

MAPPING INDIA'S KUMBH MELA:

Interdisciplinary Faculty and Student Research on a 'Pop Up Mega City'

ABOUT THE KUMBH MELA

The Kumbh Mela is a Hindu religious fair that occurs every 12 years at the confluence of the Ganga and Yamuna rivers on the plains of northern India. Since its inception early in the first millennium CE, the Kumbh Mela has become the largest public gathering in the world. Today it draws tens of millions of pilgrims over the course of a few weeks to bathe in the sacred rivers.

The next festival will take place from January 14 – February 25, 2013 in Allahabad.

A temporary city is created every twelve years in Allahabad to house the Kumbh Mela's many pilgrims. This city is laid out on a grid, constructed and deconstructed within a matter of weeks; within the grid, multiple aspects of contemporary urbanism come to fruition, including spatial zoning, an electricity grid, food and water distribution, physical infrastructure construction, mass vaccinations, public gathering spaces, and nighttime social events.

BY THE NUMBERS

30,000,000

THIRTY MILLION PEOPLE

12

EVERY TWELVE YEARS

1

POP UP MEGA CITY

5

FIVE HARVARD SCHOOLS

6

SIX HARVARD FACULTY

21

TWENTY-ONE HARVARD STUDENTS



AERIAL VIEW OF THE KUMBH MELA SITE

ABOUT THE PROJECT

In January 2013, six faculty and 21 students from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard Divinity School, Harvard Graduate School of Design, Harvard Business School, Harvard Medical School and the Harvard School of Public Health, will camp at the Kumbh Mela site for five days to document and study the different phenomena that emerge from the “pop-up mega-city.”

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

BUSINESS

- **How** are business set up at the Kumbh Mela?
- **What** is the role of technology - internet, cell-phones and media?
- **How** can ‘Big Data’ collected from the Kumbh Mela contribute to our understanding of human behavior, especially at mass gatherings and in urban environments?

PUBLIC HEALTH

- **How** are health services dispensed at the Mela?
- **Where** are all these pop-up hospitals located in the Kumbh encampment?
- **What** are their primary medical challenges?
- **How** are they prepared for crowd-based emergencies?
- **How** can public health mapping techniques be applied to toilets and sanitation at the Kumbh?

URBAN PLANNING & DESIGN

- **How** can the spatial model of the Kumbh Mela be extended to situations outside of religious pilgrimage?
- **How** might it be tailored to support tsunami or earthquake victims, to distribute vaccinations and other medical services to the poor?
- **What** are the process in designing a temporary city at the Kumbh Mela?
- **How** are the parade routes and bathings sites determined?
- **Study** of the design of the physical structure of the settlement and the hierarchies in the public and private spaces
- **How** can the spatial systems at the Kumbh inform other temporary settlements?

HUMANITIES & SCIENCES

- **Who** gathers at the Mela?
- **What** are the distinctions between self-identity and national identity in relation to the temporary city?
- **How** is the Kumbh a “microcosm” of the cultural and religious traditions of India?
- **How** is nature looked at from a religious and environmental perspective at the Mela?
- **How** can Mapping the Kumbh Mela provide a visual landscape of the microcosm?
- **How** does the Green Kumbh use environmental campaign methods to impact conservation and sustainability?

..... BUSINESS

..... TECHNOLOGY

..... HEALTH

..... GOVERNANCE

..... URBANISM

..... ENGINEERING

..... RELIGION

..... ENVIRONMENT

HARVARD SCHOOLS



HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

- **Tarun Khanna**, *Director of the South Asia Initiative & Jorge Paulo Lemann Professor*
- **John D. Macomber**, *Senior Lecturer of Business Administration*
- Two Graduate Students



HARVARD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

- **Sue Goldie**, *Roger Irving Lee Professor of Public Health & Director of Harvard Global Health Institute*
- **Paul Gregg Greenough**, *Assistant Professor in the Department of Global Health and Population*
- **Jennifer Leaning**, *Francois-Xavier Bagnoud Professor of the Practice of Health and Human Rights*
- **Richard Cash**, *Senior Lecturer on Global Health*
- **Satchit Balsari**, *FXB Research Fellow, FXB Center for Health and Human Rights*
- Six Graduate Students
- One Undergraduate Student



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DESIGN

- **Rahul Mehrotra**, *Professor of Urban Design and Planning and Chair of the Department of Urban Planning and Design*
- Six Graduate Students



SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING & APPLIED SCIENCES

- **Cherry Murray**, *Dean, Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Sciences; John A. and Elizabeth S. Armstrong Professor of Engineering and Applied Sciences Professor of Physics*



HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL & FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

- **Diana Eck**, *Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies and Fredric Wertham Professor of Law and Psychiatry in Society*
- Two Graduate Students
- Four Undergraduate Students