral victory we had in 2015 - the Delhi project for AAP was over and we had succeeded in building a political alternative which would eventually scale up to become a nationwide model. But then came the political backlash of the BJP who had used democratic means to undermine the power of the state government.

Gradually public participation has reduced in mohalla sabhas. As projects stay blocked for months on end without hope of completion. Mohalla sabha meetings have become harder to conduct as not getting public works done in time or being delayed without any deadline became an embarrassment for legislators and ministers. Conflict of service providers who are governed by the municipality and the state became very evident. The masses are really not interested in a catfight of departments when it comes to provisioning of public services. We are simultaneously working on a set of programs to revive dialogue with citizens and also appointing citizen representatives for education, environment, health.

The education representatives will be working in a structure called the school management committees. The school management committees have been on paper for many years as they are mandatory as per the Right to Education Act but have never been implemented on the ground. The health representatives "swasth mitras "will be monitoring the local primary health care centres and conduct performance audits in hospitals to check availability of beds and medicines.

The environment representative "pariyavaran mitras" will be appointed in every ward and would be involved in activities like advocacy, monitoring green areas and trees in their wards and also on raising environmental consciousness in the masses. We hope that more dialogue with citizens of Delhi will give them more knowledge of the officers in the respective departments and to the political machinery leading them. The will always be more pragmatic solution if people are consulted for every aspect of policy making.

the dream to give the future generation a country free of corruption fully functioning democracy still breathes and its oxygen is the hope of millions of citizens who are not ready to give in to narrow politics or give up their dream.

And lastly the way ahead, as soon as we get the current legislation "swaraj bill" passed and after is implemented. What would be the next step?

Petty politics must not affect our minds in any ways and we must not stop our collective moral imagination for a better future. There was a recent movie sci-fi movie *Circle* in which Tom Hanks builds a system which is a social media platform that allows members of the platform to vote from their mobiles.

Can we go digital to an extent where in every possible financial expenditure is dependent on people's choice? Something like that would definitely come close to the purest form of self-rule.