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Shaping of World-Class Delhi: Politics of Marginalization and Inclusion

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***Abstract*—In** the context of the government's vision of turning Delhi into a green, privatized and slum free city, giving it a world-class image at par with the global cities of the world, this paper investigates into the various processes and politics of things that went behind defining spaces in the city and attributing an aesthetic image to it. The paper will explore two cases that were forged primarily through the forces of one particular type of power relation. One would be to look at the modernist movement adopted by the Nehruvian government post-independence and the next case will look at special periods like Emergency and Commonwealth games. The study of these cases will help understand the ambivalence embedded in the different rationales of the Government and different powerful agencies adopted in order to build world-classness. Through the study, it will be easier to discern how city spaces were reconfigured in the name of 'good governance'. In this process, it also became important to analyze the double nature of law, both as a protector of people's rights and as a threat to people. What was interesting to note through the study was that in the process of nation building and creating an image for the city, the government's policies and programs were mostly aimed at the richer sections of the society and the poorer sections and people from lower income groups kept getting marginalized, subdued, and pushed further away (These marginalized people were pushed away even geographically!). The reconfiguration of city space and attributing an aesthetic character to it, led to an alteration not only in the way in which citizens perceived and engaged with these spaces, but also brought about changes in the way they envisioned their place in the city. Ironically, it was found that every attempt to build any kind of facility for the city's elite in turn led to an inevitable removal of the marginalized sections of the society as a necessary step to achieve a clean, green and world-class city. The paper questions the claim made by the government for creating a just, equitable city and granting rights to all. An argument is put forth that in the politics of redistribution of space, the city that has been designed is meant for the aspirational middle-class and elite only, who are ideally primed to live in world-class cities. Thus, the aim is to study city spaces, urban form, the associated politics and power plays involved within and understand whether segmented cities are being built in the name of creating sensible, inclusive cities.

***Keywords*—**Aesthetics, ambivalence, governmentality, power, world-class.

I. Introduction

NEHRU'S vision for India post-independence was to build a modern nation advocating the use of techno-scientific measures for governance and planning.

> *"A straightforward paradigm of modernity as a techno-scientifically rational pursuit of planned progress that could be measured in quantifiable social and economic terms."*

This was Nehru's definition for a modern India.

> *Nehru believed that architecture was important in building a cultural vision of a new democratic and egalitarian society [1].*

Nehru's aspiration of a forward-looking modern architecture and planning strongly influenced the way in which Delhi was perceived and built in the aftermath of independence.

> *"I find what I call a world-class aesthetic-an idealized vision of a privatized, green and slum-free city assembled from transnationally circulating images of global cities"* [2].

There were a lot of cultural and environmental politics that went into the making of this world-class city.

The government presupposes that the utopian image that they dreamt for the city would lead to a better society and improved future. The ambivalence embedded in this governmentality is that when the city was talking about modernization, legality and aesthetics on one hand; slums were also being created in the city as fallout of such processes of governance. Terms like "nuisance", "polluting", "illegal", et cetera started to be associated with slums. Ironically, they also became a part of "the image of the city." The elevated aspirations of the government to build a world-class city in turn led to "*planned dispossessions"* of a majority of city's population from their basic rights. The political contestations that took place determined the way people lived and how their territories were defined. The chaos that was created through urban development was not planned but was rather a fallout of planning. Through the paper, the various porosities, limits and fragilities of the government will be brought forth that became a resultant of creating a 'world-class' and inclusive city.

II. Theorization

There are certain patterns which the government follows in order to achieve an image of the city. There is a self-conscious search for identity while borrowing principles from other sources. These reflect in the cultural biases, economic preferences and social attitudes which the government has in order to address urban problems. The town planners and leaders of that time had shown a marked proclivity for borrowed patterns instead of policies and programs. They had a preponderant bias towards beauty and order in town planning, modelled on their superficial understanding. There was an inclination of the government towards aesthetics and aestheticization of spaces and cities. Roy defines *"aestheticization"* as a simplification that changes the

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relationship between the *"viewer and the viewed"* to one of *"aesthetics rather than politics"*. [3]

Another important aspect linked indispensably to governance and governmentality is the concept of power. Foucault referred to 'domination' as a structure of force in which the subordinate have little or no space for maneuver. These rationales adopted by the government have had significant impact on the people and how spaces have been formed. [4]. Governmentality can also be described as the art of governing and the organizing practices and rationale that are followed. [5].

Governmentality can be understood,

> *"in the broad sense of techniques and procedures for directing human behavior. Governmentality's primary point of intervention is individual desire, the 'one and only one mainspring of action' Individual desire adds up to and produces 'the general interest of the population,' which government seeks to act upon and guide at a distance in order to reach 'suitable ends' without recourse to direct intervention." [6].*

The government rationality became the specific form of rationality. This governmentality reconstituted the public sphere. The political rationales that constituted the modern government's power effected new conception of economy and society. Power-knowledge system was the new ideology and aesthetics was prioritized as a new mode of governance. There was an overriding concern for materialism.

As Baviskar puts it,

> *"The bourgeois environmentalism had emerged as an organized force in Delhi, and upper-class concerns around aesthetics, leisure, safety and health had come significantly to shape the disposition of urban spaces."* [7].

III. Modernist Movement and Nation Building

Delhi, India's vast capital is diverse, anarchic and intriguing at the same time. It is difficult to grasp the complexity of this city in a single way. The radical modernist movement in Europe with its socialist roots was a model of inspiration for Nehru especially in the case of Delhi. He encouraged young architects to move to Delhi, many of whom joined government institutions which were being set up then.

Delhi is a fantastic representation of the temptation of all its rulers to start from scratch by completely replacing much of the existing urban fabric. Nehru was no exception from this oft-repeated temptation. As A.G.K Menon points out clearly that Nehru's ambition for India's capital did not differ much from that of many of his predecessors to the extent that he wanted the new architecture of the city to reflect his own idea of the era and government he personified. However, as Menon demonstrates, there is not much specificity to Delhi's modern architecture which, more often expresses the dominant influence of the state bureaucracy and the scanty imagination of most of the Indian architects freshly trained abroad. Delhi became an embodiment of the nation's modernist ambition. Ironically, even today political power remains central to the functioning of Delhi.

The building of the capital of independent India began by encompassing both Shahjahanabad and New Delhi, as well as appropriating the lands of numerous villages around the city. What is important to note that there was no logic followed in the planning of this so-called "planned" and modern city. The modernist model followed spatial segregation of populations and functions. Delhi's image reflected the image of the nation-state.

Huge tracts of agricultural land were acquired from the villages close to the city and these spaces were transformed to zones appropriate to build the modern image for the city. Commercial centers, institutional areas, sports complexes, green areas, housing complexes and industrial estates were built extensively for this purpose. Areas close to Lutyen's Delhi, were planned as rental housing for government officers. Most of these pockets were planned on *"garden city"* planning principles and these areas came to be known as the *"city of babus"*. These developments were viewed by the nationalist elite as a means of kick-starting India's economic and industrial growth.

On the other hand, lending urgency to the government's ambition was the presence of around 450,000 Sikh and Hindu refuges, who had flooded the city from the recently formed Pakistan. The political and administrative elites continued to invest in building the area around Lutyen's Delhi for the bourgeois middle class and the upper-class. On the contrary, the refugees were settled in housing colonies in the periphery of the city. There was a massive jaundice epidemic which caused innumerable deaths in the city and this epidemic was a result of contamination of city's water from the sewage lines of these refugee colonies.

The concern for the physical and social well-being of the citizens was therefore challenged into the desire for a planned city. "*Planned-ness*, an attribute of urban space key to the determination of legality, was defined as that which looks planned, regardless of its formal standing in planning law or any correspondence between actually existing urban development expert paper representations of the city (e.g, the Masterplan). According to this aesthetic mode of governing widespread in Delhi today, if a development project looks 'world-class', then it is most often declared planned; if a settlement looks polluting, it is sanctioned as unplanned and illegal." (Ghertner, 2011) As a consequence of this idea, Shahajahanabad was classified as "notified slum" and in 1956 "slums" were declared as a national problem.

A. Delhi Masterplan and the Logic of the Planned-Ness

The first Masterplan was produced in 1962 with the help of American expertise supplied by the Ford Foundation. This urban planning exercise was always about the exercise of power. The constant acts of disciplining and controlling subjects resulted in the creation of strict boundaries. Spaces were classified into various economic categories. Separate zones were created partitioning work and residence, industry and commerce, education, administration and recreation. Delhi's masterplan envisaged a model city which was planned, orderly and hygienic.

But, this planned and hygienic city could only be realized by

the labours of the large numbers of the working poor. Sadly, no provisions were made for them in the Masterplan. The liminal spaces along railway tracks and barren land were acquired illegally by the petty vendors, artisans, construction workers and numerous other workers and the poorer sections of the society, whose ugly existence had been ignored in the plan.

The presence of this pool of cheap labour enabled the building of planned Delhi, but on the other hand, also led to the burgeoning of the unplanned city. The *"legal geography"* (Sundar 2001) created by the Masterplan, criminalized vast sections of the city's poor and the working class, causing vulnerability to their existence [8].

Ridden with these crisis, chaos and unplanned development, the planning in Delhi, seemed to have failed. Illegality became a "*spatial mode of governance"* [9]. Planning became a site of politics and marginalization for the urban poor. The Masterplan of Delhi, 1962 further accentuated the ideas of the colonial planners and established slums to be places of congestions and filth.

B. Delhi Development Authority and Its Failures

Delhi Development Authority (DDA) was set up in 1957 to control haphazard growth and development of the city. DDA acquired and surveyed land that was already embodied with vivid practices. It was not empty land, be it, the agricultural fields or the newly formed urban villages. However, nothing much happened on ground in terms of implementation of policies and planning for the poor. A specific aspect related to urban development was the production of housing in the city.

The basic objective of DDA's land development and housing policy was providing maximum shelter to the urban poor: But the organization's activities had in fact subsidized the rich much more than the poor. The 1961 census estimated that around 65 per cent of the households in Delhi lived in one-room houses during this period and 7 per cent of the households were living in big houses. The low density areas around Lutyen's Delhi that were developed by the government and other agencies with spacious houses and wide lawns indicate that it supplied plots to this 7 per cent only. The poor had no way of entering the formal housing market. DDA's strategic planning overlooked many of the demographic, social and economic realities of the capital and envisioned the city for the relatively affluent group of residents.

> *"A study done by Centre for Policy Research stated that DDA had constructed fewer than 50,000 of its projected 75,000 flats between 1969 and 1981, and the prices for these flats continued to rise, becoming too expensive for the lower and middle classes." [10].*
>
> *"Between 1960-61 and 1970-71 the high income group (HIG) was given as much as 49.8 percent of the total plots of land through auction. Those whose land was acquired (alternative allottees) were given 14 percent and the middle income group (MIG) and low income group (LIG) were allotted only 24.7 percent and 11.5 percent of the total plots, respectively. The proportion of land given to the LIG actually declined from 55 percent in 1961-62 to 3.2 percent and 1.9 percent in 1969-70 and 1970-71, respectively" [10].*

The failure of DDA's planning can also be understood by a study done by the *Delhi Economic Survery 2008-09.* In the chapter on

"Urban Development", the Survey presents a "description" of "types of settlements" in Delhi in order to "explain the situation" in the city (Government of Delhi 2009, Table I).

TABLE I
SETTLEMENTS IN DELHI [11]

Type of Settlement	Estimated population in 2000 ('000s0	Percentage of total population of the city
JJ Clusters	20.72	14.8
Slum designated areas	26.64	19.1
Unauthorised colonies	7.4	5.3
JJ resettlement colonies	17.76	12.7
Rural villages	7.4	5.3
Regularised-unauthorised colonies	17.76	12.7
Urban villages	8.88	6.4
Planned colonies	33.08	23.7
Total	149.64	100

In 2000, only 24% of the city lived in planned colonies. Nearly 75% of the city was living in housing that was apparently unplanned. The sole claim of this aesthetic mode of governance was violated. The vision for a world-class city and planning led to the mushrooming of the "unplanned and illegal". DDA's aim of creating a clean and green city led to the proliferation of these unplanned housing which was a result of its own actions.

There was gross failure on part of DDA to provide adequate and affordable housing to the poor. The removal of squatter settlements to the urban peripheries then became imperative, because they were occupying 'public' land (owned by DDA). The masterplan designated separate zones near the fringes of the city, where the squatters were to be relocated. The removal of squatters to the resettlement colonies on its peripheries was justified in terms of their 'legitimate' place within the masterplan

IV. EMERGENCY PLANNING AND MOVING TO THE PERIPHERIES

In 1975, Indira Gandhi declared state Emergency which meant the curtailment of all kinds of democratic rights. The state was exerting an absolute form of ideological power, both in terms of reconfiguring Delhi's urban geography as well as in shaping its future urban population. At this time, Sanjay Gandhi was actively involved with his mother Indira Gandhi along with Jagmohan, Lieutenant-Governor of Delhi. Together, they planned and supervised the demolition of slums from the heart of the walled city and they were relocated on the swampy eastern edge of Delhi.

The Emergency state launched a "city beautiful" program which entailed forced and violent eviction of slums across Delhi, as well as a "population control" which entailed forced sterilisation of the urban poor. During the Emergency rule when the government strived to produce order, slums were considered to be sites of disorder. Slums became exceptions when the

government was trying to introduce order, beauty and modernity into the post-colonial city. The two initiatives launched by the government during Emergency was through a suspension of laws, rights, citizenship, national policies and democracy.

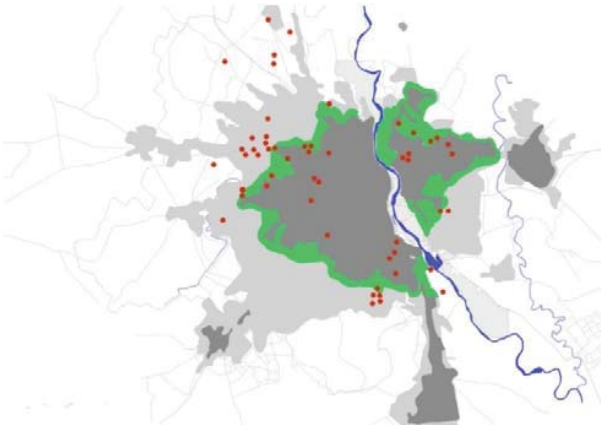

Fig. 1 Map showing resettlement colonies between 1962-77

The red dots in the map indicate the resettlement colonies, the dark grey area marked the boundary of the city within the green belt that was demarcated in the first masterplan to restrict any development beyond that. The light grey area in the map indicates the actual growth of the city which ironically happened beyond the green belt. Also, what is found is that the slums and the squatter settlements were pushed to the peripheries in order to build infrastructure and world-class facilities in their place.

Slums were considered to be a shame for the country/ state. The Vice Chairman of the Delhi Development Authority, Jagmohan set about his dream of saving the capital 'from turning into a veritable slum, a death trap for future generations, a symbol of national degradation and shame.'

At a similar time, in the late 1970s, there was a surge of construction activities in the city, with the aim of building facilities for the Asian Games to be held in 1982. In a project like this, national prestige was at stake. Construction of flyovers, sports facilities and luxury apartments started all over the city. For this purpose, an estimated of one million labours were brought to the city from other states. The city was beautified and prepared for this mega-event at the cost of labour and toil of millions of workers. However as always, there was no plan that integrated them and in turn led to the 'planned dispossessions' of these disenfranchised groups. They continued to live in the city, often in shanty settlements and squatters in the shadow of the mega-concrete structures they had themselves created.

So, when the city was being 'aestheticized' and made beautiful, the poor were pushed to the peripheries of the city and were deprived of their basic rights as well; as Sassen would say *"devalorisation of disadvantaged economic actors"*. [12].

V. Achieving World-Classness

"The major contradiction of space arises from the pulverization of space by private property, the demand for interchangeable fragments…" [13].

In 1991, India began its process of large-scale economic liberalization. There was an emerging aspiration of Delhi to be a world-class city at this time. The Delhi Master Plan stated that its goal was to transform Delhi into a "world-class city" (DDA, 2007). According to A.K. Jain, "Making Delhi a world class city means building high quality sports facilities, creating a clean environment, and beautification of the city." [14]. As the Chief Secretary of Delhi said, "A world-class city means a slum-free city."

The middle-class and upper-class people desired for a clean and green Delhi. In this process, the state and government denied the poor their rights to the city and environment. But, the squatter settlements proliferated throughout the city. DDA had monopoly over urban land, but it failed to build or facilitate the construction of legal low-cost housing, and thus led to the burgeoning of slums in the city. Baviskar writes, "The bourgeois gaze regards these encroachments as disfiguring the landscape." The government instituted several spatial and social changes in the city in order to achieve world-classness. The city's landscape, lifestyle and livelihood were radically restructured.

The Delhi High Court's ruling against the appeals of the Visthapan Virodhi Andolan (anti-displacement campaign) argued that Delhi, *"…is a show window to the world of our culture, heritage, traditions and way of life. It cannot be allowed to degenerate and decay."* [15]

A leading national daily, *The Times of India,* started their "Walled city to World city" campaign and upheld the decision of the court as a "return to order" and "good governance", which was necessary in the creation of this world-class city. As Bhan explains the reason behind the increased occurrence of evictions in Delhi, he identifies three main components:

- *"'Misrecognition' of the poor and the disavowal of their rights*
- *a changing discourse on the ideas of government rooted in the slow demise of the nationalist development state and the rise of neo-liberal ideologies of self-government and market participation.*
- *an increasing 'aestheticization' of poverty and city spaces that alters how the poor are represented and visualised in the city." [16].*

The special events in Delhi like the Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, etc are spectacular yet critical events that helps to uncover the political actors and planning procedures that facilitated inclusion on one hand and marginalisation on the other hand, ironically. These events brought about large scale spatial and social transformations.

The Commonwealth Games, 2010 was one such extraordinary event. The hosting of the Games represented two aspects, one was India emerging as a super-power and Delhi as a world-class city. Much attention was given to improve Delhi's sports infrastructure. More construction entailed the creation of

'world-class' transport for Games participants and tourists. Re-laying of roads, redesigning of bus stops, dustbins and other street furniture were being carried out to meet 'world-class' specifications. Other major spurts of construction involved hotels, bridges, flyovers, commercial spaces, etc.

The major construction works also brought about a massive influx of workers to facilitate these works. Sadly, no provisions were made for them in these plans. Rather, the state identified the streets as major problem areas that visitors were likely to encounter. The growing concern about the external image of Delhi's urban culture led to a "cleaning" drive of the city. Visual embarrassments like slums, beggars, stray dogs were kept out of sight. Squatter settlements and working-class settlements that remained in the vicinity of the sports venue were evicted rampantly.

Fig. 2 Map showing evicted and resettled sites during Commonwealth games

"The Delhi government had approached the governments of the north-eastern states of Assam and Mizoram to purchase bamboo screens to hide slums and other unsavoury sights, including rundown colonies, from the eyes of visitors" [17].

Within these transformations evictions of the urban poor marked a larger critical shift in urban politics and, particularly, how the urban poor in India are represented, governed and judged. In such cases, evictions became acts of governance rather than violence. The Games made visible the 'aestheticization' of city spaces and depicts clearly how the city is seen and consumed by the global audience.

VI. Conclusion

Ashis Nandy and Jai Sen both famously described Indian cities as *"unintended"* [8]. Jai Sen said that the city of the poor emerged gradually as an unconscious and unintended society and he regards the citizens of this unintended city as one separate group [19].

With over emphasis on building an "image of the city", there has been an increasing "aestheticization" of poverty and city space that altered how the poor were represented and visualized within the city. In order to build a world class city, the government agencies privileged parks over functional infrastructure, cleanliness over live-ability and word-classness over inclusion.

Planned urban development led to the displacement and impoverishing of large sections of the society. The focus remained on the image of the built environment- the literal physical architecture. Thus, the slum and the poor were reduced

to a representation of poverty, filth and fragility, which did not fit into the aesthetic image of the 'world-class' city. The image of the poor was spurred by these spectacular events and the aim to achieve world-classness. Thus, the policies and practices achieved towards the making of a global city came together with the marginalization of certain sectors of the society and exclusion. As mentioned by Sassen, "in global cities we see a new geography of centrality and marginality."

When the government claims to create just and equitable cities, does the poor truly have right over the city or is the city meant only for the aspirational middle-class consumer citizens, who are ideally primed to live in 'world-class cities'

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