

Challenges of managing a government town planning office in Nepal: a planner's experience

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1. KVTDC (2000), "Long-term development concept for Kathmandu Valley", published by the Kathmandu Valley Town Development Committee (KVTDC), Kathmandu, Nepal.

2. Central Bureau of Statistics (2001), "Population census report", published by His Majesty's Government of Nepal.

SUMMARY: *This paper describes the challenges of managing a town planning office in Nepal, based on the author's own work experience. After an introduction to the Kathmandu Valley and its planning institutions, the paper explains how the town planning office operates, describes its programmes and discusses the kind of cooperation it receives from local residents, landowners, politicians and government. It focuses in particular on the socioeconomic, political and administrative challenges and constraints facing the town planning office in enforcing building bylaws, encouraging land-pooling, developing roads and protecting public land, especially in the context of the proactive stance taken by the author. The paper concludes that a less proactive approach might achieve more in moving towards greater receptiveness to the concept and objectives of urban planning.*

I. INTRODUCTION

THE KATHMANDU VALLEY, the capital region of Nepal, covers an area of 600 square kilometres and has a population of 1.5 million. It contains three districts, which include five municipalities and 98 village development committees.⁽¹⁾ Roughly 61 per cent of the valley's population is urban, and its average annual growth rate is as high as 5 per cent.⁽²⁾ The ongoing Maoist insurgency in villages and rural areas has, to some extent, spurred rural-to-urban migration and contributed to this growth rate. The urban expansion in the valley is horizontal rather than vertical and is the result of the conversion of fringe area farmland to urban use. The existing urban use is basically mixed residential and commercial, and most of the land in the valley is privately owned. Urban development is haphazard and takes place mainly through the uncoordinated decisions of private individuals. Most houses are built as a result of the owner's initiative, although organized housing developers are beginning to emerge. There are two major physical planning issues in the valley: the slow intra-city mobility due to vehicular traffic congestion (average vehicular speed is 20 kilometres per hour), and the unplanned expansion of residential areas, which grow with neither appropriate roads nor the provision of public open spaces.

There is no land use regulation in the valley. Building bylaws are the only tool enforced in guiding urban development. The agency responsible for the physical planning of the valley is the Kathmandu Valley Town Development Committee (KVTDC), which has jurisdiction over all three of the

valley districts of Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur. Although the Ministry of Local Development is responsible for the valley's district development committees, village development committees and municipalities, the KVTDC is considered responsible for the physical planning issues of these local bodies in the valley, and it initiates the coordination of development activities at both ministerial and local level.

The KVTDC implements physical development plans through its three district-level branches (Figure 1), namely the Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur town planning offices (TPOs). In the absence of strong political commitment to enforce physical development plans, the TPOs' role has been confined to enforcing building bylaws, implementing guided land development programmes, public land protection and land-pooling, which will be described below in greater detail. The Town Development Act of 1988 provides the legal basis for carrying out urban development plans in Nepal. It allows for the designation of town planning areas in suitable locations and for the formation of town development committees; it provides guidelines for land-pooling/land readjustment projects and guided land development programmes; and it makes it possible to freeze land for planning purposes and penalize those who do not comply with the rules.

a. The approach adopted by the town controller⁽³⁾

The experiences presented in this paper are based on the author's nearly two and a half years' work experience (March 1996–July 1998)⁽⁴⁾ as a town controller in Lalitpur TPO. The Lalitpur TPO, one of the three branches of the KVTDC, is responsible for the development programmes in the one municipality and 24 village development committees of Lalitpur District. The town controller heads up the office, and other office staff include an engineer, an administrative officer, two overseers, an accountant, 15 building bylaw inspectors and two helpers.

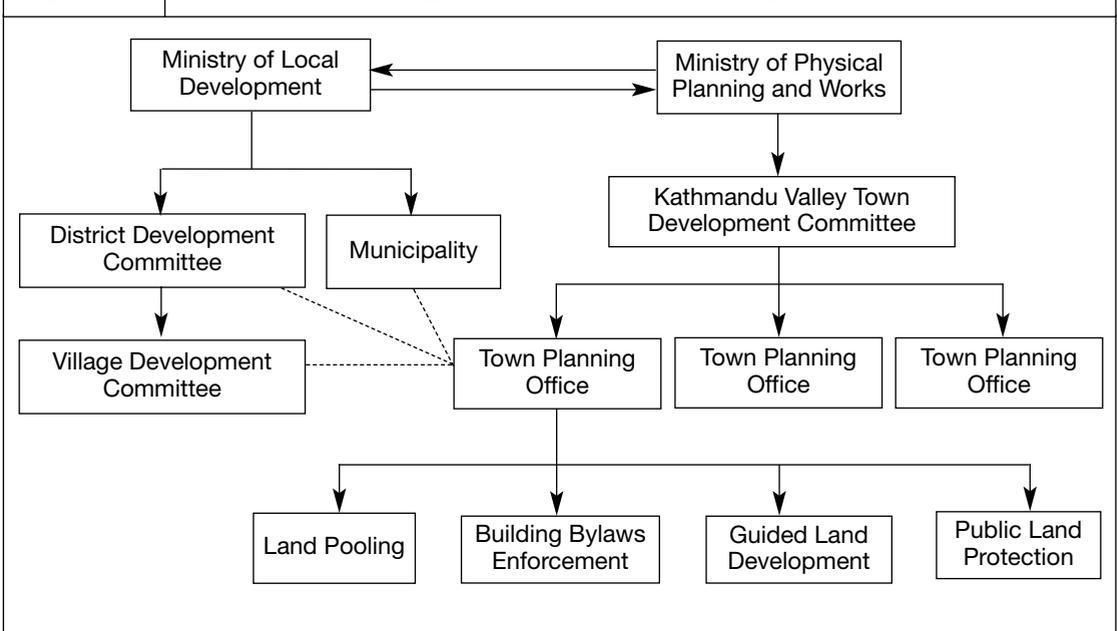
The town controller has two options for managing a TPO. The conventional approach is to limit the work to carrying out routine office responsibilities. The alternative approach involves taking the lead in promoting more planned urban development activities, and working as a motivator, facilitator and negotiator. The former is a safe and generally trouble-free management approach; the latter invites controversy because of the interactions with and involvement of various interest groups and powerful forces. The second option, despite the risks, has the potential to generate creative efforts and to yield promising results in the area of urban development and planning. Being a relatively young student of urban planning, the author preferred to try the proactive approach, and he had the opportunity to test its feasibility in the socioeconomic and political climate of Nepal.

II. EXPERIENCES

AN ACCOUNT OF the problems experienced while the author managed the Lalitpur TPO reveals some of the constraints and limitations that exist for urban planning in the Kathmandu Valley. Two kinds of experiences are presented here: first, the attempts to motivate development stakeholders and mobilize planned urban development programmes; and second, the more routine management experiences involving the enforcement of bylaws and the implementation of ongoing programmes.

3. The town controller is the office chief of the TPO, and generally has an urban planning background and is deputed by the Ministry of Physical Planning and Works (MPPW)/ Department of Urban Development and Building Construction (DUDBC). The author of this paper was the town controller, and has an urban planning background.

4. The experience is still relevant today, as there has been little change in the attitudes and behaviour of the people towards urban development and planning, despite the sociopolitical upheaval in the country and the urban growth in the valley.

Figure 1: Institutional arrangement for town planning

a. Motivational efforts

Attempts to generate awareness. Generating awareness is a continuous process in an office such as Lalitpur TPO, where intense public interaction takes place through person-to-person dialogue, group meetings and discussions with local representatives. This section presents the outcome of some specific and intentional awareness-raising efforts.

On one occasion, all 22 municipal ward chairs, along with technical personnel, were invited to the TPO in order that they might understand and discuss how Lalitpur TPO and Lalitpur Sub-Metropolitan City (LSMC) could jointly facilitate various development activities in the city. Only seven of the 22 ward chairs came. They were asked if they had any new development ideas for their wards and how the TPO might help to carry them out. The ward chairs discussed their difficulties in carrying out ward development (such as the lack of funds and problems with the effective enforcement of building bylaws), but none of them had any ideas about potential development for their wards. At the end of the meeting, they were invited to come again to discuss development proposals, but none of them followed up on the invitation.

On another occasion, a video show was organized at the TPO to demonstrate urban land readjustment activities in Japan. All the ward chairs and the deputy mayor were invited. After the show, lectures were delivered on the consequences of unplanned urban development for the health and lives of the population. The programme was appreciated but it prompted no creative responses.

On another occasion, a ward profile prepared by masters-level urban planning students was handed over to the concerned ward chair (ward number five), with the intention of stimulating him to take part in joint development work. But he didn't respond, nor did he return the profile.

These attempts to stimulate local representatives' interest in planned

development were not encouraging. The tendency was for them to see their jobs as providing conventional municipal services. They were not interested in taking the initiative, did not see themselves as development motivators, and had no clear vision of their potential role in their ward's development. Perhaps more time was required for them to absorb and digest these new ideas.

Attempts to promote new land-pooling schemes. Land-pooling/land readjustment is a technique for managing and financing urban land development. A group of neighbouring landowners in an urban fringe area form a partnership for the unified planning, servicing and sub-division of their land, with the project costs being recovered through the sale of one of the project's building plots⁽⁵⁾ and with the remaining plots being distributed in a proportional manner to the landowners in exchange for their rural land parcels.⁽⁶⁾ This technique does not call for either land acquisition or the displacement of landowners, nor does it require huge funds for compensation. It is, in theory, acceptable to landowners, as they gain high land value as a result of the project.⁽⁷⁾ These incentives create positive conditions for the unification, servicing and planning of urban land. Recognizing the benefits of this planning approach, the TPOs of Kathmandu Valley made several attempts to promote the idea to landowners.

The Lalitpur TPO had prepared land-pooling schemes for four locations: Bungamati (8 hectares), Sunakothe (30 hectares), Lamatar (36 hectares) and Harisiddhi (510 hectares).⁽⁸⁾ Proposals for each of these schemes were taken to the respective locations for consultation with landowners. However, convincing landowners about these schemes was a challenging task. In Bungamati, one of the largest landowners (also a government official) vehemently opposed the idea, despite the positive attitude of the rest of the landowners and the village development committee chair, and he launched an opposition campaign at the higher ministerial and bureaucratic level, taking advantage of his position. According to the local people, this man's own plan for purchasing land in the locality was the main reason for his opposition to the land-pooling idea. Normally, the more educated people support these planning ideas. Here, the opposite was the case.

In the case of Sunakothe, a few outspoken people said that they did not need the project and did not want to contribute land for roads or the reserve plot. They said they could plan and build on their own. Some said that because they were farmers, they did not like the idea of land-planning. We tried to convince them that, because of the area's rapid development, no one could guarantee prolonged agricultural use.⁽⁹⁾ However, they maintained their opposition and prompted children to burn the displayed maps. According to some local people, the landowners, in collaboration with land brokers, were engaged in speculation and, for this reason, opposed the government's proposal for land-pooling. Similarly, in Lamatar, some influential people who were against the project used the uninformed and illiterate farmers in a signature campaign against the project.

There are two types of opposing landowners. The first includes those who are only concerned with what they will lose and do not believe that there is anything to gain. There are good reasons for this attachment to the land; there are few diversified employment opportunities in Nepal, and people's land is their last hope in case of a financial crisis. The second type of opposing landowners have their own plans for their land and, for this reason, they motivate others to go against the project. Large or small, all opposing landowners belong to one of these two categories, and the majority are in the first category.

5. The plots reserved for project cost-recovery are called "reserve" plots or "cost-equivalent land". In this paper, they are referred to as "reserve" plots.

6. Archer, R W (1994), "Urban land consolidation for metropolitan Jakarta expansion, 1990-2010", *Habitat International* Vol 18, No 4, pages 37-52.

7. ESCAP (2000), *Municipal Land Management in Asia: A Comparative Study*, Chapter 10, ESCAP, www.unescap.org

8. Harisiddhi was selected as the largest land-pooling project for a satellite town in the valley.

9. Landowners reject planning in the name of farming, but do not stick to farming if they receive better monetary offers from a potential building developer. Thus, neither planning nor preservation for farming is achieved.

Surprisingly, in Harisiddhi, where the plan was for a satellite town, people did not oppose the concept but, rather, demanded that there be less land contribution from landowners, a firm guarantee of the government's cash contribution and timely completion. However, due to political instability in the country, the government, despite its appreciation of the concept, failed to make a firm financial and policy commitment. Recently, though, a comprehensive study report was produced by the Department of Urban Development and Building Construction, and the preparation of a detailed implementation plan is underway.

Attempts to launch new land-pooling schemes were not encouraging in most cases. The lack of understanding or confidence on the part of the landowners concerning the proposed land-pooling schemes, and their reluctance to contribute their land, were the major causes of opposition. And in the Harisiddhi new town case, although landowners did support the scheme, this was slowed down by the lack of strong political and financial commitment on the government side.

b. Managing ongoing programmes

Building bylaw enforcement. The building bylaw is a KVTDC-approved document⁽¹⁰⁾ prepared to ensure certain standards in the urban built-up area. It sets the ground cover limit for a building on a plot, the set-back limit on all sides of the building, the maximum height for a building, and the requirements for light and ventilation. Enforcement of this bylaw helps to cut down on overcrowding in the urban built-up area and safeguards the welfare of neighbours. Only those who comply with the building bylaw are entitled to a building permit, which is necessary for construction.

Lalitpur Sub-Metropolitan City (LSMC) issues building permits according to the Local Self-Governance Act 1999, and the Lalitpur TPO is responsible for monitoring and enforcing building bylaw compliance. The TPO has the legal right to examine building construction sites to make sure that the buildings are being developed according to the issued building permits, and they can take legal action against those in violation. The TPO relationship with LSMC in this regard can be awkward, however. Legally, LSMC is equally entitled to monitor and enforce building bylaws, but it tries its best to avoid unpopular acts, and concentrates on issuing building permits and generating municipal revenue. LSMC rarely sends its inspectors to check whether any buildings are being developed in violation of building bylaws. In some cases, LSMC has issued permits to illegal builders who face legal proceedings through the TPO. For political reasons, the mayor of LSMC (who issues the permits) remains silent in most cases, or else supports and legalizes these illegal builders, allowing them a conditional permit according to which they face demolition if they are found to be in violation.

LSMC's office building in ward number five was built on public land,⁽¹¹⁾ on the banks of an historic pond. The TPO issued a letter to LSMC asking the reason for this violation; this simply annoyed the mayor. The TPO cannot take action against the mayor, and the ward office still stands, illegally. LSMC ward offices also encourage local clubs to erect club buildings on open public land. The duplication of responsibility between LSMC and the TPO undermines the potential for enforcement. When the author joined the Lalitpur TPO, there were 23 tried cases of illegally constructed buildings that were to be demolished, and many more cases were involved in litigation. In addition to managing legal action, the demolition of illegal

10. KVTDC (1993), "Building bylaws of Kathmandu Valley", published by the Kathmandu Valley Town Development Committee (KVTDC), Kathmandu, Nepal.

11. Public land is mainly government land, not owned by private individuals or institutions. Encroachment on such land, or issuing a building permit for development there, is an illegal act.



Photo 1: Illegally encroaching portion of a building still standing one year after the initial demolition operation

buildings is also the job of the TPO, and is carried out with the help of a small team of police.

On one occasion, the demolition of a building that had encroached on a road's right of way was to be carried out by a team of security police, an engineer, two overseers and a few hired labourers. As the demolition began, the daughter of the house became hysterical and had to be sent to hospital. The owner agreed in writing to demolish the illegal portion of his building within seven days, and the team left. However, the demolition did not take place as agreed (Photo 1); the owner had complained and put pressure on various influential people to stop the process.

Demolition is a controversial issue, and there is a tendency among higher-level authorities to make a scapegoat of the TPO. A lot of influential people, including politicians, will push for the TPO to carry out demolitions. Then, following a demolition, others question the action and complain that not all similar buildings are treated equally. But to undertake all similar demolition cases would require large numbers of people and huge resources and security and, since demolition is only one of the TPO's many responsibilities, it cannot be a priority all the time. Demolishing buildings gets little social support and may generate tensions that the team does not have the capacity to handle. They have no training in demolition, which involves a lot of risks, and the prospect of an upcoming demolition can generate a lot of anxiety among staff. For all these reasons, the office tries its best to avoid demolition and to concentrate instead on initiating legal proceedings against violators. But this, in turn, helps only to increase the number of building demolition cases.

Attempting to enforce bylaws without the backing of strong political, institutional, financial and logistical commitment is ineffective. A weak institution with limited capacity, with no access to police security and with inadequate political and social support cannot manage the massive task of

12. Cadastral maps are used to propose guided land development roads along property boundaries. On the cadastral maps of most of the municipal wards, roads of 4, 6, 8 and 11 metres wide have been approved and implemented by the KVTDC. This programme was launched in 1988 and continues to this day.

13. "Mouth" landowners are those landowners whose land has road access but which is located at the entry point of the proposed guided land development road. In order to open the proposed road, the mouth landowner has to contribute a portion of land for the sake of inner landowners, without any advantage to himself. Most mouth landowners strictly oppose giving land free of cost.

enforcing planning norms. This calls for an agency that specializes in building demolition. More importantly, as long as LSMC and its mayor continue to condone illegal behaviour, it will be difficult to enforce building bylaws. In other words, until there is legal action against those who issue building permits in defiance of the provisions of the building bylaws, it will not be possible to see satisfactory results.

Managing the guided land development programme. The guided land development programme is basically a road-widening and extension programme within and around the municipal areas, and the TPO is the agency responsible for interpreting and implementing guided land development road network plans. Within this programme, roads are developed along adjoining landowners' property boundary lines, to ensure an equal land contribution from either side.⁽¹²⁾ For instance, a contribution of a 3-metre strip of land from either side would make it possible to extend a 6-metre wide road into the area. In areas where landowners agree to open up the proposed guided land development roads, the TPO facilitates the work by providing funds and technical support for road development – surface-grading, gravelling and the shifting of compound walls.

However, this approach is not free of difficulties. Most landowners still tend to believe that a contribution of land for guided land development is a loss and not an advantage. The main problem is getting the initial landowner ("mouth" landowner)⁽¹³⁾ to agree. This landowner already has access to an existing road, but has to contribute land to ensure road access for inner landowners. Nor has the guided land development approach managed to address the concerns of small landowners, who are left with a piece of land too small to develop after the necessary land contribution for a road. Providing compensation to such landowners may be a solution, but the government is reluctant to use its scarce resources for this purpose. Even when government funds are available, half of the total compensation to the mouth landowner is required, by law, to be contributed by the inner landowners. In most cases, any attempt to collect these contributions meets with failure.

In some cases, despite the availability of compensation, it is difficult to motivate mouth landowners to contribute land. In an area called Gwarko, for instance, a mouth landowner refused to give land for a proposed road for the inner inhabitants, even when they agreed to pay reasonable compensation for a small strip of land. Whenever the inner inhabitants agreed to a certain amount of compensation, the mouth landowner increased his demands. The frustrated inhabitants continually visited the TPO and requested that something be done. The office tried several times to convince the mouth landowner, but to no avail. Finally, the road track was opened through the efforts of a small team of police and office staff using a grader (Photo 2). After a few months, however, the man blocked the road by building a compound wall and a shed on the roadway. Once a shed like this is built, legal proceedings are necessary to deal with it under the building bylaws violation clause. It took quite some time to go through the process but, finally, the road is now operational.

Another pressing issue is the inadequate budget allocation for guided land development. The municipal ward chairs still consider guided land development to be the TPO's job, and not the ward's, and they make no extra effort to allocate any municipal budget to support it. Every year, about 2 million rupees are allocated by the government, an amount which can open about 1.5 kilometres of road. Of the 60 kilometres of proposed road in Lalitpur, only 25 kilometres have been opened in the last 10 years.



Photo 2: Opening up the “mouth” land for a prospective guided land development road

At the current rate, it will take another 23 years to complete the remaining 35 kilometres.

However, despite these limitations, a substantial number of guided land development roads have been opened in the valley. In newly developed areas, the residents and the ward personnel are relatively active, and ask the TPO for road-opening and gravelling. The implementation issues are resolved through a combination of approaches. In some cases, the community itself applies social pressure and contributes to compensation for the affected landowner; in some cases, government funds for improving road quality or moving compound walls and structures have made it possible to open up and widen the roads according to guided land development plans. On the whole, the ongoing guided land development scheme has provided a framework and basis for development in the haphazardly urbanizing fringe areas of municipalities where, without it, there would be clumsy and congested settlements.

Public land protection. The TPO receives some budgeted funds for public land protection activities. The primary objective of this is to demarcate and fence vacant public land in and around the urban built-up area, and prevent encroachment by adjoining landowners. Such land can play a vital role in providing open space to the urban community and, where the budget allows, the TPO tries to develop these areas as parks. Sites for this kind of protection are selected based on field observation, map studies and local people’s requests.

However, securing overall cooperation for public land protection work is not always easy. In one case, approved and half-implemented pond reha-

bilitation work at Thado Dhunga, in ward number three, was stopped by the mayor, despite strong support from the local ward chair and local residents. Ultimately, the contract for the work was cancelled and the leftover funds were approved for use elsewhere. After some research, a piece of green public land was identified in Sainbu village, in ward number one. Initially, the committee chair agreed to the fencing of this land but, as the work was about to start, he changed his mind, saying that the area had already been committed to some agency for constructing a hospital. Attention was switched to the adjoining village of Bungamati. Here, the committee chair was positive and, with his guidance, it was possible to complete some fencing and stonework in a traditional courtyard and around a pond. Similarly, a beautiful triangle of public land, well suited for park development, was identified in Lamatar. Unfortunately, this too, according to the local ward chair, had been reserved for a hospital to be funded by a Korean organization, and so the resources were used elsewhere. Subsequently, the local people stopped the Koreans from building, in order to keep the land open. In many cases, local representatives show no interest in the public land protection offers made by the TPO – despite the funding that comes with it. At the same time, they are quick to commit public land to uncertain donor projects, without any analysis of the need for open space in the near future.

Implementation experiences of ongoing land-pooling projects. In Lubhu, a rural area distant from the city centre where most of the landowners are communal residents of traditional settlements, a land-pooling project was finally completed in 1997, after significant delays on the part of contractors.

The planned area is a great improvement over the congested and infrastructure-deficient traditional settlements. However, the landowners are not very happy with it. The farming community does not see much benefit from this urban project, and the only impact at present is that the people in the area now understand what planning is and what it really does.

Sainbu was the site of another ongoing land-pooling project. When a good part of the site of the road-grading and gravelling work was complete, some ad-hoc decisions by the Land Management Sub-Committee (LMSC) generated problems. The LMSC makes a project's fiscal and policy-level decisions, and it consists of the heads of various local and regional agencies, along with a few representatives of the local residents.⁽¹⁴⁾

It is not uncommon for the LMSC chair and shrewd landowners' representatives to collude on behalf of hundreds of innocent landowners, who are illiterate and uninformed or who are not even present in the town, and to dominate the meetings. On one occasion, they put strong pressure on the committee to invest the Sainbu land-pooling project money into roadworks for surrounding villages that were unrelated to the project. Since it is not permissible to spend project resources outside the project area, the project staff refused to allow this. In response, the committee chair refused to approve the project budget, which virtually stopped all activity, causing a delay of more than a year. Ultimately, the deadlock was resolved only by the allocation of some money for outside the project area. These kinds of delays and compromises are not unusual, as different stakeholders push for control of a project.

In January 1998, for instance, the TPO was assigned to handle a land-pooling project in Bagmati Corridor that had been deadlocked for some time. A quick project review revealed that only five out of the total of 305 landowners were opposing and interrupting the project. A series of discus-

14. The LMSC consists of a chair, who could either be a mayor, in the case of a municipal area, or a district development committee chair, in the case of a non-municipal area; a secretary, who is the town controller/project manager; the KVTDC chief; the joint secretary of the Ministry of Physical Planning and Works (MPPW); the director general of the Department of Urban Development and Building Construction (DUDBC); the chief of the Central Regional Directorate of the DUDBC; the chief district officer; the chief of the District Land Revenue and Cadastral Survey Office; the legal advisor for the KVTDC; one landowner representative; one user committee representative; one tenant representative.



Photo 3: Enforcement of Bagmati Corridor land-pooling project

sions were held with these landowners, most of their demands were satisfied, and they agreed to proceed with the project. However, despite the agreement, some of their friends repeatedly interrupted fieldwork by threatening technical staff and by blocking the entry of the road-grading equipment. On the one side, there were 300 landowners whose property had been frozen for five years while they waited to see the project completed; and on the other side, five landowners continued to hold up the process despite the fulfilment of most of their demands. Finally, with backup from the police, a coercive intervention was planned to open all the roads for the project. As the work started, the same five people came to interrupt, and were finally taken away by the police to discuss the issue in the chief district officer's office.¹⁵ Later, the police instructed the team to go ahead with the work (Photo 3). Several bottlenecks and new roads were opened with no objection from any other landowner. However, in the evening, as the day's work was ending, the five landowners entered the area along with the local member of parliament, who demanded that the work be stopped. This member of parliament had purchased land within the project area and had earlier requested certain concessions, which had not been granted. For this reason, he had encouraged the five landowners to obstruct the project activities to protect his own interests.

Since the attempt to open all the project roads had failed, energy was diverted to completing the already opened roads. Land title certificates were distributed to the landowners in a formal gathering, and the moratorium on building development on the site was lifted. In the meantime, the same member of parliament became the Science and Technology Minister, and he used his position to effect the transfer of the town controller from

15. The chief district officer looks after the overall administration and law and order situation in the district. He has the legal right to mobilize the police force to maintain law and order and to provide security in the development mission.

Lalitpur TPO to the Department of Urban Development.

A number of land-pooling projects have suffered as a result of intervention by politicians and influential landowners, and there have been other cases of transfers of project staff who were not loyal to the personal interests of these influential people. Planners are considered to be a tool for fulfilling vested political objectives rather than institutional and development objectives. Those who fail to comply suffer the consequences. Officials are not judged by their performance, and their institutions are helpless in preventing this kind of mistreatment. The ongoing political abuse of the bureaucracy seriously damages the spirit of sincere planners and policy makers committed to planned urban development.

III. CONCLUSION

IT IS NOT the intention of this paper to give the impression that planned urban development is impossible in the Kathmandu Valley, given sufficient time and repeated efforts on the part of the TPOs. In the case of the author, time was limited and attempts were mostly on a small scale. For some urban development tasks, even years of tireless effort might be insufficient. The conclusions presented here should be read with these provisos in mind.

Attempts by the TPO to generate awareness in order to stimulate the interest of local representatives in planned urban development did not have encouraging results and, clearly, this will require sustained attention. The lack of understanding or confidence of the landowners regarding proposed land-pooling schemes, and their reluctance to contribute land were the major causes of opposition – although this was complicated by the lack of strong political and financial commitment on the part of the government.

Enforcing building bylaws, penalizing violators and demolishing illegally constructed buildings was a difficult task for a weak institution with limited capability such as the TPO, especially in the context of a lack of cooperation from LSMC. The ongoing guided land development scheme has definitely provided a framework and basis for development in the haphazardly growing fringe areas of municipalities. However, its implementation has been weak, because of insufficient manpower and inadequate provision of financial resources. The overall support of local representatives has been discouraging, and land-pooling projects have suffered from the intervention of politicians and influential landowners.

Finally, the appetite or demand for planned urban development still seems to be weak in Nepal, and urban issues have not yet emerged as a strong sociopolitical agenda to influence the policy makers. This lack of an overall supportive environment is a serious obstacle to planned urban development in Nepal.

A proactive approach to managing a government TPO still appears risky in the Nepalese context. It results in more pain and less gain. A more low-profile approach is clearly safer and possibly more productive in the end. This is a management dilemma for the planners of Nepal: either to “die” quickly by supporting a proactive or ethical stance – or else to find strategic ways to survive and slowly try to make progress whenever the opportunity presents itself.

