DEVELOPMENT OF A RESIDENTIAL AREA
IN THE NEW TOWN RAJARHAT,
KOLKATA, INDIA

Hanna Bäckgren. Fp03. Diploma work for Master's degree, 30 ECTS credit points. Master's program of Spatial Planning. Blekinge Institute of Technology. 2008
On the front page an Indian flag with the text “India is great” is displayed, this is originally a decoration on a truck, and almost every truck in India have decorations like this. For me it symbolises the pride the Indians feel for their country and what they do. “India is great” - what we do is great!
Two young women in one of the residential areas analysed in Salt Lake.
This document you hold in your hand is a product of a Minor Field Study Scholarship I received from SIDA. The study is a diploma work on 30 ECTS credit points by me, Ms Hanna Bäckgren, for the Master’s Program in Spatial Planning presented at the Blekinge Institute of Technology, Karlskrona, Sweden. The scholarship made it possible to go to India and carry out the project “Development of a residential area in the new town Rajarhat”.

My field study in India and the Kolkata region lasted from October 2007 until the beginning of January 2008. During this time I studied the project area and other residential areas already developed in the region. I also visited other residential areas in other parts of the country, this to broaden my knowledge on Indian Spatial Planning and help me when designing a residential area in the new town Rajarhat.

Discussions with my tutor in India helped me to better understand how the situation in the Kolkata Region at large and Rajarhat is right now.

The background and the analysis were to a great extent completed during the three months in India. Back in Sweden I continued and finished the diploma work.

I would like to give the reader who has not been to India a glance of what I have experienced during my time in this incredible country with a small personal comment on the next page and photos on the pages 8 to 10.

Hope you enjoy this document as much I have enjoyed making it, pleasant reading!!

Malmö - Sweden, May 2008
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to:

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A special thanks to the Bysack family who guided me in Kolkata and made my time in India to a joyful memory for life!

COMMENT ON MY TIME IN INDIA

This was my first time in India. If I must conclude my experiences with one word, it would be “a lot”.

A lot of friendly people, a lot of people in general, a lot of cows in the streets, a lot of poor people, a lot of dirt, a lot of smells, a lot of tasty food, a lot of pollution, a lot of religion, a lot of contrasts, a lot of yellow taxi cars, a lot of garbage in wrong places, a lot of children working, a lot of colours, a lot of joy.....

One thing I thought would be very obvious in India was the cast system. But I did not see any clear signs of it. I met many people and spent a lot of time with three families. These families all had different lives, incomes and house standard. Maybe the cast system would have been obvious if I have tried to join these three families, I do not know.

I have tried to reflect on all my meetings and experiences when making this thesis, these are the people I have planned for!
The urbanisation in India has led to a growth of the larger cities, the number of cities with a population over 100 000 inhabitants is today 393 and among these cities 35 have a population over 1 million. Recent made calculations estimate that by the year 2021 the number of cities with a population over 100 000 will be 500 and cities with a population over 1 million will be 75. As the housing shortage today is 24,71 units it is clear that something needs to be done.

The Kolkata region in West Bengal has started to develop a new town 10 km east of the Kolkata city core to cope with the housing shortage in the region. The new town Rajarhat will according to the planning program have 750 000 inhabitants when fully developed, three commercial centres and a new business district.

I have chosen to analyse existing residential areas in the Kolkata region as well as in other parts of India to get better understand the urban planning in India.

This analysis together with a landscape analysis of the project area and an analysis of the principals of both India’s town planning system as well as Rajarhat’s planning has lead to a plan proposal of the project area.

My thesis conclude in a proposal on one residential area in the new town. In my plan proposal I have created a unique city, a walkable and well connected city, a social sustainable city and an environmental sustainable city for 5760 inhabitants.

ABSTRACT
SHORT FACTS ABOUT INDIA

Official name:
The republic of India

Head Capital:
New Delhi

Area:
3 287 263 km², divided into 28 states

Population:
1 114 million (2007)

Annul population growth:
1,55 % (2000 – 2005)

Language:
Hindi and also 14 other official languages, English has an important role as administrative and commercial language.

Religion:
the majority is Hindu (80,5 %) followed by Muslim (13,4%).

Government:
republic

Important industry: service, industry (annual growth 6,7 %), agriculture

Important exports: workshop products, precious stones, jewels, garments, agriculture products, chemicals

Swedish import from India:
SEK 3 274 millions, mainly clothes, garments, machines, iron, steel and leather products

(Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007)
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Introduction
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TODAY'S PROBLEM
In India the economic growth has lead to more work, more work means more people moving to big cities where the work usually is situated, and in the end this means that the big cities needs to expand, with new residential areas, new workplaces and so on.

As the housing demand even before this urbanisation was much higher than the housing stock the problem is a fact. Close to Kolkata the new town Rajarhat is being developed to cope with the population growth in the region.

PURPOSE
The aim with this Minor Field Study is to make a proposal for a new residential area in the new town Rajarhat, the area is today agricultural land.

The challenges with this project will be to make the project area a part of the already existing settlement and turn the new residential area into a vibrant part of the new town with modern amenities and to make an attractive residential area to live in for different income groups.

Keywords in this work will be sustainable development, both urban and socially.

APPROACH AND METHOD
My thesis begins with a review of the problems that India as a country has been and still is facing, India’s town planning system and the way the urbanisation is affecting India. After that a closer look is taken on how West Bengal and Kolkata’s situation has been and is today. The background ends with a part where the new town Rajarhat is looked at and a landscape inventory of the project area.

To better understand the Indian town planning, structure of buildings, building blocks and cities I have chosen to analyse different residential areas in Greater Kolkata and also other parts of India, looking for similarities, differences, street patterns, street activities, weaknesses and strengths in the areas. After this “field study” I have arranged the observations under six headlines which I think is the most useful for this work, almost every headline with observations is followed by a literature study, where the phenomenon is discussed. This analysis method together with an analysis of the background is the basis for my plan proposal.

Finally I represent my plan proposal, a comprehensive situation plan with building heights as well as paths, meeting points, drainage system etc. A more detailed plan also gives a closer look at one area. A summary describes the total number of dwellings, inhabitants, parking lots and square metre floor area. Illustrations and street sections visualise how the project area can look like when developed.

DELIMITATION
The project areas boundary is the existing settlements which to a great extent are surrounding the project area. The area is well restricted but as it is situated in the middle of the new town a greater area have been looked at to get at better view of the new town.