ASTRAGALO
CULTURA DE LA ARQUITECTURA Y LA CIUDAD

Número 27

DELHI AND ITS INHABITED IMAGINARIES. *ARCHITECTURES OF LIVING*

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ARCHITECTURES OF LIVING

CREDITS FOR THE ILLUSTRATIONS

In addition to his paper "The Lahori Gate Polyclinic, New Delhi, INDIA: Building for an inclusive city", architect and visual artist Martand Khosla, who works and lives in New Delhi, contributes to the present volume with a visual article encompassing the book cover and the images separating one contribution from another. His artistic practice, drawing from his own experience as an architect in contemporary India, explores urban continuity and transformation, questioning the limits between construction and demolition, power and dispossession, sculpture and object, participant and observer, material and memory, or art and life. This selection of the works displayed in his exhibition *1:2500* held in New Delhi in 2019 at the Nature Morte Art Gallery sheds light on how narrow the lines differentiating architecture and life can be. The cities, buildings and objects that Khosla sees in his mind's eye are flexible organisms that awake in anger, as if as a result of inhabiting themselves. That being so, rebelliously, they imagine and bring into view alternative ways of being, living and building, turning themselves into real acrobats when needed to.

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ASTRAGALO
CULTURA DE LA ARQUITECTURA Y LA CIUDAD

Issue 27 - December 2020

DELHI AND ITS INHABITED IMAGINARIES. *ARCHITECTURES OF LIVING*

City Awakens in Anger

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ASTRAGALO

new era / nueva era / nova época

ASTRAGALO HAS SOMETHING TO SAY. It's an announcement, but more than that, it's knowing that you have something to say as an impulse to adopt change. This issue already shows this, we have incorporated English as a language, and soon, Portuguese as well. It is about being able to expand the Latin American sphere in terms of access, both outwardly, to achieve visibility, and inwardly, to learn new perspectives. The changes will be more profound, renewing and adding the experiences of professionals and academics committed to this project, which is highly recognised internationally, for the scientific, editorial and ethics committees.

With the following issues, the journal will also begin the necessary steps to integrate itself into the OJS platform and to meet the requirements to achieve adequate indexing in a few years. And this will be done without losing independence or quality, maintaining its place among the publications on architecture that we have had until now, with new energies.

We know that we have something to say about contemporary architectural thought: the announcement is made. And everyone is invited to give Astragalo a voice.

WHAT IS TO COME:

A28. SICK CITY

The *virosal coronation* of the world 2019-20 (21?) raises philosophical, political and vital concerns and calls or demands to think again about the already devalued theoretical-disciplinary arsenal of architecture.

For the time being, the virtuous restoration of the Foucaultian hell of panoptics and different models of reclusion and therapeutic segregation of bodies can be seen. What took a century to counteract –that insidious functionalist vocation of separating, distinguishing and classifying, which perhaps unites the ideas of the end of the 18th century with the spirit of the CIAM– is reborn, valued by the hygienists who cry out for help from *specialist-spatialists* who ensure social distances and porosities as well as manage to make the lockdowns more pleasant. With concerts of balconies and unusual plant arrangements and various effects to avoid spatial deficits.

A29. DIVIDED CITIES

This number of Astragalo looks at the concept of divided cities. The idea of division for this number is multi-faceted. We are looking at cities divided by conflict such as Belfast, Nicosia, Jerusalem. In this case two different cultures, faiths, groups create an urban assemble of walls and artefacts. We look at cities divided by race, like Post-apartheid in South Africa, where a system of racial segregation leaves traces of a past, wherein different races had to leave and be segregated in different areas. From the streets of Soweto, to the vertical slums of Hillbrow in Johannesburg. Cities that met those challenges and behind pain and history, told a positive story. We look at cities divided by racial segregation, by painful experiences that halt our very basic humanity. We look at cities divided by capital, where displacement of the poor out of wealthy, areas creates a disjointed urban imprint. Cities with processes of gentrification, or social and economic division. We look at cities divided by edges, and borders where suburban conurbations gather different inhabitants. Divided cities welcome contributions from all of these examples mentioned. We look for original and brave contributions, from within. Those who challenge our

preconceived ideas, those that conjoin in that tension causes by division.

A30. ORIENTED OBJECTS FOR AN ONTOLOGY

Contemporary philosophy can be divided (very roughly) between a varied group of thinkers whose axis is based on *problems of the subject* (such as those questions linked to ideology, language and social practice) such as Ranciere or Zizek and a group –much less nourished and published– whose interest lies in defining a *philosophical realism* that can transcend any philosophy centred on consciousness, experience, action or existence; a philosophy for an afterfinitude (the title of a book by Quentin Meillassoux) that declines to be *objectualist*, which would be a nickname applicable to thinkers like Latour and De Landa, within a modern tradition that reaches a certain part of Heidegger's production and that of North Whitehead. In this context, one of his founder-cultivators –Graham Harman– proposed the expression OOO (*object-oriented ontology*), within his field of installation which he calls speculative realism and which aims to analyse the relationship between real objects and intentional objects (which we could describe as projected) and/or sensitive objects (which we could define as any *objectology* of aesthetic-communicational will). Although these thinkers accept that the intentional object is subsidiary (or vicar) to the real object with which it tries to establish relationships, it would seem that deepening such a real-intentional relationship comprises a substantive part of the OOO programme. In this A30, the aim is to invert the OOO formula, from *Object-Oriented Ontology*, to *Ontologically-Oriented Objects* and, in short, to contribute to the discussion of the relations between intentionality and reality, which is none other than the problem of the project.

ASTRÁGALO NUEVA ÉPOCA

ASTRÁGALO TIENE ALGO QUE DECIR. Es un anuncio, pero es más, es saber que se tiene algo que decir como impulso para adoptar cambios. Este número ya lo evidencia, incorporamos como idioma el inglés, y en breve, también el portugués. Se trata de poder expandir el ámbito latinoamericano en accesos, tanto de salida, para lograr visibilidad, como de ingreso, para aprender nuevas perspectivas. Los cambios serán más profundos, renovando y sumando experiencias de profesionales y académicos comprometidos con este proyecto, de alto reconocimiento internacional, para las comisiones científica, editorial y ética.

La revista igualmente iniciará con los números siguientes los pasos necesarios para integrarse en la plataforma OJS y para cumplir con los requisitos exigibles para lograr una indexación adecuada en pocos años. Y se hará sin perder la independencia ni la calidad, manteniendo el lugar dentro de las publicaciones en arquitectura que hasta ahora hemos tenido, con nuevas energías.

Nosotros sabemos que tenemos algo que decir sobre pensamiento arquitectónico contemporáneo: queda hecho el anuncio. Y todos están invitados a dar voz a Astrágalo.

LO QUE VIENE:

A28. CIUDAD ENFERMA

La *coronación virósica* del mundo 2019-20 (21?) depara inquietudes filosóficas, políticas y vitales y convoca o exige a pensar de nuevo el ya de

por sí devaluado arsenal teórico-disciplinar de la arquitectura.

De momento se advierte la restauración virtuosa del infierno foucaultiano de panópticos y diferentes modelos de reclusión y segregación terapeútica de los cuerpos. Lo que costó un siglo para contrarrestar –esa insidiosa vocación funcionalista de separar, distinguir y clasificar, que quizá une las ideas finales del XVIII con el espíritu del CIAM– renace valorado por los higienistas que claman por ayudas de especialistas-espacialistas que aseguren distanciamientos y porosidades sociales, así como que consigan amenizar los lockdowns. Con conciertos de balcones e inusitados afectos por los arreglos vegetales y diversos efectos para eludir los déficits espaciales.

A29. CIUDADES DIVIDIDAS

Este número de Astrágalo mira el concepto de ciudades divididas. La idea de división para este número es multifacética. Estamos viendo ciudades divididas por conflictos como Belfast, Nicosia, Jerusalén. En este caso, dos culturas diferentes, creencias, grupos crean un conjunto urbano de murallas y artefactos. Observamos ciudades divididas por razas, como el Post-Apartheid en Sudáfrica, donde un sistema de segregación racial deja huellas de un pasado, en el que las diferentes razas tuvieron que salir y ser segregadas en diferentes áreas. Desde las calles de Soweto, hasta los barrios bajos verticales de Hillbrow en Johannesburgo. Las ciudades que se enfrentaron a esos desafíos y detrás del dolor y la historia, contaron una historia positiva. Miramos las ciudades divididas por la segregación racial, por experiencias dolorosas que detienen nuestra humanidad básica. Miramos las ciudades divididas por el capital, donde el desplazamiento de los pobres de las zonas ricas crea una huella urbana desarticulada. Ciudades con procesos de aburguesamiento, o división social y económica. Miramos ciudades divididas por bordes, y fronteras donde las conurbaciones suburbanas reúnen a diferentes habitantes. Las ciudades divididas agradecen las contribuciones de todos estos ejemplos mencionados. Buscamos contribuciones originales y valientes, desde el interior. Aquellos que desafían nuestras ideas preconcebidas, aquellos que se unen a esa tensión causada por la división.

A30. OBJETOS ORIENTADOS A UNA ONTOLOGÍA

La filosofía contemporánea puede escindirse (muy a grosso modo) entre un variado conjunto de pensadores cuyo eje radica en *problemas del sujeto* (como aquellas cuestiones ligadas a la ideología, el lenguaje y la praxis social) tales como Ranciere o Zizek y un grupo –mucho menos nutrido y publicado– cuyo interés estriba en definir un *realismo filosófico* que pueda trascender cualquier filosofía centrada en la conciencia, experiencia, acción o existencia; una filosofía para un *después de la finitud* (título de un libro de Quentin Meillassoux) que se decante como *objetualista*, que sería un mote aplicable a pensadores como Latour y De Landa, dentro de una tradición moderna que alcanza a cierta parte de la producción de Heidegger y a la de North Whitehead. En ese contexto uno de sus cultores-fundadores –Graham Harman– propuso la expresión OOO (object-oriented ontology), dentro de su campo de instalación que él denomina *realismo especulativo* y que pretende como programa analizar la relación entre *objetos reales* y *objetos intencionales* (que podríamos calificar

como proyectados) y/o *sensibles* (que podríamos definir como toda aquella *objetología* de voluntad estético-comunicacional). Si bien estos pensadores aceptan que el objeto intencional es subsidiario (o vicario) del objeto real con quién intenta establecer relaciones, parecería que profundizar tal relación real-intencional abarca parte sustantiva del programa OOO. En este A30 la pretensión es invertir la fórmula OOO, de *Ontología orientada a objetos*, a *Objetos orientados ontológicamente* y en suma aportar a la discusión de las relaciones entre intencionalidad y realidad, que no es otra cosa que el problema del proyecto.

ASTRÁGALO NOVA ÉPOCA

ASTRÁGALO TEM ALGO A DIZER. É um anúncio, mas mais do que isso, é saber que você tem algo a dizer como um impulso para adotar a mudança. Esta edição já o mostra, incorporamos como idioma o inglês, e em breve, também o português. Trata-se de ser capaz de expandir o alcance latino-americano em acessos, tanto de saída, para alcançar visibilidade, como de entrada, para aprender novas perspectivas. As mudanças serão mais profundas, renovando e acrescentando experiências de profissionais e acadêmicos comprometidos com este projeto, de alto reconhecimento internacional, para os comitês científico, editorial e de ética.

Com os números seguintes, a revista também dará início aos passos necessários para se integrar na plataforma OJS e cumprir os requisitos para alcançar uma indexação adequada em poucos anos. E isto será feito sem perder independência ou qualidade, mantendo o lugar dentro das publicações em arquitetura que temos tido até agora, com novas energias.

Sabemos que temos algo a dizer sobre o pensamento arquitetônico contemporâneo: o anúncio é feito. E todos estão convidados a dar uma voz a Astrágalo.

O QUE ESTÁ POR VIR:

A28. CIDADE DOENTE

A *coroação virosal* do mundo 2019-20 (21?) levanta preocupações e apelos filosóficos, políticos e vitais e exige que se pense novamente sobre o já desvalorizado arsenal teórico-disciplinar da arquitetura.

No momento, podemos ver a virtuosa restauração do inferno Foucaultiano de panópticos e diferentes modelos de reclusão e segregação terapêutica dos corpos. O que levou um século para contrariar –aquela insidiosa vocação funcionalista de separar, distinguir e classificar, que talvez una as idéias do final do século 18 com o espírito do CIAM– renasce, valorizada pelos higienistas que pedem ajuda aos *especialistas-espacialistas* para garantir o distanciamento social e a porosidade, assim como para tornar os fechamentos mais agradáveis. Com concertos de varandas e arranjos de plantas incomuns e vários efeitos para evitar déficits espaciais.

A29. CIDADES DIVIDIDAS

Este número de Astragalo olha para o conceito de cidades divididas. A idéia de divisão para este número é multifacetada. Estamos olhando para cidades divididas por conflitos, tais como Belfast, Nicósia, Jerusalém. Neste caso, duas culturas diferentes, fés, grupos criam um conjunto urbano de muros e artefatos. Olhamos para cidades divididas por raça, como o Pós-apartheid na África do Sul, onde um sistema de segregação racial deixa traços de um passado,

no qual raças diferentes tiveram que sair e ser segregadas em áreas diferentes. Desde as ruas de Soweto, até as favelas verticais de Hillbrow, em Joanesburgo. Cidades que enfrentaram esses desafios e por trás da dor e da história, contaram uma história positiva. Olhamos para cidades divididas pela segregação racial, por experiências dolorosas que detêm nossa humanidade muito básica. Olhamos para as cidades divididas por capital, onde o deslocamento dos pobres para fora das áreas ricas cria uma impressão urbana desarticulada. Cidades com processos de gentrificação, ou divisão social e econômica. Olhamos para cidades divididas por margens, e fronteiras onde os aglomerados suburbanos reúnem diferentes habitantes. As cidades divididas acolhem contribuições de todos estes exemplos mencionados. Procuramos contribuições originais e corajosas, a partir de dentro. Aqueles que desafiam nossas idéias preconcebidas, aqueles que se juntam a essa tensão causada pela divisão.

A30. OBJETOS ORIENTADOS PARA UMA ONTOLOGIA

A filosofia contemporânea pode ser dividida (muito asperamente) entre um grupo variado de pensadores cujo eixo está nos *problemas do sujeito* (como aquelas questões ligadas à ideologia, linguagem e prática social) como Ranciere ou Zizek e um grupo –muito menos nutrido e publicado– cujo interesse está em definir um *realismo filosófico* que possa transcender qualquer filosofia centrada na consciência, experiência, ação ou existência; uma filosofia para uma pós-finalidade (o título de um livro de Quentin Meillassoux) que quere ser objetualista, o que seria um apelido aplicável a pensadores como Latour e De Landa, dentro de uma tradição moderna que atinge uma certa parte da produção de Heidegger e a de North Whitehead. Neste contexto, um de seus fundadores-cultores –Graham Harman– propôs a expressão OOO (*object-oriented ontology*), dentro de seu campo de instalação, que ele chama de realismo especulativo e que visa analisar a relação entre objetos reais e objetos intencionais (que poderíamos descrever como objetos projetados) e/ou objetos sensíveis (que poderíamos definir como qualquer *objetologia* de vontade estético-comunicacional). Embora estes pensadores aceitem que o objeto intencional é subsidiário (ou vicário) ao objeto real com o qual ele tenta estabelecer relações, parece que o aprofundamento de tal relação real-intencional abrange uma parte substantiva do programa OOO. Neste A30, a intenção é inverter a fórmula OOO, de *Ontologia Orientada a Objetos Orientados* para *Objetos Ontologicamente* e, em suma, contribuir para a discussão das relações entre intencionalidade e realidade, que não é outra coisa senão o problema do projeto.

VA.1 Upwards

ASTRAGALO

Moldura de sección semicircular convexa, cordón en forma de anillo que rodea el fuste de la columna bajo el tambor del capitel (Arquitectura).

Hueso pequeño, corto, de superficies bastante lisas excepto los laterales que son rugosos, de excepcional importancia en los movimientos de la marcha (Anatomía).

Las plantas del género *Astragalus* son flores, algunas veces solitarias pero casi siempre en racimos, espigas o nubelas (Botánica).

ASTRAGALO, 27 (2020)

Introduction to the issue, ISSN 2469-0503

DELHI AND ITS INHABITED IMAGINARIES *LIVING ARCHITECTURES**

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EDITOR IN CHARGE OF THE ISSUE

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1. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROJECT BEHIND THIS VOLUME

This volume aims at shedding light on the city of Delhi and its surroundings by looking closely at the different architectures of the city. Architecture here is broadly understood. It includes places of worship and street bazaars; slums, housing developments, skyscrapers and five-star hotels; the busy street, the vehicle-jammed highway and the museum; gardens, hospitals and the sidewalk; but above all, how people live and interact with each other, creating collective habitats and surroundings, which have both hermeneutical as well as physical dimensions. In a nutshell, how the city is lived as well as interpreted.

The diversity of Delhi is one of a kind. A panoply of collectives inhabits it, sometimes consolidating physically in specific all-inclusive quarters throughout the city with a village-like character to them. As a matter of fact, the city includes a good number of urban villages. It is no coincidence that Meeta Mastani, one of the authors contributing to this volume and a friend living in Delhi, explained to me, while discussing the roots of this project, that only thanks to her experience of living in villages in Rajasthan can she understand the complexities of the quarter just behind the housing-complex in which her house can be found. And that en-

* The edition of this issue as well as my introduction have been produced in the context of i) the research project Intercultural Understanding, Belonging and Value: Wittgensteinian Approaches" (PGC2018-093982-B-100) funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation & Universities, and ii) a research project granted by the Andalusian government (B-HUM-459-UGR18).

tails, among other aspects, how people relate to each other in those public spaces, what the shops, small temples and other architectures, sometimes very improvised, mean to them.

By gathering different standpoints and living experiences, this volume elucidates the living complexities of the city, and how they relate to architecture: how different modes of existence are shaped by the architectures of the city and, most importantly, how the former shapes and reconfigures the latter. In this regard, this publication pays special attention to living alternatives, juxtapositions and reconfigurations of the city of straight lines and radial roads that was once projected under British rule. And it does so with a twofold purpose. On the one hand, with a view to casting light on how colonial India has been superseded by a countless number of the most heterogenous organic inhabiting processes, while, on the other hand, revealing that colonial India remains all too real, both latently and explicitly, in all kinds of excluding practices, coexisting with a splendid display of different conceptions of how to be, of how to inhabit and how to live, that intersect and intertwine, reconfiguring one another. In direct and indirect ways, these articles bring into view how it is possible to speak of an intricate city culture, showing points of convergence in which the presence of history in the multiple layers of the living city suggests that there is a sense in which the past, the present and the future coexist meaningfully. In this manner, this volume aims at making sense of living processes that, despite being tangible to the city inhabitants, might bewilder those from other geographies.

2. ON THE INTERNAL LOGIC OF THE VOLUME

This volume was conceived while enjoying a research affiliation during the summer of 2019 at the Institute of Economic Growth of the University of Delhi, for which I am indebted to Dr. Amita Baviskar, as she was the academic who kindly agreed to support my project in the institution. But if there is someone without whom this project wouldn't have been possible, that person is Meeta Mastani, who helped me immensely to put these authors together.

The issue opens with an article by Sohail Hashmi, who takes us along with him in a unique journey through the many Delhis that there have been, combining his insights as a historian, a filmmaker and a heritage activist. I would like to draw your attention to his understanding of how cities come into existence. How cities need "time to grow organically", developing "its own traditions of workmanship, of scholarship and of intellectual discourse", "its own wholesale markets", "its own cuisine, its own taste for music, its own rhythm that makes it tick with life", or "a special lilt in its language". In contrast, building an administrative area and palatial accommodations for the rulers, adding enough things in the surroundings for it to operate, as it happened under British rule with what was to become the Imperial capital, doesn't make a place to grow into a city. British rulers forgot the core to any city, its people, in such a way that ordinary housing was not part of their plan. On Hashmi's view, the actual probuilder and anti-poor strategy of city planning shares such a colonial logic. For to come into existence, a city also ought to be cosmopolitan

and welcome its migrants. But that is far from reality today, in Delhi and almost everywhere, including Spain, where I write these lines. In this manner, Hashmi brings to light the direct relationship that exists between workers and peasants toiling outside, somehow surviving, and the hermetically sealed communities of the elite in today's Delhi. No less intimate, Hashmi argues, is the relationship between the Delhi of today and the Delhis of the past, including the rigidity of the Imperial capital but also the vibrance of the Mehrauli of the Sufis.

In the second article, designer and art historian Annapurna Garimella homes in on how humble novice tilemaker Gurcharan Singh contributed to making a vibrant city out of the Imperial Garden Capital planned by Edwin Luytens and Herbert Baker. By imagining how the young Panjabi Sikh Singh would have experienced a city that was being demolished as ferociously as it was being built, readers feel as if they were walking in the midst of the demolition of the many pre-Mughal and Mughal structures that were recycled as building material in a terrain that in itself was conceived by the city planners as part of a wasteland. She invites us to hold on to the moment in 1918 when Singh, also a geologist, arrived to a Delhi that was to a substantial extent dust, bare earth and destruction. If we had to imagine a color, she argues, it would be brown, in all its shades. Then we are asked to imagine what meant to him the blue notes that he encountered scattered throughout the surviving decaying tombs, the gurudwaras, mosques and temples and the old city of Shahjahanabad –kept on purpose as picturesque elements across the urban landscape in formation. Singh's grasp of blue as the possibility of seeing past and future simultaneously in the present is thus revealed as the core to his own practice as a ceramist and his capacity to make the city a place of romance.

Time travels are not less present in architect Chintal Sharma's revisitation of the architecture that once symbolized British colonial power in the context of the press notice that was issued by the Central Public Works Department of India in early September 2019 inviting architects to a competition for a redevelopment project of the Central Vista, which comprises the Parliament and other major ministry buildings, national cultural institutions, Rashtrapati Bhavan and India Gate. Reminding us that historical buildings are representational of a people's collective memory, she argues that the Central Vista Redevelopment Project is a lost opportunity to bring more insight into the troublesome nature of colonial architecture and negotiate the acceptance of past traumas of the city while imagining together alternative futures for the city and its people. By contrast, failing to celebrate the rich history of Delhi, what the Central Vista Redevelopment Project has to offer is further polarization along religious and political lines in an already highly polarized India with no concern at all for secular and egalitarian ideas.

Contemporary motivations behind architectural policies in todays' India are further elucidated by architect and visual artist Martand Khosla's piece on his experience of building the Lahori Gate Polyclinic in the heart of old Delhi. In principle, the primary health center was supposed to address the needs of the local migrant population, with a high number

of TB and HIV patients among them, functioning as an early detection and post hospital care center. However, when the project came to completion, ironically, some of the most vulnerable patients for whom the polyclinic had been planned, who lived in hutments surrounding the construction site, were displaced for the politicians to enjoy their inauguration. In this manner, Khosla, sharing the spirit of other contributions and providing us with insightful details, draws our attention to a very specific instance of a politics of exclusion that seems to accompany architectural policies in Delhi since British rule.

Next article deals with settlements of those sorts that do not please politicians, always under the threat of eviction, for they are understood as breeders of diseases and hideouts of vices, as if lacking everything to do with human worth. Revealing the intelligence, sensitivity and creativity of working-class settlements in the city of Delhi, Ankur Society for Alternatives in Education shares their over three-decade experience involving children and young people in research and writing on their own neighborhoods. In the resulting body of knowledge, children of cooks, cleaners, drivers, vendors, cobblers, coolies, garbage collectors and many others share how the architecture in which they inhabit colors their everyday life, vindicating their experiences of the city, their right to speak about them and the importance and validity of their point of view. As examples, we learn about the difficulties that Rama faces when trying to cook before her parents wake up in their 20 square-yard hutment, which is next to a garbage-dump, or about ten adventurous girls who 'open a shop' by making a stove out of bricks and waste material, selling rotis to poor migrants in search for work who do not have the means to cook food.

Intellectual and All India coordinator for the Congress Party Pratishtha Singh also offers us a minute examination of the micropolitics of the unique case of the peaceful sit-in protest led by women against the anti-secular policies of the government, in particular the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, which uses religion overtly as a criterion for citizenship, discriminating against Muslims, who were not granted eligibility by the law. In such circumstances, the gathering set off an impromptu *adda* for women in the area of Shaheen Bagh in New Delhi since December 2019. The word 'adda', as appropriated in the Oxford Dictionary, refers to informal conversations taking place among a group of people. In India, addas are especially associated with Bengal, where the word is used mostly as a verb, alluding to the very practice of engaging in conversations (especially regarding culturally and intellectually stimulating issues). We have before us an example of what I would say is the most striking architectural genre in India, which basically consists of people gathering together. In this particular actualization of that genre, engaging in conversation is fundamental. In the process, Singh sheds light on how women had been excluded from existing addas across the country and how fundamental it is for them to have access to addas and create and enjoy their own.

Textile artist Meeta Mastani brings into view other kind of invisible architecture in Delhi, that belonging to equally invisible people, street vendors. However, unlike addas, in their

case there are structures, with the most varied forms (carts, triangular bamboo stands, plastic squares to sit on by the side of the street, cycles, and so on), though they share the same luck that many of the settlements in which Ankur Society for Alternatives in Education develops their programs. They are not recognized as architectural structures, when the truth is that they are all too real living spaces. These micro entrepreneurs, Mastani argues, create the structures of their mobile shops, which are also those of their own lives, carrying them around, dismantling them and setting them back again every single day. She also draws our attention to other migrant workers, whose vulnerabilities have become particularly tangible as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, as they were evicted, forced to go home, sometimes walking thousands of kilometers without water or food in their way to their villages. Providing inexpensive, yet essential, services, with no social security, everyone pretends as if they did not exist, including the state. Aiming at making visible their experiences of the city, Mastani conducts a series of insightful interviews, introducing us to people like Ashrafi Lal, who works and lives with most of his workers in his rented 315 sq. ft tailoring workshop in an unauthorized neighborhood in Tuglaqabad extension area. He is fortunate enough to have a toilet in his rented space and manages to go and visit his wife and five children every other weekend at their village, as he cannot afford to bring his family to Delhi. We also learn about the living conditions of Noor Mohammad Ji, one of the hundreds of thousands of people who walked back home during the lockdown. Earning between 135 and 170 USD a month, he pays 14 USD rent for a 5 ft x 6.5 ft room that he shares with his eldest son in the unauthorized residential area Amarjyoti camp. They can only use the room to sleep side by side, cooking and bathing outside their doorstep, sharing ten toilets for men and ten for women with other 5000 people in similar conditions and queuing for water when tankers visit the camp between 6.30 and 7.30 am.

Sharing the insight that the size and diversity of cities make them susceptible to complementary, even contradictory, ways of seeing, graphic designer and sociologist Samprati Pani brings to light the plastic nature of Delhi. Drawing from John Berger, she advances that Delhi is continuously being made through the relationships of her inhabitants with it and, as such, being one (and many) with such interactions, it cannot be separated from those who inhabit it. When we realize, we are navigating with her this fantastic megacity through its smallness, being witnesses to place making interactions and routines in particular streets, street bazaars, pavements and street shops, getting a very good grasp of the idea that a road is much more than asphalt and concrete, that a street, more than anything else, is its people, how they actualize it in multiple ways, in different uses and practices that coexist and accumulate, creating a special thickness, a distinctive flavor, that makes it unique, recognizable, despite being always in transformation.

There is another important layer to every street. Philosopher and social anthropologist Sarover Zaidi calls attention to the fact that a street is also made of the violence that it was once exercised there, as such a violence does not go away. Motivated by a conversation

with her students at an architecture and urban planning institute in Delhi, future planners and architects for the city who had no idea of the anti-Sikh pogrom that took place in large parts of Delhi in 1984, Zaidi reminds us of the need to keep our collective memories awaken if we want to create spaces for equality, brotherhood and tolerance. The history is there, it informs the street and those who inhabit it, whether they are aware of it or not. Underscoring the importance of incorporating this kind of education in our architecture programs, she makes us wonder whether, if the memory of 1984 was more spoken of, the reality of Muslims, who are today structurally persecuted, would be different.

I believe that Martand Khosla's artwork, which constitutes the visual article that serves as a leitmotif to this issue, manages to convey and articulate such fundamental matters, making clearer the interconnections between the different papers gathered together in the issue by somehow putting ideas from different articles side by side. For instance, his *City Awakes in Anger*, reproduced in the frontpage, could be said to share the understanding that a city has many layers, including its violence. It might be the violence from the 1984 anti-Sikh Riots or the violence experienced by those migrant workers who were forced to leave in the middle of the coronavirus crisis in 2020 with neither the means to do it nor the support from the state. But the city, and its inhabitants, the living city, is also able to rebel, creatively and organically, fighting back through the smallness the politics of exclusion that such practices reveal.

3. THREE EXAMPLES OF SPACE MAKING IN DELHI FROM MY OWN EXPERIENCE

I grew up in India. By this statement, I mean that parts of my adolescence and secondary education took place in India, specifically in the state of Maharashtra, in Paud, near Pune, and that such an experience changed me as a human being, including my sense of space and my understanding of the possibilities of inhabiting it.

What I find most striking regarding space making in India is how the most sophisticated places can be made by a few people gathering together. For instance, while trying to go across Delhi by car in 2019 summer, four people on the pavement caught my attention. I had time to observe them because I was in a huge traffic jump. Squatting, about one and a half meter from one another, they formed a perfect square. Two men and two women chatted in the middle of the heat. Their surroundings couldn't be less appealing. There was construction going on very near-by, which added to the noise from road traffic, which alone would have been stress enough. It was as exhaustingly humid as any other day of that summer. To give you an idea, the moment I left my air-conditioned car, I was dripping with sweat. But they were there, as if in the coziest living room, taking pleasure in using their space, both the common space, created by their gathering, and the one that each individual enjoyed, as they kept their distance in a very precise, material manner.

I would say that this kind of private use of public space is another feature that makes

Delhi the city it is. It is as if people were allowed to such a kind of pleasurable intangible architecture of intimacy provided that they don't mind being watched. In this regard, there is something very generous in the use of public space. That being so, it also seems to be true that those most vulnerable and in real need of that space are not so generously welcome anymore to use it, in such a way that one might have to bribe the police, for example, to be able to sleep under a bridge, always under threat.

That was the experience of a family living on the pavement under the left abutment (if coming from Mahatma Gandhi Marg) of the bridge in Sri Aurobindo Marg closer to AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Science) with whom my friend Meeta and I had the opportunity to chat on the Saturday of September 7th 2019. They had been sleeping there for about three years, as their eldest daughter had mental health problems and her parents felt that it was important that they lived near the hospital where she was receiving treatment. All of them, including their eldest daughter, were garbage pickers. The money they managed to collect picking up, cleaning, sorting and segregating recyclable cardboard waste, was just enough to eat and pay the police the bribe they demanded every week from them. They were lucky to be under the bridge. The structure allowed them to create their own family dwelling, giving them shelter from the sun and the rains.

The pavement was also the temporary home of many others who could not find refuge under the bridge. AIIMS makes clinical care available to millions of underprivileged citizens of India who are too poor to afford quality treatment elsewhere. But first they have to get there, which in itself might be a huge investment for them. Often coming from very far, such vulnerable people know no one in the city and cannot afford accommodation while being in Delhi. But let us get back to my visit and the people living there that September. All they used to build their own space was a piece of fabric, mostly rectangular and of rough materials used for sacks. They were mostly families waiting for one of their members to get treatment. There were also patients among them, people who, while getting treatment, had to live on the pavement, as they could not be accommodated at the hospital. There were also people who lived there while they waited for their loved ones who had been hospitalized. Some of them had been living on the pavement for months. The open space inside the hospital complex was no less crowded. It was very hard to find a place in the shade to sit and rest from the heat. Even though my friend and I could not sit together, we did find space close to the AIIMS office, where lots of people were trying to sort out bureaucratic issues regarding the documents that were supposed to make sure that they received medical care. The stories we heard were all equally devastating.

I couldn't help looking fixedly at a very old gentleman, who, squatting, without moving from the little space he had for his own, kept swinging a leaf, as if brushing away the dirt on the pavement underneath. He did not stop doing it the long hour we sat there, and it felt that he would continue doing so all the time he happened to be there.

Sorting out the documents sometimes took long months away from home or travelling

back and forth collecting endless documentation from institutions of all sorts. We learnt in detail about Prem Nath Verma's story, who was there to make sure that his wife, with a serious heart condition, and who was in their village in Uttar Pradesh, could get the treatment she urgently needed. Theirs was a real bureaucratic nightmare, for when she was about to get her operation done, they learnt that her papers were not in order and she had to leave the hospital, return to their village and start the application process all over again.

My last example has to do with the use of the median strip of roads. One continuously encounters all kinds of shops on the sidewalk. Barbershops and cobblers are exciting examples. Sidewalks, when compared to the median strip, seem to be safer, at least as far as traffic is concerned. Nonetheless, many people use the median strip for living purposes. For instance, particularly at night, many people use, to sleep, the median strip of the section of Lala Lajpat Rai Road closer to the Nizamuddin Dargah's area. Let me add that it is really narrow. When noticing such a sleeping practice for the first time, I felt that the sleepers were doing real exercises of acrobatics, as if they were sleeping on a tightrope. Likewise, it is not rare seeing people brushing their teeth early in the morning in the median strip. I never had the chance to ask anyone why they preferred the median strip to the sidewalk. However, I have the feeling that it might have something to do with the politics of exclusion outlined by the contributions to this volume. By being more dangerous, it is also less used and more accessible and, as such, ironically, also safer. For instance, it is more difficult to corner someone in the median strip than on a sidewalk. Moreover, for being, let us say, less comfortable, its use is also likely to disturb at least a bit less those who don't want vulnerable people, and especially *certain* vulnerable people, around.

I am sure that readers will agree with me that the papers conforming this issue cast light on these examples of mine. I would like to close my introductory lines thanking the authors for their invaluable help for making this project possible.

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DELHI: TWO CITIES, 8 CAPITALS, 20 MILLION RESIDENTS AND NOWHERE TO GO

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Delhi has been described in many ways -celebratory, poetic, envious and jealous. It has been called the eternal city, the forever bride, the graveyard of empires and there are others, some laudatory and others not so generous.[1]

One of the most remarkable things about Delhi is the fact that only one of the 8 capitals that were built here over the last 1000 years or so, was named Delhi and that is New Delhi. The seven historical capitals that came up in Delhi, in chronological order, were Lal Kot, Siri, Tughlaqabad, Jahanpanah, Ferozeabad, Deenpanah, Shahjahanabad and then came the 8th capital New Delhi.

The name New Delhi happened by default, the British could not decide between the two names that they had narrowed down the choice to, Georgeabad (City of George) and Georgetown, the latter did not have too many backers because one Georgetown already existed in South Africa and it didn't sound right, the former proposal had a lot of support because it went well with Tughlaqabad, Ferozeabad and Shahjahanabad and tied in with the British desire to present themselves as the rightful inheritors of the great Mughals.

That is why even as they ruled from Calcutta the formal installation of their monarchs as emperors of India did not occur at Calcutta but in Delhi, in 1877 for Victoria, in 1903 for Edward the VIIth. and in 1911 for George Vth. It was at his coronation that George announced that the capital will return to Delhi in 1912.

1 On the history of Delhi, see Historic Delhi, Ed.H.K.Kaul, OUP 1985, fifth Impression 2004, The Delhi Omnibus, OUP 2002, second impression 2004, Shahjahanabad/Old Delhi, Tradition and Colonial Change, Ed. Eckart Ehlers and Thomas Krafft Manohar 2003.

Though the British had removed the capital to Calcutta in 1859, to punish Delhi for being the centre of the revolt of 1857, they knew that their being recognised as rulers of India, by the people at large, depended greatly on their presence in Delhi.

Meanwhile their attempt to divide Bengal, along religious lines in 1905 to weaken the anti-colonial struggle, back-fired and in order to turn a bad situation into an advantage they decided to move the capital to Delhi. Temporary structures were thrown up at great speed and the basic offices were shifted, Edward Lutyens and Herbert Baker were chosen as the architects to design the new capital for "British India".The Construction began in fits and starts, slowed down during the Second World War and also got caught in cost over runs.

The new capital was finally inaugurated in 1931. The issue of naming the city was never resolved, the workers involved in the construction began calling it Nai Dilli and the English translation as New Delhi became the popularly accepted name that stuck for good and thus Shahjahanabad, by default, became Old Delhi.

Naming the Capital New Delhi wasn't a very bright idea, because historically each new capital had had a unique name -Lalkot, Siri, Tughlaqabad, Jahanpanah, Ferozeabad, Deenpanah or Shahjahanbad, while the region where all these capitals came up had always been Delhi. The Capital was never Delhi, it was always a part, a small part, of Delhi, and that is what it is even today New Delhi is spread over an area of 47.2 km^2 while Delhi is spread over an area of 1484 km^2 that is more than 31 times larger than the area of New Delhi.

The kind of development and growth that New Delhi now represents is an architectural and planning hotchpotch of illusions of colonial grandeur, historical inevitability, political expediency, bureaucratic incompetence and judicial insensitivity. All this has spawned a kind of urban growth that militates against all historical characteristics of an organic urban growth. This paper would seek to touch upon some of these and also to try to understand the reasons for these anomalies.

Before we come to these issues, we would like to talk a little more about the capitals that rose and fell in Delhi, and through this short narration we would like to outline the kinds of things that we think are necessary in a city.

Of the 7 capitals that were built in Delhi in the mediaeval times, only the first, that is Lal Kot, also known as Quila Rai Pithora or more popularly referred to as Mehrauli and the seventh capital, that is Shahjahnabad, had time and resources to grow into cities.

The other five were mere capitals, built and occupied by a king, at times by a successor or two and then deserted. None of the five remaining capitals developed into a city, the successors to the founders built their own capitals, the population moved to the new location, the earlier buildings were stripped of everything that could be carried away, what remained were the bare walls that fell in course of time.

The 8th capital, New Delhi, built by the British was never visualised as a city, it was imagined merely as a show piece and it continues to be that. The present government, with their proposed plans of rebuilding, might actually succeed in destroying even this USP of New Delhi.

Mehrauli and Shahjahanabad followed two different trajectories of growth, the for-

mer following a more gradual growth, turning slowly from the site of a capital into a pilgrimage centre, because of the presence of some major Sufi Saints who took up residence in this area. The development of Shahjahanabad happened in two phases. In phase one, an entire city culture was shifted from Agra to the new capital that Shahjahan had built in Delhi, the next couple of hundred years constituted the second phase during which Shahjahanabad acquired the wherewithal of a city.The city was sought to be destroyed by the British after the great rebellion of the Sepoys and the peasantry in 1857, an attempt that Shahjaanabad resisted bravely and continues to do so. It will be of some interest to take a look at these two trajectories, but before we come to that we would like to lay down our understanding of how cities develop.

You cannot construct an administrative area, palatial accommodations for the rulers; build market spaces, streets and avenues, circulation areas, open spaces etc. and call the space a city, a city needs time to grow organically. A city is not merely an extended market or a place of work where people come to labour, to trade, to buy and sell. A city needs workers, professionals, artisans, painters, musicians; it needs to develop its own traditions of workmanship, of scholarship and of intellectual discourse. It needs its centres of learning and dissemination of knowledge; it needs people with skills, its own crafts and its own residential, commercial and public spaces. A city needs its own style of construction that takes from many traditions and evolves its own. A city needs its own wholesale markets. It needs to produce things to trade with its own residents its hinterland, with other cities and countries. A city also needs to develop its own cuisine, its own taste for music, its own rhythm that makes it tick with life; it needs to develop a special lilt in its language, a lilt and flow that is unique to the city.

A place needs all these and a thousand other things, drawn from a diverse range of influences, to grow into a city. And it needs time for all these things to gradually evolve and to fall in place. A city has to be inclusive and cosmopolitan. A place where only natives –sons of the soil– live, is a village; it becomes a city when migrants come, in little trickles and in waves and settle down over a period a time, a couple of hundred years or more. That is how a city comes into existence.

Mehrauli and the area around it began to grow from a village from the moment the Tomars arrived and built their capital here, they were replaced by the Chauhans, followed by the Mamluks, the Khalijis, the Tughlaqs, the Lodis and the Mughals in that order, Mehrauli ceased to be capital form the time of the Khaljis, but the settlement continued to grow into a city.

What kept the place ticking was the vibrant presence of the Sufis. Khwaja Qutub-ud-Din Bakhtyaar Kaaki, the second of the Chishti Sufis in India, took up residence in Mehrauli in the early 13th century and when he died, he was, in keeping with Sufi traditions, buried in his hospice. Because of his popularity, people continued to flock to Mehrauli in large numbers, even after his death and so the place was neither deserted nor did it fall back to becoming a village because, new sets of arrivals continued to add to its diversity.

The land where a Sufi is buried is considered holy and people willed that they be buried in the neighbourhood of the shrine. Over the next seven centuries mausoleums and graves continued to be built in the vicinity. Those

with means commissioned wells, water tanks, step-wells, gardens, and caravanserais for the devotees who came to visit the shrine.

Many other Sufis came and started to live in the area and the place became a pilgrimage centre with its attendant paraphernalia. Food stalls, catering to the pilgrims, came up, all manner of small businesses sprouted, soothsayers and sellers of holy trinkets, rings and amulets, set up pavement stalls on the path leading to the shrine. Shops selling flowers, incense sticks and sugar-coated horse-grams sprang up – a small portion of these were offered at the shrine and the rest taken away as *Tabarruk*[2].

New concepts of spirituality, '*Wahdat-ul-Wujuood*' ('Unity of Being') and '*Wahdat-ul-Shahood*' ('Unity of the Observed') arrived with the Sufis and found common ground with the ideas of '*Adwait*' ('Non-duality') and of '*Maya*' ('Illusion of Being'), in such a way that the syncretic began to take root. *Qwwali*, in its initial form as the *Qaul*, probably had its beginning at the hospice of Bakhtyar Kaaki. His successor Fareed-ud-Din Ganjshakar settled down at Ajodhan (now in Pakistan and known as Pak Patan) but sent his disciple and successor -Nizam-ud-Din Auliya back to Delhi. Nizam-ud-Din and his favourite disciple, the poet musician, historian, chronicler Yamin-ud-Din Khusrau, were to contribute greatly to the development of the syncretic tradition that was to become the defining element of the tradition of inclusion and syncretism that evolved in the fertile soil of Delhi and at a hundred other places.

The Sufi presence was the key to the continuation of Mehrauli as a flourishing and growing settlement, despite the shifting of the capital. All the other capitals, barring Shahjahanabad, that came into existence after Mehrauli perished with their founders.

Running parallel to the growing influence of the Sufi tradition was the project of empire building. With the Mamluks and Khaljis, and the others who followed them, came new construction techniques and a whole range of new crafts, trades and skills.

Those who came and settled down in this region from the 12th century brought with them the art of building with rubble, held together with a plaster that was a mix of slaked lime and crushed bricks. They also brought the true Arch and the Dome that had travelled to them through the Romans and the Byzantines. With this new construction technique came brick-kilns and the kilns that heated limestone to turn it into quicklime, later soaked in water to make slaked lime. New techniques of construction led to the development of new skill-sets and to a diverse range of interactions among masons, stone carvers, stucco workers and others.

The new arrivals also brought with them Zari, Ikat, Adras, Atlas, Velvet and Brocade (different varieties of fabrics introduced to India during this period). With them arrived the technique of weaving fine silver or gold wires with cotton or silk, they brought the spinning wheel, the pit-loom and the Persian wheel, the former two revolutionised weaving and the latter had the same impact on agriculture. The new comers also brought with them the art of carpet-weaving, paper-making and of ceramic-glazing, the last two acquired from the Chinese through the Silk route.

2 A ritual offering, akin to Oblation, the idea was to make an offering at the shrine, a small part was kept by the caretakers and the rest returned to the devotee, the part returned was seen to be blessed by the saint and was shared with others in the belief that the blessings of the saint will thus reach the recipients.

With new crafts came workshops – *Karkhaanaas*. Earlier because of the caste based social organisation based on segregation, each craft was the preserve of one caste and each one worked independently, the new kings introduced new court etiquettes and new production practices.

One of them, Al'auddin Khalji, institutionalised the practice of rewarding his soldiers, officers, nobles and others on a regular basis with Jubba-o-Dastaar - robes, head-gear and ceremonial weapons. He gave away more than a 100,000 every year and large workshops were set up to prepare the robes and the accessories that went with them. Weavers, cutters, tailors, embroiderers, iron, brass, silver and gold smiths, metal-inlay workers, ivory workers, sword-smiths, embossers and masters of other skills began to work together and to learn from each other. Skills were transferred and began to transform and evolve through these exchanges.

The list of changes that were happening in this period with constant introduction of new techniques and new ideas is endless, the purpose of mentioning some of these is to put across the idea that the languages, cultures, life styles, cuisines, musics, architecture and new crafts brought in by the migrants mingled with their local counter-parts and contributed to the development of a cosmopolitan, city culture. That is how Lal Kot, Qutub Saheb, Mehrauli, call it what you will, gradually evolved into a mediaeval city.

Shahjahanabad, followed an entirely different trajectory of development, in fact the construction of the new capital imagined by Shahjahan, began from scratch in 1639 and the capital was shifted from Agra in 1648 with the Emperor relocating to the Quila-e-Mu'alla (the exalted fort) that later came to be known as Laal Quila or the Red Fort.

The construction of other parts of the capital continued for many years. Ja'ama Masjid – the central congregational mosque for example, was to be completed only in 1656. Each subsequent ruler and later nobles kept on adding palaces, gardens and other structures, private and public, for religious or secular use. While all this took time, a fully developed city culture was virtually imported into Shahjahanabad from Agra or Akbarabad as the city was then known.

A fort, an irregular octagon, was built to the east, facing the river on the east and north-east and surrounded on the other 6 sides by the city. The city was enclosed within a high wall, outside the wall ran a moat; the wall was pierced by 12 well-guarded gates, opened at sunrise and closed at sunset. Inside, the capital was divided in two parts, the dividing line was the main street of the city starting from the Lahore Gate of the fort and running straight for almost a mile to end at the Fatehpuri Mosque. To the South of the main street, that later came to be known as the Chandni Chowk, was two thirds of the city and this was the area that was more heavily built up. To the north of the main street spread the remaining one third of the city, it is in this area that the railway station, the railway line, the residences of the railway staff, etc. were to come up some 200 years later. This is also the area where many of the major buildings built in the 19th century and all the major churches, barring one, were to come up during colonial times.

The area that gave identity to Shahjahanabad was the area to the South of the main street, the markets and residential areas

were organised along professional lines like mediaeval cities all over the world, Gold and Silver Smiths, those working with diamonds, pearls and engaged in Jewellery making, making and selling fine laces of silk, or silver and gold thread embroidery were all in one locality. Wholesale trade of grains, pulses, spices, nuts and dry-fruits occupied another locality. Shoe makers, bangle makers, makers of thatched roofs, lock smiths, sellers of brass and copper cooking vessels, stone carvers, those engaged in embroidery and the business of sewing, the makers and sellers of perfumes and natural extracts used in medicines, hair oils and such like, whole-sale traders of betel leaves, betel nuts, tobacco and hundreds of other trades had their own localities with in the capital. In most markets, traders lived above their shops.

But this was only trade and trade alone does not create a city, the other elements that turn a mart, a busy market place into a city is its culture and the practitioners of the arts: the Scholars, the Poets, Writers, Compilers of *Tazkirahs* (literary records), Singers, Musicians, Hakims (Physicians), Calligraphers, Book-makers, Book-binders, Miniaturists, *Dastaangos* (the tellers of tales), Makers of musical instruments and many others lived scattered through the city. The street running to the west of the central Mosque was the street of the courtesans, some of the most sought after dancers and vocalists lived here on the first floor, while the trade in paper and goods of daily use continued on the ground floor shops, some of the richest traders of the city also had their mansions in the same locality.

Near the central Mosque of the city, to its North was the imperial dispensary and to the south was a college. Arithmatic, Algebra and Geometry were taught here as well as logic, the art of debate, calligraphy, Islamic philosophy and the traditions of Islamic Jurisprudence. Inside the mosque ran a *madrasa* where education in matters of religion was imparted. To the east of the Mosque was an open ground where the army camped. To the north and south of the camp were bazars that catered to the needs of the soldiers.

With the decline of the Empire, the market located to the South of the Mosque was gradually taken over by calligraphers, book makers, book binders, publishers and book sellers. It was here that writers and poets gathered as did their fans and followers and this tradition continued till about 40 years ago. The market to the North gradually disappeared, replaced by flowers sellers leaving just two shops that dealt in army seconds till as recently as 1970s.

The British wrested control of Shahjahanabad from the Marathas in 1803 and their presence in the city started to become more pronounced as several structures that were typically British in their appearance began to dot the city -The Residency of Ochterlony 1803, Central Baptist Church 1814, St James Church 1836, St Stephen's Church 1862, Railway Station 1864, General Post Office 1885 and others. Post 1857 the British moved the capital to Calcutta - the head-quarter of the East India Company, in 1859 in order to punish Delhi for being the centre of the rebellion. Why it was brought back in 1912 has been referred to in the opening part of this piece.

When the British decided to build a new capital for their largest colony, they had two clear models before them, models that had worked for centuries and one of them, Shahja-

hanabad, had been, at the time of its foundation and for many decades subsequently, the capital of the most powerful and richest empire in the world, contributing as much as over 25% of world GDP in the17th century and yet they put together a strange concoction that came to be called New Delhi.

New Delhi was envisioned as the capital of the largest colony of the empire and was always referred to as the Imperial capital. This was to be a built-up area to showcase the might and grandeur of empire and therefore it was designed on a gigantic scale, except that the planners and builders did not think that a capital has to have people that inhabit it and so houses for the common ordinary folks were not part of the plan.

The city was expected to grow over time and so the agricultural land of all the villages was notified, the villagers were put on notice that their lands can be acquired against compensation as and when needed, all that was spared was the residential area of the village proper and the villagers were told that no municipal laws of construction would apply on their ancestral residential property. The boundary of the residential area of each village was marked, in red, on a map of Delhi Region. This red line, that came to be known as the Lal Dora or the Red Tape was to play a crucial role in shaping the life of the city in the post-independence years.

Placed on either side of the Vice-regal Lodge, now known as the Rashtrapati Bhawan –the official residence of the President of India–, there were huge impressive buildings, housing the offices of the secretariat to the viceroy, rather imaginatively called the North and South blocks. The Lodge and the two secretariats were together placed atop a hill, to either side of the buildings of the secretariat, down the slopes were other offices and official accommodations of senior bureaucrats.

Straight down the hill to the east was a broad avenue more than 2 km long, pierced by a gate commemorating the Indian soldiers who died protecting British interests in Turkey, Africa and elsewhere. Beyond the gate was a canopy, erected atop a statue of king George Vth. Surrounding the canopy at a respectable distance and placed around the largest traffic island in New Delhi were the residences of the most important among the rulers of the princely states. The princely residences were placed in a way that suggested devotion and supplication to the Monarch. The minor princes were arrayed along roads that radiated from the large traffic island. Those who occupied these large estates came to stay in them only when the viceroy wanted to meet them; rest of the time royal retainers looked after these structures.

This then was the imperial capital that the British built. Aside from the structures described above, there was the building of the National Assembly, now known as the Parliament House, the main market known as Connaught place with Bakeries, Cinema Halls, Tailors, Haberdashers, Outfitters, Watch smiths, Gun smiths and Restaurants. There was an area known as the *gole* (circular) market to three sides of which there were single storey houses, two or three room sets arranged in blocks and inhabited by junior bureaucrats, clerks, superintendents and the like.

There were no factories, no wholesale markets, no educational institutions, no public libraries, no auditoriums. In short, there were no provisions that could be seen as an attempt to build a place that gave you a sense of belon-

ging. The idea was to create a space from where the minions of the empire would rule the colony. A majority of those who came to work in the new capital lived in the scattered villages or in Shahjahanabad, the city that the British had looted and nearly destroyed in 1857. New Delhi was never meant to be a city, it was meant only to be an administrative area and that is what it continues to be till this date.

An overwhelming majority of those who live in the 43.7 sq. kilometres of land administered by the New Delhi Municipal Council are migratory creatures, senior bureaucrats, senior army brass, members of parliament. Each one of them spends some time in Delhi and then goes back.

The only quasi permanent residents are the gardeners, cooks, drivers, guards and other household helps employed by these temporary residents. There are a few very rich industrial families who had bought huge properties in New Delhi and some of these now house high-end flats for the super-rich, while some of those properties continue to be in the possession of the descendants of the original buyers. Families of some of those who had acquired flats on the first floor of Connaught place can also be counted among the few thousand permanent residents of New Delhi.

When India became independent it was also divided into two countries, more than 330,000 Muslims left Delhi for Pakistan and the population of the city –Shahjahanabad and all the scattered villages– fell to about 570,000, before rising, within 4 years –by 1951 to 1744,042, an increase of more than 1.1 million or close to 250,000 per year (see my piece, Hashmi (2017).

This tectonic shift in the population changed the character of the city. Muslims were almost 33% of the population of the city before 1947; their share fell to about 4%. The large influx of refugees from the newly created Pakistan changed the landscape, culture, language and lifestyle of Delhi forever.

Those that had presided over the partition, the leaders of the Congress, the Muslim League and the British, had no idea of what the partition would unleash, just as the current rulers of India had no inkling that hundreds of thousands would begin the long trek home from the metropolitan centres the moment the unplanned lock-down was imposed.

The millions that began to stream into the city, from what is now Pakistan, were initially placed in the 14th century forts at Tughlaqabad and Kotla Ferozeshah and in the Kingsway camp. The refugee camp at Kingsway grounds at one time housed almost 300,000 refugees. This was the site where the foundation stone of the new Capital was initially laid. The site of the capital was shifted later to Raisina Hill, where the Vice-regal Lodge and the secretariat complex came up in the 1920s. Aside from the initial deluge, the refugees kept trickling in over the next few years, stopping on the way, hoping to find sustenance and then moving on in search of more welcoming environs.

The refugees could not be contained in these camps alone and they spilled out all over, occupying houses left by those who had gone to Pakistan, leading to uncertainties and fear among the few Muslims that had stayed back, still the number of such houses was not enough so they began living in the grounds outside the red fort in shanties constructed with discarded card board sheets and gunny sacks, they hudd-

led under the arches of the bits of the old city boundary wall that still survived and they camped under the open skies wherever they could.

By the late 1940s and early 1950s, some semblance of order began to emerge, areas to the south of New Delhi –South of Lodi Colony, to the west of Karol Bagh, North and West of the Kingsway Camp– Scrub lands, degraded forest lands, grazing lands village commons and Agricultural Lands began to be acquired. A ministry of rehabilitation was set up and gradually people began to be accommodated. By end of 1950 the number that had been accommodated was close to 300,000 out of these 190,000 had been settled into properties left behind by those migrating to Pakistan and the rest were provided newly built accommodations (Dutta 2002: 290). Those among the refugees that were better off and had brought papers to show that they had left property in Pakistan, were given compensatory plots and they built on those plots.

There were many other interventions to help people stand on their feet, like assistance in setting up small industries (p. 301), building of markets with flats above the shop to provide both a roof above the head and a shop to start a business, many kiosks and tin shed shops and markets were built or people were given assistance to build their own and that is how Khan Market, Ghaffar Market, Yusufzai Market, Meherchand Market, Khanna Market, Amar Colony, B.K. Dutt Colony and a whole lot of other markets came up in different parts of Delhi.

This sprouting of Bazars coincided with the emergence of new residential localities, almost totally consisting of refugees, mostly Punjabi speaking, with smatterings of Multanis, Sindhi and Pashtun Hindus and Sikhs. There were many Bengalis as well, but in the almost single-minded engagement with the largest contingent –the Punjabis, the rest just became a foot note. The new residential areas that came up included Kingsway Camp, Vijaynagar and Azadpur in North Delhi, Jangpura, Bhogal, Lajpat Nagar, Malviya Nagar, East Nizamuddin in South Delhi, and Tilak Nagar, Patel Nagar, Rajendra Nagar, Rehgar Pura etc in West Delhi.

The growth of Delhi in the post 1947 period can broadly be understood in terms of four major movements, i) constructions related to the rehabilitation of refugees that has been briefly touched upon above, ii) extensive building activity undertaken by the government for building offices, other infrastructure like schools hospital, parks, water supply network, power distribution and housing for government employees, iii) the building of plush residential localities by consortium of builders and iv) interventions of the Delhi Development Authority to ensure what the organisation describes as planned development.

The New Government set about putting its house in order, the frame work that the British had left behind and the bureaucracy they had trained could only operate in the manner born and so among the first set of housing that came up for the government employees was broadly divided in three categories, Senior officers residential locality –there were two and not surprisingly they were named Maan Nagar (City of Honour) and Shaan Nagar (City of Grandeur), the large locality where the lower bureaucracy would reside was named Vinay Nagar (City of Supplication) and the locality which had houses for the drivers, office boys, sanitation staff was called Sewa Nagar (City that Serves). This city plan fitted perfectly with the

design philosophy of Sirs Lutyens and Baker- The viceroy atop the Hills, surrounded by the various secretaries at one end of Kingsway, the current Raj Path, and the subservient princes around the grand statue of the Monarch at the other end.

This was in the capital of a newly freed colony and the ideas of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity were still alive, there were loud protests at this nomenclature, the Ministry of housing and the officers of the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) were compelled to make amends, Maan Nagar and Shaan Nagar became Rabindra Nagar and Bharti Nagar, named after two Iconic poets, Rabindranath Tagore and Subramanian Bharti, Vinay Nagar was parcelled out and renamed, Netaji Nagar, Sarojini Nagar, Lakshmi Bai Nagar, Kidwai Nagar and Nauroji Nagar, named after major leaders of the freedom struggle respectively Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Sarojini Naidu, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai and Dadabhai Nauroji. The ideas of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity did not, however, extend to the service class and Sewa Nagar continued with its name till the 1990s when someone woke up to the anomaly and the area was renamed after Kasturba Gandhi to become Kasturba Nagar.

In and around the core of New Delhi came up the offices of the different ministries, Railways, Agriculture, Industry, Housing, while home, external affairs, the Prime Minister's office etc. moved into the Secretariat Buildings, designed by Herbert Baker, as part of the Imperial Delhi, in fact modified copies of the Union Buildings he had built in Pretoria.

Other structures that came up during this period were the academies of Literature, Music, Theatre and fine arts, World Health Organisation, the head-quarters of the Post and Telegraph Department and many other buildings. All designed by Habib Rahman, the favourite architect of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, the First Prime Minister of India. Habib's architecture represented the modernist in the newly independent Country.

Fairly early in the post-independence times, the sentiment to be self-reliant in the field of food and basic needs of the people combined with the assistance being given to the refugees to start small scale industries. The initial production activity started at Malviya Nagar and Kalkaji area evolved into the Okhla industrial Area starting in 1953 (Dutta 2002: 301). Gradually, industrial estates developed in different parts of the city;as many as seventeen were created in different parts of the city.

Around the industrial estates grew shanti-towns of hovels put together by sons of peasants who kept drifting into the city from far and near, to become workers in the small industries located in the industrial estates. The new arrivals contacted people from their village who had preceded them into the city and small pockets of people, speaking the same language and eating the same food began to cluster together. The same thing had been happening with the Punjabi refugees who tended to stick together and so small and big pockets that were linguistically and culturally cohesive began to emerge.

Residents of nearby villages that had lost all their land to government acquisition but had control of their sprawling ancestral houses inside the Lal Dora Lands, began to build single room tenements for the workers and the villages took on the appearance of slums while the women from these working class families

became part time maids and cooks in the houses of the better offs. Gradually Delhi became a strange city, it was cosmopolitan in its places of work but behaved parochially in its residential areas and so it became a collection of many villages. The only residential areas that continued to be somewhat mixed were localities that had government housing.

Running parallel to this development of industrial estates, initiated by the government and its feeding of the growth of slum colonies there was the work of the builder lobby that has been active from the early days of independence. Most of the large sprawling residential localities for the well-heeled owe their existence to these builders who bought agricultural land at throw away prices in the late 1940s and early 1950, cut out plots and sold them initially to the well to do among the refugees and later to the new rising class of Urban rich, industrialists, Bankers, Builders, Architects, Chartered accountants, senior executives and others. Those Army Personnel who had opted to come to India were one such lot and that is how Defence colony came into existence. Many residential localities populated by the well to do including Kailash Colony, Greater Kailash Parts I and II, Mount Kailash, East of Kailash, Mansarovar, West End, Hauz Khas, Green Park, Safdarjung Enclave, Safdarjung Develpment Area, Maharani Bagh, Friends Colony, New Friends Colony and others that came up in the 1950s, 60s and 70s were all built similarly. The neighbourhood of the Posh localities turned into slums populated by those who served the well off, Newspaper boys, milk delivery boys, vegetable hawkers, men and women who cooked, washed and swept for the leisure class.

Amidst all this was the emergence of the Delhi Development Authority –created in 1957 and asked "to secure the development of Delhi according to plan"[3]. In a city with a population touching 20 million it had till 2007 built and handed over for possession, a total of 367,724 flats, half of them to those belonging to the lower income category (Mitra 2019), this works out to about 7823 flats per year across 47 years. In 2019 it allotted 8000 flats to applicants through a draw of lots, 4000 allottees refused to take possession after inspecting the properties (Ghosh 2019), Clearly the DDA had other priorities.

The two things that DDA did within a short time of coming into existence was i) to declare that all of Shahjahanabad was a slum and ii) to acquire all the agricultural land that had not been acquired till then.

The first act ensured that Shahjahanabad could be ignored. The moment it was declared a slum, it did not need upgrading of its amenities, which was the beginning of the systematic and wilful neglect of one of the finest mediaeval cities in the world.

The second decision was aimed at enriching the coffers of the DDA at the cost of the peasants who happened to be in the path of the growing megalopolis. The scheme was to pay the peasants the prices prevailing at the time of acquiring the land and charge the allottees land prices prevailing at the time of allotment of these houses.

3 As it can be read in chapter II "The Delhi Development Authority and its objects", The Gazette of India EXTRAORDINARY PART II—Section 1 PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY No. 48] NEW DELHI, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1957/PAUSA 7, 1879 MINISTRY OF LAW New Delhi, the 28th December, 19576. You can have online access at http://egazette.nic.in/WriteReadData/1957/E-2142-1957-0048-97085.pdf.

To cite one instance Agricultural land in Bodella (Budhela), now Vikas Puri in west Delhi, was acquired by DDA in 1969. Four brothers who jointly owned 40 Acres, roughly equivalent to 200,000 sq. yds, were awarded Rupees 200,000 that is Rs.1 per sq. yard as compensation, they challenged the amount as too little. In 1983 the courts granted them an additional compensation of Rs 2,000,000. Fourteen years to settle a simple civil suit.

Around the same time DDA auctioned plots to builders in Bhikaji Cama District Commercial Centre in South Delhi from land acquired in the 1960s; one of the plots went for a record price of around Rs 70,000 per sq yard. Property in the locality right now is at around Rs, 250,000 per square yard. You can try to imagine the stash that DDA made. A 1918 survey conducted by National productivity council and Geo Spatial Limited revealed that DDA was holding as much as 5,484 acres of land.

Within a couple of decades of coming into existence DDA realised that it wasn't able to cope with the demand for housing in the city and so it came up with a scheme to allot land to co-operative group housing societies and virtually washed its hands off the project of providing affordable housing to those who lived in the metropolis.

Co-operative societies were first required to get registered, apply for land, run around to get it in their preferred location, pay to DDA the asking price, always way above the price at which DDA had acquired the land, and then get it built, the co-operative also had to pay land development charges, including the costs of building roads, getting connected to the sewer system and getting power and water lines etc.

DDA meanwhile moved into building shopping complexes, district shopping cum commercial centres etc. but soon this too they abandoned and began auctioning plots to builders to set-up office cum commercial complexes. The scope of this has now been expanded to auction land to private builders to build residential complexes. The losers are the villagers and those looking for affordable accommodation. The DDA is the officially created middleman who bought all the available land in Delhi dirt cheap to sell it to the highest bidder.

The DDA came up with the scheme of relocating slums, an exercise that picked up steam during the period of the internal emergency, declared by the then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, that lasted from June 1975 to March 1977. These 21 months saw DDA forcibly evict 200,000 people to dump them miles away from their places of work. A total of 44 resettlement colonies were created between 1960 and 1985 and the life and livelihood of 1.2 million citizens was badly disrupted. They live in conditions worse than their earlier slums with poor sanitation, transport and lighting and are compelled to travel long distances to the heart of the city where they either work or hope to find work as daily wagers. Another 11 resettlement colonies have come up since 1985, but no figures are available for the numbers involved (Jeelani 2018).

Add to this the 1797 unauthorised colonies, involving a population of more than 5 million, with promises of regularisation made recently. The cumbersome process of registering 2,000,000 odd properties (see Sultan 2019) providing them basic facilities is a task that the DDA is ill-equipped to handle. DDA has up to now built 28,344 flats for the urban

poor, 26,861 of these remain unoccupied, primarily because they are located in places far away from the places of work of the allottees.

So this is a very brief and a very limited view of the patently pro-builder and anti-poor strategy of planning that has shaped this city that has grown 21 times from 900,000 in 1947 to 19000000 now. The two mediaeval cities that existed were not considered worth the land they were built upon, the Imperial model, a mere place of work, bereft of soul, spirit and residents will now become the model for much touted smart city that is going to be a working and living place for hermetically sealed communities of the elite. The workers and peasants will toil outside, their products will be delivered and the waste taken out of the city to be dumped in places where the overwhelming numbers of the citizens live. New Delhi has always been like this. The city serves the elite that rules the country from their palatial Bungalows, sealed off and protected from the living throbbing, struggling, working, producing and somehow surviving multitude outside the charmed 43.7 sq.kms of New Delhi.

Writer, Film Maker Sohail Hashmi also conducts Heritage walks in Delhi.

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VA.3 Maximum Capacity 3

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BROWN AND BLUE, WITH LOTS OF GREEN: GURCHARAN SINGH AND MAKING A PLACE OF NEW DELHI

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At the 1911 Coronation Durbar, a royal proclamation announced the shifting of the capital of British India from Calcutta to Delhi. Almost immediately, the ground beneath Delhi began shifting as the plans, the site and the personnel for the construction of Imperial Delhi were activated by colonial authorities. One source tells us that approximately 60,000 cubic feet of stone were accumulated in the process of demolishing many of the pre-Mughal and Mughal structures and occupied villages that were standing in various degrees of life and ruination (Liddle 2018: 36-47). In the logic of planners, the terrain was first understood partly as a wasteland even if it was occupied, to recreate it as tabula rasa which was to be remade again. The used building material was recycled into the beds on which roads were to be laid and into the concrete for making buildings. There was so much material that no living rock in Delhi had to be cut and crushed for this purpose. The people who were living there were displaced to other areas; some received new lands while others moved away.

Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker's plan was an imperial Garden City, based on an ideal city form first consolidated in 1898 in Britain by Ebenezer Howard with the aim of envisaging urbanization as one in which structures including workspaces and homes were integrated into extensive green zones which were either parks or agriculture (Bowe 2009: 68). Lutyens and Baker's plan integrated their commitment to Classical architecture as well as to the aesthetic ideal of the picturesque. The picturesque framed the many large, historic structures that were not demolished; they became important features on axial roads, roundabouts and points of termination. The planners conserved and integrated Safdarjung's and Humayun's Tomb, Nizamuddin's Dargah or the Lodi era

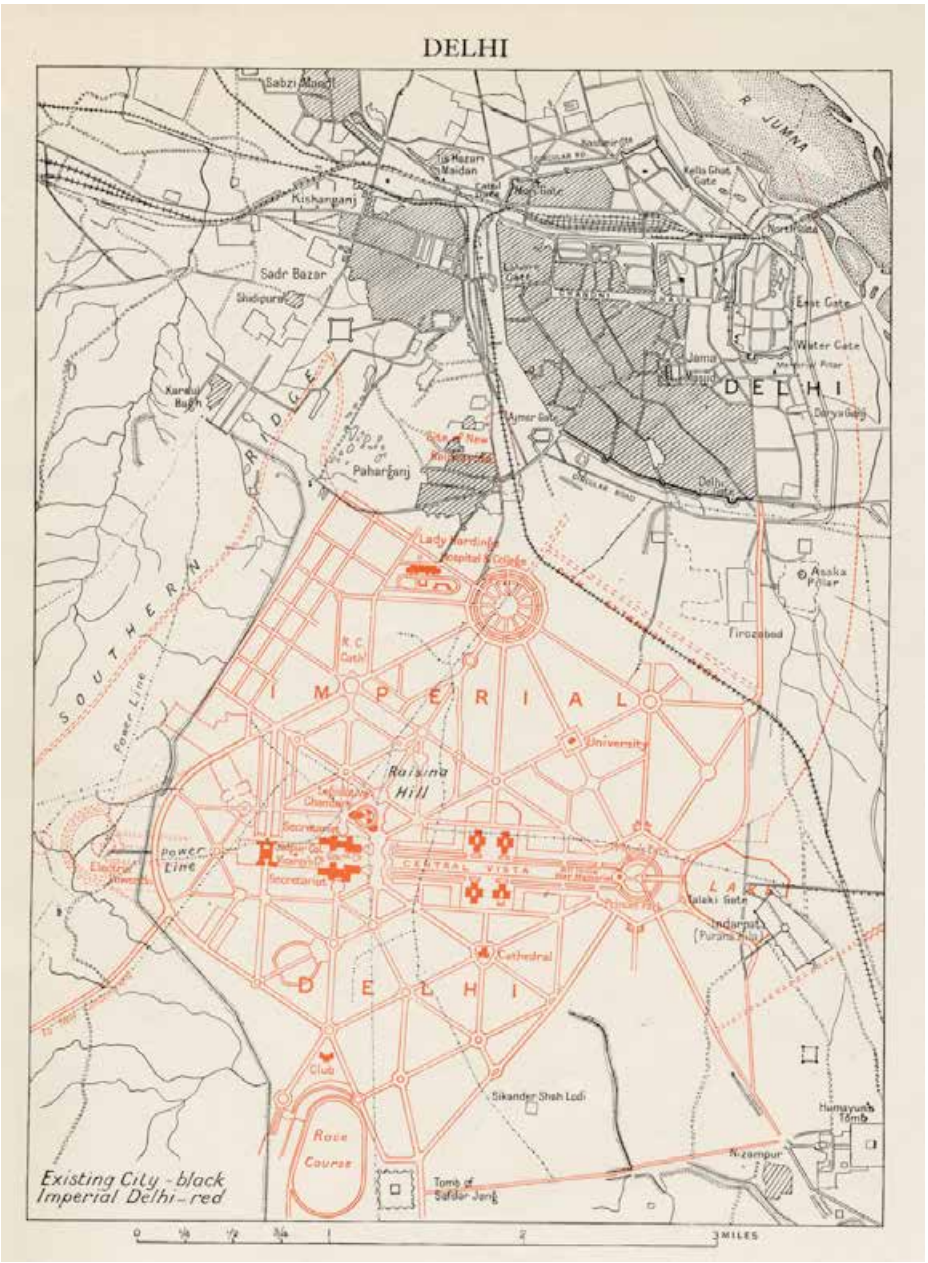

Image 1: A map of Lutyens' projected "Imperial Delhi," from *Encyclopædia Britannica* Eleventh Edition, December 1911, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Lutyens%27_projected_Imperial_Delhi,_from_the_Encyclopedia_Britannica,_11th_ed.,_1910-12.jpg

tombs in what is called today Lodi Gardens or smaller structures such as Sabz Burj into the idea of Imperial Delhi (Image 1). If the grand scheme of Neoclassical architecture manifested the imperial in built form, the Rajput, Sultanate and Mughal structures became the backdrop against which the British Empire unfolded its grandest statement of power.

Lutyens worked closely with the horticulturist William R. Mustoe, who came to Delhi in 1919 after first working in Kew Gardens in London, then the Municipal Gardens in Bombay followed by a stint in the Government Gardens in Lahore. Mustoe familiarized himself with the soil types of north-western India in Lahore, preparing him for his responsibilities in landscaping Imperial Delhi. The Mughal gardens of Talkatora was commandeered and Mustoe proceeded to establish a nursery in which all the species and numbers of local and new trees and plants were propagated. Lutyens determined the planting scheme for Kingsway or Raj Path

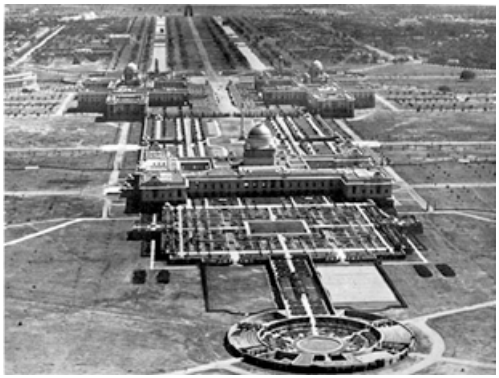

Image 2: Aerial view of the city in progress and the completed city of New Delhi with the war memorial at the end of Kingsway, https://asiasociety.org/blog/asia/video-asia-society-museum-exhibit-depicts-transitional-moment-indias-history

Image 3: New Delhi. © Daily Overview https://images.adsttc.com/media/images/5ecc/7d07/b357/6579/0d00/08a0/large_jpg/New_Delhi.jpg?1590459626

Image 4: Aerial view of the city in progress and the completed city of New Delhi with the war memorial at the end of Kingsway, The Collection of the Centre for South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge, https://sites.asiasociety.org/princesandpainters/design-of-delhi-edwin-lutyens/

which led to the Viceroy's Lodge and Mustoe and his staff decided for the rest of Delhi, including which trees to plant where, how a specific street gained an identity with a particular species and how the spacing of trees worked with other features such as street lamps and sidewalks.[1] He was also responsible for greening the Delhi Ridge as well as planting the Mughal gardens of the Viceroy's Lodge (Image 2, 3 and 4).

Gurcharan Singh came to Delhi in 1918 and must have encountered this scheme as it was being emplaced. If today we see pre-colonial monuments in bare red or white, lime-plastered sandstone as picturesque counterpoints, Neoclassical imperial architecture in the same colours of sandstone modified with elements from local architecture such as the *chajja* or eave and the *chattri* or an umbrella-like cupola pre-

1 Pradip Kishen recently has spoken critically on the horticultural logic of the Mustoe and Lutyens planting scheme (Verghese 2020).

siding over the city, with large boulevards and circuses lined with green connecting it all, Singh would have seen bare earth, demolition and road construction, living gurudwaras, mosques and temples, the old city of Shahjahanabad, and decaying tombs that were left standing, some of which in the previous 50 years, the British had conserved and converted into gardens (Sharma 2007).

It is important to visualize the state of Imperial Delhi in 1918 as unmade and in construction in order to then imagine how a young man such as Gurcharan Singh, a recent graduate in geology would have seen this city-in-the-making and seen how he could make himself. He came to Delhi from Jammu because his father's friend Sardar Ram Singh Kabli, the owner of Delhi Pottery Works, located just south of the upcoming capital, in what is today Safdarjang Airport, manufactured bricks and tiles. Kabli's brickworks was in the midst of producing a portion of the vast number of bricks required for building Imperial Delhi as a subcontractor for Sobha Singh and Baisakha Singh, two of the five most important contractors who had migrated from Panjab to make their fortunes in the entrepreneurialism made possible by the upcoming city.[2] The work was so intense that Kabli needed assistance and threw Gurcharan Singh into the task of learning every phase of work in the pottery, especially in the tiles section.[3]

Image 5: Khishtsaz or brickmaker from James Skinner's *Kitāb-i tashrīḥ al-aqvām*, artist unknown, 1825, The Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection in the Library of Congress, Washington DC; https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbc0001.2015rosen2076/?sp=448&r=-1.372,0.537,3.745,1.614,0

The work at the pottery also threw Singh into processes by which the landscape was being transformed. While he was learning to make tiles and watching bricks fired every day, he would have noticed that Delhi Pottery Works was surrounded by other kilns which were located on or near Safdarjang's Tomb. Looking at historic images of brick kilns and brickmakers in paintings and prints made for English patrons or buyers, they appear as something "exotic" that is being captured about the brickmaker and the manufacturing process in India (Image 5). Simultaneously, they also communicate that what is in appearance exotic can be translated into something familiar by the Eng-

2 Singh (2012) documents that construction process of the city. See also Jain (2019). See Delhi Pottery Trust (n.d.).

3 Interview with Mansimran Singh, ceramist and son of Gurcharan Singh, October 9, 2020.

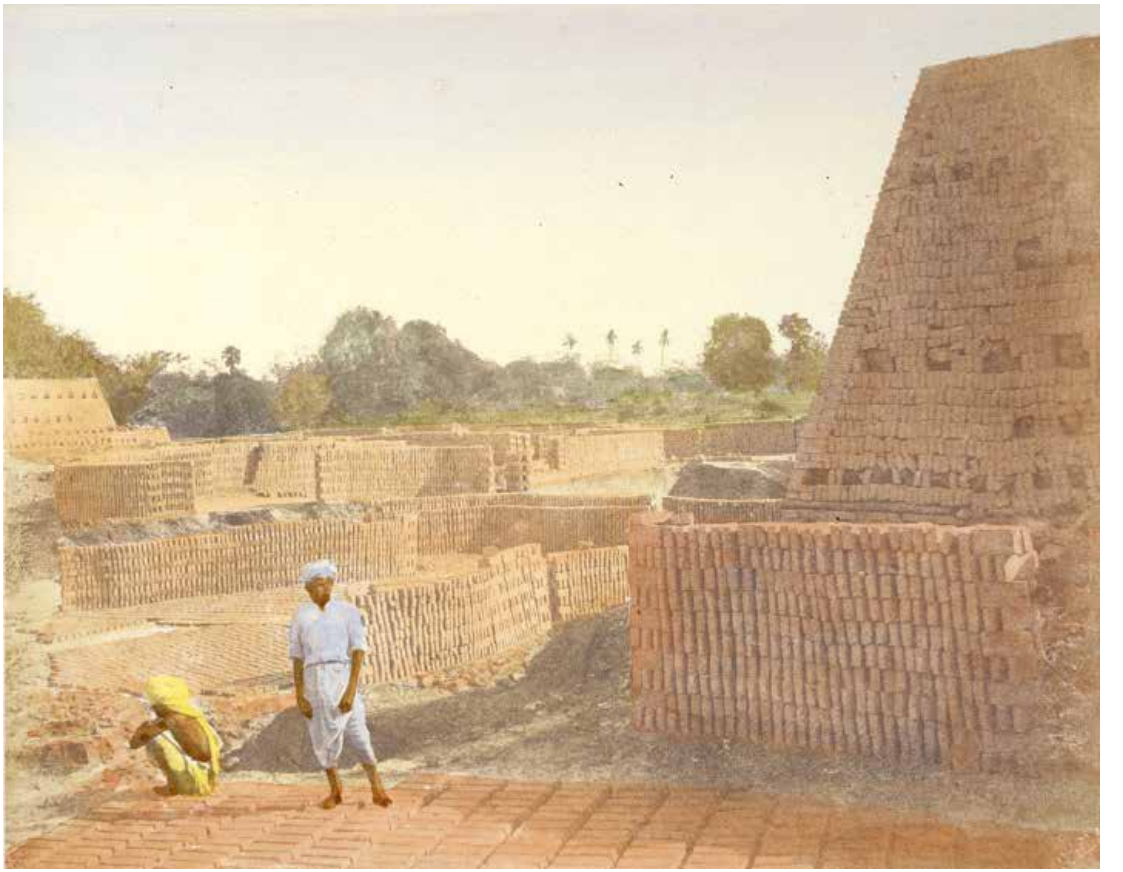

Image 6: Frederick Fiebig, *Brick kiln on the Hooghly*, Calcutta, 1851, photographic print; http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/apac/photocoll/b/019pho0000247s1u00021000.html

lish viewer because in England too, bricks are fired in kilns. Even more important is that the act of visually recording brick kilns and bricks drying also tells viewers that there is permanent or *pakka* material, technology and human labor available to make the new structures that the East India Company and later the imperial Government of India, would need (Image 6).[4] When such images are paired with images of ruined monuments, as they often were in colonial albums, it was possible to see a context in which construction and demolition coexist in such a way that a space could be cleared for the

4 Cowell (2016) tell us about the process and value of making the now institutionalized difference between *kacchā* and *pakkā* materials in the construction of colonial architecture. Dutta (2007) tells us of the importance of visually and economically imagining construction craft in the making of colonial public works. See N.A. (1845) which reassures the colonial construction professional that while brickmaking in India was not as good as in England, with some training and time and an adjustment of materials and process, satisfactory results could be achieved.

Image 7: Pajawa or Clamp Kiln. Photograph Suyash Dwivedi, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiln#/media/File:Indian_brick_kiln.jpg

colonial contemporary, one in which the colonizer and the native entrepreneur benefitted (Image 7 and 8).[5]

Such entrepreneurialism is evident in the transformations that bricks underwent and the subsequent changes in architectural silhouettes, materials and design. Before the coming of the colonial brick, locally known as *ghumma* (9" x 4" x 3"), the *lakhauri* (approximately 4" x 6" x .75") brick was made for centuries all across northern and central India, as far north as Srinagar and as far south as the Deccan. Lakhauri is a thin brick, which is scaled at slightly varying dimensions in relation to the composition of the clay, the use of the brick in

Image 8: Brick Kiln at Delhi Potteries, near Safdarjung Tomb, now Safdarjung Airport, Delhi, http://delhibluepotterytrust.com/history.php.

5 Gupta (2002) tell us that prior to 1911, there was more than a century of complexity in land ownership because, financial transactions and military action created very intense forms of entrepreneurship. Those natives who became rich were those whose fortunes were not destroyed in the rebellion of 1857, made more wealth by 1858 and began to prosper even more as they made goods to serve the European population and found tenants for the properties they owned.

Image 9: A cusped arch made of Lakhauri bricks at the Chota Imambara, https://anotherglobaleater.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/ci-lakhauriarch.jpg

a specific area of the construction, the quality, type and availability of fuel and the patron's capacities.[6] So, for example, round bricks were cast for pillars, thin bricks could be easily manipulated or cut to follow the curve of an arch, its silhouette well-articulated with the skilled application of stucco and so on (Image 9). When European motifs and designs began to be domesticated, the size of the bricks remained the same though ornamentation transformed (Image 10). The Lakhauri gave immense flexibility to the *mistri* or construction expert.

The *lakhauri* brick transformed into the *ghumma* when the design and the composition of rooms in a building changed from the intimacy of space and shorter wall spans in native architecture to the larger dimensions of EIC-designed architecture. A *Gazeteer of Delhi* (1883-84) tells us that plaster work was still of a fine quality but goes on to note that "the notable deterioration which has taken place of late years in the *rāj mistri*'s craft is attributed by the workmen themselves to the introduction of the very different method of treating wall-surfaces necessary for our large English buildings, where immense stretches of wall have to be covered with plaster as economically as possible."[7]

6 Rishu (n.d.).

7 *A Gazetteer of Delhi* (1883-84, reprint 2020: 130). The writer continues, "a skilled workman will tell you that any cooly can learn to do such work; and as a matter of fact the greater part of the men employed by the Public Works Department are only promoted labourers, and very few of them are capable of working out such details as the pendentives of vaults or the foliated pilasters and the mihrābs of the arcades which are universal in the work of fifty years ago. Even in the English bungalows built at that period, the native fancy, through evidently ill at ease in our vast, rectangular domestic barns, broke out in quaint

Image 10: Lucknow's Chota Imambara made in Lakhauri Bricks with Stucco Design, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chota_Imambara#/media/File:A_statue_holding_chain_for_earthing_purpose.jpg

panelling on the wall and in ornamented mantel pieces. The barrack and the railway station, however, have now effectually checked this; and the *rāj mistri* has learnt how to combine the worst and least durable plaster work ever wrought in India, with pure, utilitarian hideousness."

Image 11: Begum Samru's Palace (after it was partially destroyed in 1857), Chandni Chowk, Delhi, photograph by Robert Christopher and Harriet Tytler, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Begum_Samru#/media/File:1857_bank_of_delhi2.jpg

As colonial architecture was built in the European way, such as in the palaces and bungalows of Begam Samru's house in Delhi (Image 11 and 13) and for her European soldiers in Sardhana (Image 12), *ghumma* were used and covered with lime. Later, when Indian *mistriyan* built the historically important Bradlaugh Hall (1900) in Lahore (Image 14), which was used as the National College and as a space for large gatherings during the freedom movement, the *ghumma* bricks were left exposed, the only embellishment was the beauty of the façade and the perfection of brickwork. [8]

8 This was a building commissioned by Charles Bradlaugh, an MP who advocated for Indian independence and self-determination. See Charles Bradlaugh Society, n.d.

Image 12: European House, ca. early 19th century, Sardhana, UP, http://www.baadalmusings.com/zoomed/samru/ruined-european-house-sardhana

Image 13: Attributed to Muhammad A'zam, artist, *Begam Samru and her household*, 1805-26, Collection of Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/object/In_74_7/1/LOG_0000/, accessed on October 16, 2020.

If such structures and others designed by Public Works Department engineers, including churches or government buildings, were built in a colonial Neo-Classical in which *ghumma* bricks were covered with plaster in the early part of the 19th century or later left exposed to make exquisite Victorian and Indo-Saracenic facades such as in Bradlaugh Hall, a new modernist language of exposing the bricks and with minimal ornamentation to create mass and monumentality began to appear in Delhi once it was declared the capital of British India. Brick had acquired representational authority and in the hands of architects such as Shoosmith or George, needing neither plaster nor ornament (Image 15, 16 and 17) (Stamp 2016; Butler 2012).

As Gurcharan Singh arrived, all these transformations were already under way. He would not have understood the landscape in the way I have sequenced the narrative but something of this was surely taken in from the corner of his eye, seen but not fully absorbed. As histories of his career as a ceramist note, Singh was captivated by the blue tiles he found everywhere on the historic buildings that were

Image 14: Bradlaugh Hall, Lahore, https://www.dawn.com/news/1209096

left standing across a landscape in formation. It was in these years that the bicycle became a form of personal transport and that the tradition of taking a one-rupee *ekka* ride to see the monuments of the city became common Gupta 2002). Perhaps Singh took such a ride. In any case, his interest in the way the city was, converged with the way it was *becoming*. He had stepped into a city in which its residents had developed an archeological outlook as part of their urbanity, a phenomenon which was a consequence of a palimpsest city transforming into a colonial one.[9]

For the 22-year-old Singh, 1918-1919 was a definitive period that set the course for his entire life. He met Chattar Kaur, the daughter of his employer, and when he asked for her hand in marriage, Kabli agreed, provided that Singh would go to Japan and study industrial ceramics, which he did in 1919.[10] 1918 was also an important year in Delhi for the Satyagraha movement. Whether or not Singh was di-

9 Chenoy (2018) is a critical edition of Mirza Sangin Beg's text which was commissioned by the English East India Company to document Delhi's layout, buildings, habitations, bazars, localities, residences, individuals and local cultures. King (2007: 188-189) talks about the repair and restoration work on the Qutub Minar in 1826 and the formation of the Archaeological Society between 1847-50 to which both English and local elites belonged. He quotes a colonial writer, "The... inflictions of the climate are amply compensated by the endless gratification afforded to intellectual minds, by the number of interesting objects which greet the spectator on every side. A life might be spent in rambling over the ruins of old Delhi and subjects of contemplation still remain. Next to the palace... is the Jumma Masjid, a magnificent mosque. ... From the interstices of the piazza of this fine square, very picturesque views are obtained."

10 Japan was a major supplier for ceramic tiles to India in the interwar years when free trade was encouraged by the

Image 15: Arthur Gordon Shoosmith, St. Martin's Garrison Church, completed 1931, Delhi Cantonment, Delhi, https://dome.mit.edu/handle/1721.3/55863

Image 16: Walter Sykes George, St. Stephen's College, completed 1941, Delhi, https://dome.mit.edu/handle/1721.3/55928

rectly involved, he certainly would have been aware of it. Arriving in Japan, he began to learn Japanese to gain entry into The Higher Technological School in Tokyo. During this period, he became associated with the leaders of Mingei, Japan's Arts and Crafts movement, in which Yanagi Soetsu, Hamada Shoji, Tomimoto Kenkichi, and Bernard Leach, the founder of British studio pottery, came together to make a movement that promoted the folklorization of culture and the idea of an artist-craftsman dedicated to making functional ceramic ware. Singh was captured by the Mingei narrative of the folk and the local and by the potential of stoneware; it became a lifelong passion.

When he returned to India in 1922, he returned to Delhi, married Chattar Kaur, and began to make hand-thrown pots at Kabli's Delhi Potteries, which no one bought. It was at this time he met Abdullah (Image 18), a tilemaker from Dasna near Amroha in Uttar Pradesh, who

Image 17: Walter Sykes George, architect and Shoba Singh, contractor. Sujan Singh Park Apartments, completed 1946, Khan Market, New Delhi, https://www.gettyimages.ae/detail/news-photo/view-of-sujan-singh-park-on-october-9-2015-in-new-delhi-news-photo/528086990

came from a lineage of potters who practiced Persianate ceramics and held the formula for "Delhi blue," as Britishers called the colour of Sultanate and Mughal tiles.[11] Singh gave him a one-rupee coin as *dakshina* or a ritualized offering, which in turn designated Abdullah as his

GOI and continued to play a role in Indian ceramics after Independence when Indians, such as Krishan Kapoor, the founder of Hitkari Potteries, went to Japan for training in industrial ceramics and set up production upon his return. See Panicker (1943) and Toyoyama (2018).

11 There were brickmakers and turquoise-colored brickmakers designated as *khistsaz* and *chunah paz* in the Delhi area as recorded in the James Skinner Album, *Kitāb-i tashrīḥ al-aqvām*, which is in the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection at the Library of Congress, Washington DC,

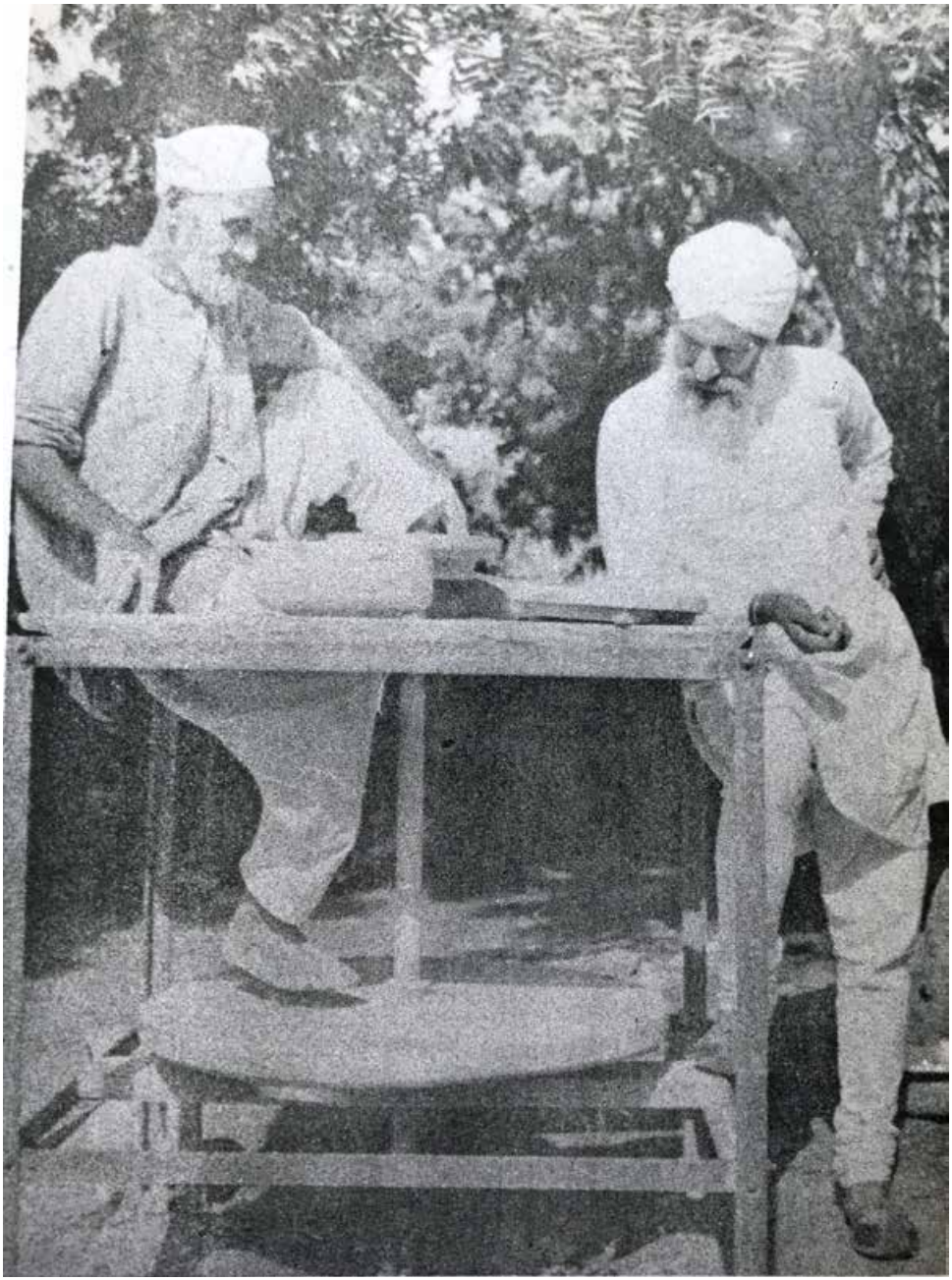

Image 18: Abdullah at the potters' wheel and Gurcharan Singh standing, from Singh, *Pottery in India*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1979.

Image 19: Delhi Potteries Tileworks, http://delhibluepotterytrust.com/imgs/history-2/1920-50/Delhi%20Potteries.png, accessed November 4, 2020.

guru, his teacher in ceramics. This continued until 1929. In these years, the pottery shifted to Factory Road (Image 19) as the brick kilns were demolished to make Willingdon (now Safdarjung) Airport and the Singh family built a *ghumma* brick house on the land (Image 20); it had a domed studio and floor tiles designed by Sarada Ukil, a Bengali actor and an artist who trained with Abanindranath Tagore in Kolkata and migrated to Delhi in 1918, while Abdullah and Singh made them. His choice to expose the *ghumma*, a modern form of an ancient construction material, and make an intimate aesthetic statement with it, was the way he distilled the making of Imperial Delhi and his alliances with its various makers to build his new workshop-home. The earthy modernism of the exposed brick house, the incorporation of designed, handmade tiles and Singh's affiliation with a hereditary Muslim potter who worked with materials which inhabited multiple temporalities, created the possibility for bringing together, visually and materially, large histories in intricate ways.

Image 20: Gurcharan Singh and Chattar Kaur's House, Dome View, made of ghumma bricks and completed 1932 with later additions of Delhi Blue Ceramic jali, http://delhibluepotterytrust.com/index.php, accessed on November 4, 2020.

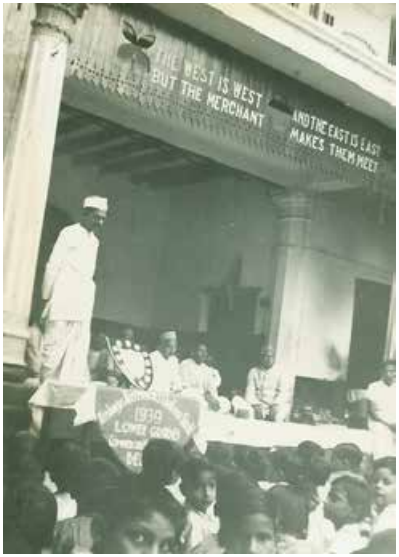

Image 21: Narain Prasad, photographer, Audiences at an inter-school competition sponsored by the Delhi Merchants Association, 1939, http://nebula.wsimg.com/c730cc8dd5564d23db33be3221fba4d3?AccessKeyId=617D84A9BB3FDBCA34E8&disposition=0&alloworigin=1 on the Centre for Community Knowledge, Ambedkar University, http://www.cckonline.in/cameras-of-the-past.html, accessed on November 4, 2020.

https://lccn.loc.gov/2014658650, accessed October 12, 2020. See Pourhadi (1977). There were mosaic makers in the old city as well; see Gupta (2002: 41).

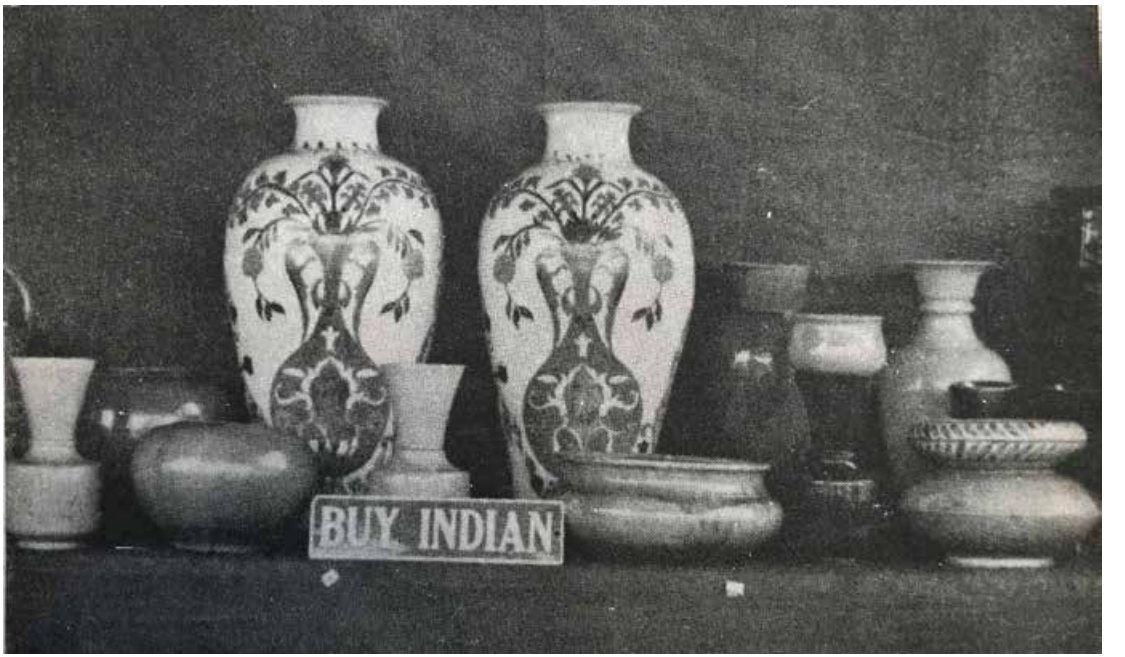

Image 22: Gurcharan Singh's display for a *swadeshi* exhibition, from Singh, *Pottery in India*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1979.

Image 23: Gurcharan Singh, Kamandalu Tea Set, Delhi Blue Pottery, first developed in Ambala, Panjab circa 1949. This set is from the 1970s. Collection of Anuradha Ravindranath, New Delhi. Image © Piramal Museum of Art, Mumbai.

Working in Delhi as the Swadeshi movement grew in ways that M. K. Gandhi advocated and also did not conceive (Image 21), Gurcharan Singh kept building his repertoire of stoneware in India, domesticating *mingei* into *swadeshi*. Image 22 is a selection of Singh's work that was showcased for a Swadeshi exhibition in Delhi in the 1930s. The pots and vases he made are both local and *mingei* in design concept. For example, he placed a painted vase on a large white vase based on Mughal ornamentation found on carpets or in wall niches inside palace rooms in the Red Fort. The vases without figural ornamentation are in shapes that have cosmopolitan origins and Singh's experimental glazes; he was bringing together his education in geology to source materials, his industrial training and *mingei* experience in Japan, his tutelage under

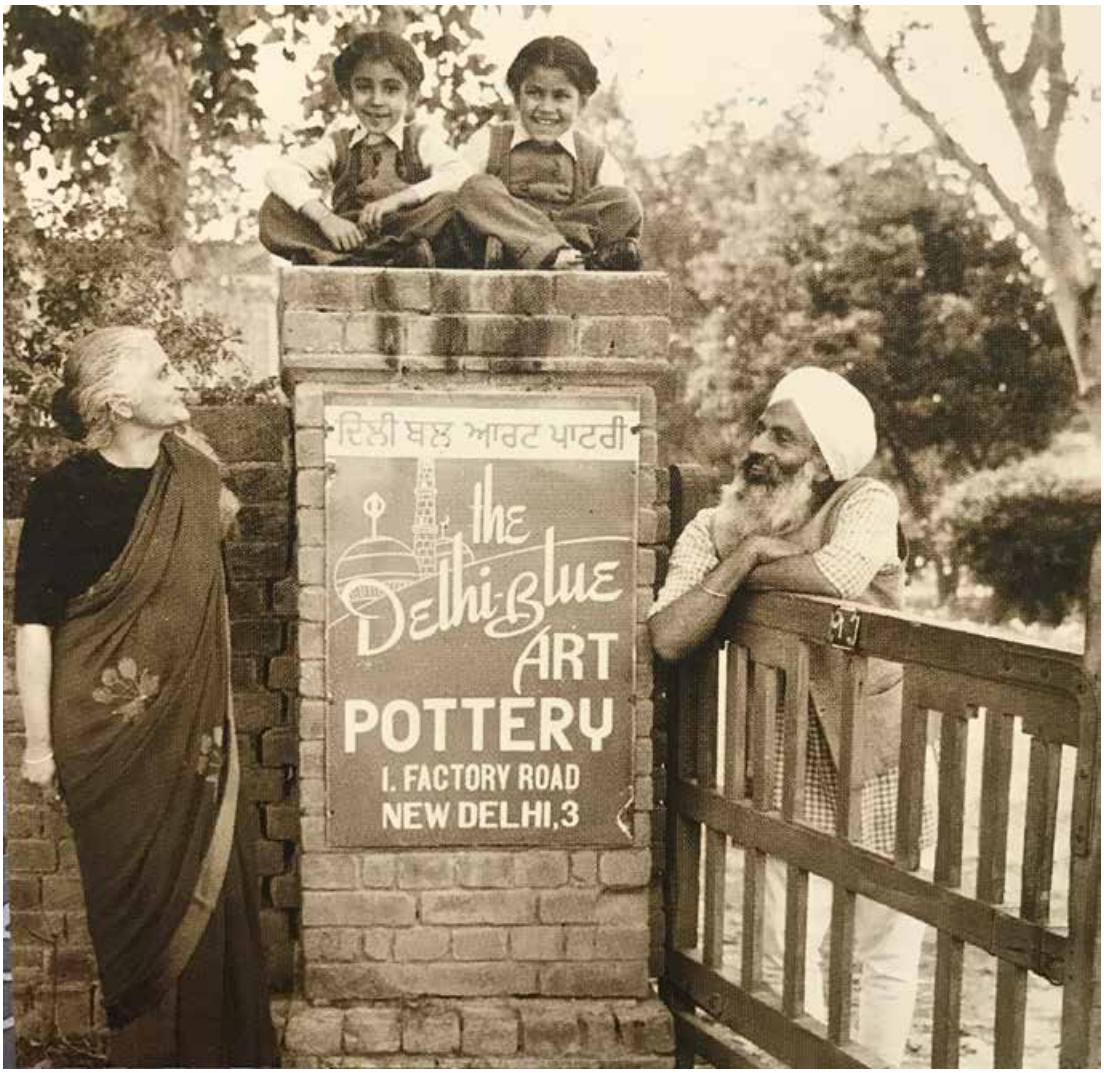

Image 24: Chattar Kaur and Gurcharan Singh with children, from Singh, Pottery in India, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1979.

Abdullah and his work in Delhi Potteries to create stoneware, a completely new clay body for India that he had to compose. It would take another decade for him to make a confident and more integrated *swadeshi-mingei* ware such as the Kamandalu Tea set (Image 23, first made in Ambala in 1949) for which he took the common mendicant's water holder –*kamandalu*– and turned it into an East Asian tea pot with a provision for a bamboo handle and accompanied with English-style, handled teacups and saucers. It was in 1930s too that the competition from

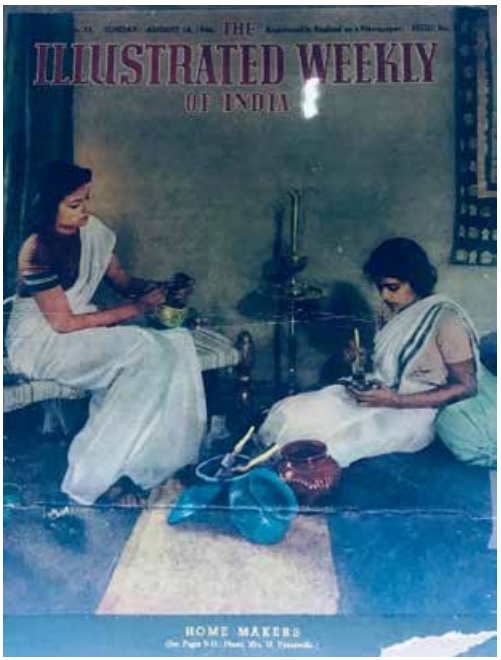

Image 25: Cover of *Illustrated Weekly*, August 1946, HV Archive and The Alkazi Collection of Photography.

Japanese industrial tiles increased and finally in 1939, Delhi Potteries closed. Singh went to Srinagar, Bundi, Lahore and finally Ambala, setting up ceramic training institutes or working as a geologist for various governments.

In a few years after Partition, when he retired from government service in ceramics, Singh moved back to Delhi and started The Delhi Art Pottery on Factory Road. From here, his studio pottery practice expanded (Image 24). Even before Independence, after 1857, when the railways made the city a central junction, hotels became established, first for the English and then for the native elite (King 2007: 237). Delhi's anglicizing upper classes began to use tiles and then bone china in the home (King 2007: 210; Hosagrahar 2001). That very same class also became enamoured with the

Image 26: The Delhi Blue Art Pottery, Tea Set. Collection of Anuradha Ravindranath, New Delhi. Image © Piramal Museum of Art, Mumbai.

Image 27: The Delhi Blue Art Pottery, Ceramic *Jāli*, India International Centre, architect Joseph Allen Stein, inaugurated 1962, New Delhi. Photograph by Annapurna Garimella.

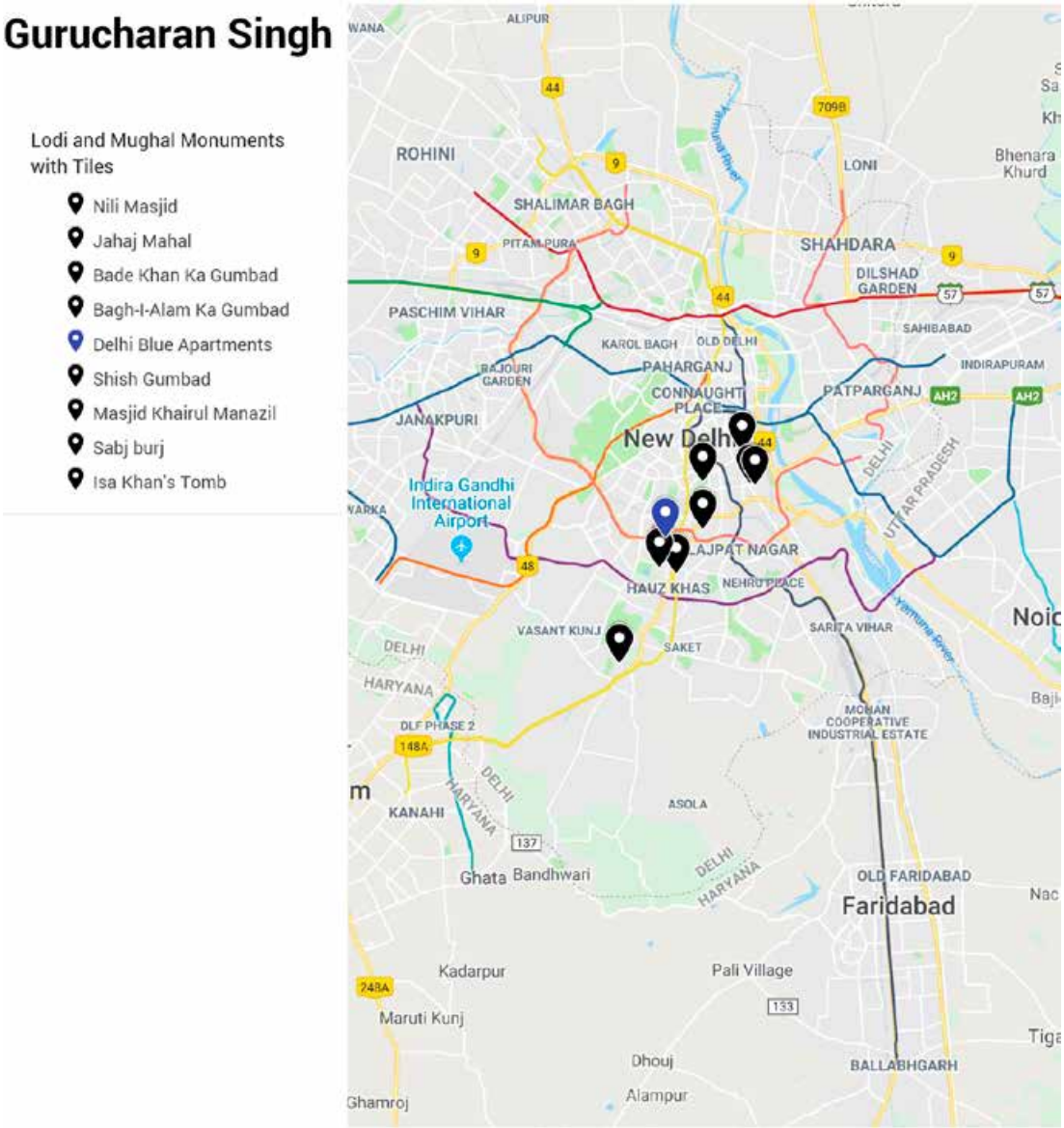

Image 28: Precolonial monuments with Delhi Blue tiles. Map made on Google Maps by Annapurna Garimella.

Image 29: Gur-e Amir, c. 1400 CE, tile-decorated mausoleum of Timur, Samarkand, Uzbekistan, Central Asia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gur-e-Amir#/media/File:ShrineofAmirTimur.jpg

aesthetics of *swadeshi*; the hand-tinted cover of *Illustrated Weekly* from August 1946 shows two students from Lady Irwin College dressed in khadi saris and painting pots, one of them the same shade of Delhi Blue that had captivated British architects and planners (Image 25); Gurcharan Singh was now entering popular culture as sign of the new, of the local and of the self-made.[12]

After Independence, the first Indian government banned the import of foreign-made ceramics as part of the effort to grow local industries. Simultaneously, as Imperial became New Delhi, and new embassies and industrialists established themselves in the nation's capital, the need for table ceramics only grew as a consequence of the dinner parties for which the city is today so famous.[13] Many foreigners from the US and England who came to reside in Delhi were already familiar with the studio pottery movement which had expanded to include amateur training and practice. Gurcharan Singh began to teach a variety of people at Delhi Blue Art Pottery and he began to make Delhi blue tableware (Image 26). Soon, he was

12 The blue was given by the unknown person who tinted the image.

13 Interview with Mansimran Singh.

Image 30: Sabz Burj, 16th or 17th century, New Delhi, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabz_Burj#/media/File:Sabz_Burj_1.jpg

Image 31: Fahim Khan's Tomb or Nila Gumbad, Humanyun's Tomb Complex, ca. 1625. https://hi-in.facebook.com/OurMonuments/photos/pcb.492492901532999/492489824866640/?type=3&theate

commissioned to do things like the Delhi blue ceramic *jālī* which was first exported and then began to be used locally, for example in Joseph Stein's India International Centre (Image 27).[14]

To understand how one person, a young Panjabi Sikh man, a geologist, a novice at tilemaking, became involved in making Delhi into a place, we

14 Ibid.

Image 32: Tomb of Isa Khan Niyazi, 1547, Humayun's Tomb Complex, New Delhi, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomb_of_Isa_Khan#/media/File:Isha_Khan_Niyazi's_tomb_-_Delhi_297_HT.jpg

have to hold on to that moment in 1918, when Singh would have seen the future and the past simultaneously in the present, perhaps without even knowing that he was doing so, to connect it to the moment when he would recognize that his own body and mind were involved in the task of making materials for a place in which structures had been demolished and structures were being made. These moments come to us as precious fragments for imagining how Delhi in 1918 became for Singh a place of brown, a place where blue stood out as a magical streak

Image 33: Monsoon Sky over Mehrauli. Photograph by Annapurna Garimella, 2019.

Image 34: Blue tiled dome of Jahaz Mahal, Mehrauli. Photograph by Annapurna Garimella, 2019.

Image 35: Monsoon sunset over tomb in Sunder Nursery, New Delhi. Photograph by Annapurna Garimella, 2019.

of beauty, a local color that had been positioned as a mark of the past in the present through which he would be able to imagine, even if he did not consciously recognize it, as the future among a growing field of green with brown (Image 28). To imagine this is to see through the eyes of architects who imagined the turquoise-tiled dome of Timur's tomb against a paler but brilliant, azure Samarkhandi sky to be in the presence of Lodi builders deciding to trim their buildings with a richer cerulean; and then turn the corner and see Mughal *mi'maran* taking in Timurid and Lodi tiled structures and thinking about making whole domes in blue tiles, condensing the sky on the earth which could then flow and pool into a sharper, richer aqua in a garden that was still being imagined into existence to surround Sabz Burj (Image 29, 30, 31, 32, 33 and 34).[15] It is not too difficult a stretch to think that architects also would plan for the two months when the monsoon visits Delhi and the blue dome becomes a jewel set among the puffy white or orange rimmed rain clouds (Image 35). To imagine all this is to understand that all these histories of New Delhi flow to us across centuries, arriving at our present, thanks to many makers, but especially Gurcharan Singh, who made the city a place of romance, creative entrepreneurship and a new urbane culture of making. It is also to acknowledge the "vibrancy" of things, as Jane Bennett (2010) has termed it, to accept the vitality that matter has for human beings.

15 The exterior of the dome of Sabz Burj originally had turquoise tiles. The Aga Khan Trust is currently restoring it and the cobalt blue ones will be replaced with Delhi Blue tiles.

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AT 75, NEW ASPIRATIONS FOR NEW DELHI?

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Architect, Shodh Design Workshop

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"No capital in the world has been built on the site of as many legendary cities of old, as Delhi."
Patwant Singh, 1971

INTRODUCTION

The Central Public Works Department (CPWD), in early September 2019, issued a press notice inviting architects to compete for a redevelopment project of the Central Vista. The precinct which once symbolized British colonial power was appropriated post-Independence to celebrate the seat of the world's largest democracy. The area comprises of the Parliament building, Rashtrapati Bhavan, major ministry buildings, national cultural institutions and the triumphal arch- India Gate. The timeline of the project is ambitious and aims to construct the new Parliament building by July 2022, a new Secretariat by March 2024, and reshape the landscape surrounding the Central Vista by late 2020. The request for proposal (RFP) notice issued by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs stated the following as the objectives of the Central Vista Redevelopment Project:

> A new Master Plan is to be drawn up for the entire Central Vista area that represents the values and aspirations of a New India – Good Governance, Efficiency, Transparency, Accountability and Equity and is rooted in the Indian Culture and social milieu... These new iconic structures shall be a legacy for 150 to 200 years at the very least. (Dutta 2019)

In light of the above-mentioned trajectory, is it possible to make sense of the radical plans of the redevelopment of Lutyens' Delhi proposed by Prime Minister Modi's government? Furthermore, I intend to understand the ideological shifts and socio-political developments that have catalysed the demolition of various ministry buildings along with the Central Vista consolidation of the ministries at one location

which are right now spread across the city. This also extends to the North and the South Blocks of the Secretariat which are proposed to be converted into museums. Furthermore, the paper attempts to understand the process of museumification of architecture to discern the threshold between the past and the present while engaging with the process of history-making if there exists a lens to demarcate the two in the above-mentioned context. One section of this paper examines the very idea of re-conceptualisation of the Central Vista and the fate of the current buildings while the other section of the paper comparatively analyses the symbolic significance of the architectural elements of the buildings to be demolished and the buildings to be built.

NEW DELHI, AN IMPERIALIST PROJECT

On 12th December 1911, King George V and Queen Mary announced at the Coronation Darbar that British India's capital will shift from Calcutta to Delhi. Shifting the capital has been deemed as a political and administrative strategy following the instability caused by Curzon's Bengal Partition in 1905. In essence, the shifting of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi was Lord Hardinge's (the then-Viceroy) way to dissociate from any specific provincial government and use the historicity of Delhi to consolidate the British stronghold as the supreme government (Ridley 1998). This was also an opportunity for Lord Hardinge to establish a federation of self-governing states as opposed to Lord Curzon's crusade for centralized autocracy (Moore 1985). Sengupta (2006) purports that the purpose of the capital city was never out of utility but to showcase imperial power; from the beginning when the announcement was made till the tone of the aesthetics was decided; the process was made out to be ostentatious. Though the architecture style was wildly debated in both India and England, its rudimentary appearance had been articulated long before even the architects were commissioned. Lord Hardinge wrote a memo to Lord Crewe, the Secretary of State in London, titled 'Transfer of the Capital to Delhi' and in response, Crewe writes,

> The ancient walls of Delhi enshrine an imperial tradition comparable to Constantinople or that of Rome itself. (Sutton 2020: 73)

Sengupta (2006) further elaborates that reference to Rome was not in vain and the grand look associated with Rome, Nazi Berlin and Washington is called Grand Manner. Sengupta makes use of urban historian Spiro Kostof's work to explain that the Grand Manner is urban grandeur without any utility, that it was built without any pragmatic considerations. Instruments of heroic scale, luxurious building materials and visual homogeneity assert undiluted authority; the streets are built to hold pompous rituals and processions, as if the use of triumphal arches, obelisks and fountains could undermine the chaos of everyday life. Indian citizens had little or no agency to voice an opinion about the upcoming capital planning and design.

A Town Planning Committee was consolidated in 1912 to select a chief architect who would lay out the new Imperial city. Following several nominations, the Viceroy Lord Hardinge selected Sir Edwin Lutyens, an architect consulting the Hampstead Garden Suburb

Trust in England, and husband to former Viceroy, Lord Lytton's daughter; Lutyens' friend and architect Herbert Baker was summoned for assistance (Johnson 2015). Anthony King's (1976) Marxist critique proposes that Delhi is a textbook example of a modern colonial city –the geospatial planning, as well as the structures of power involved in the decision-making process, indicate British's dismissal to harbour interests of the British Raj's Indian subjects. Lord Hardinge (1948) makes boisterous claims in his memoir that it was he who insisted on the site south of the Ridge against the better judgement of experts' opinions after site survey. Furthermore, the British convoy of planners and architects did not attempt to integrate the old city with the new one. Lutyens was dismissive of Indian architecture and remarked that Indian builders "set stones and build child wise… Before [they] erect, [they] carve every stone differently and independently, with lace patterns and terrifying shapes. On the top, [they] build over trabeated pendentives an onion" (Metcalf 1989: 228).

Johnson (2015) writes that Baker and Lutyens needed to create a city that unified architecture with Enlightenment, because, despite the British conquering India by the sword, the officials often noted that the decision of colonialism was based on reason rather than autocratic will. The geometry used in the Imperial design employs pure forms and shapes like circle, square and triangle, which were used by the architects and the planners to assert Order and Law in contrast to what they saw as chaotic indigenous planning, or lack thereof. Furthermore, Lord Hardinge, his architects, his town planners and the government bureaucracy overseeing the project believed that the new capital was a gift from the British to India. According to the British, the project symbolized good government, rule of law and political reform, giving Indians greater responsibility in governance. However, Indian nationalists of the time, like Dadabhai Naoroji, would argue that the British were economically draining India and ruling by coercion. The British were losing their stronghold on India and political reforms became imperative. There was no better opportunity to assert British presence in India than building an Imperial capital to cement their position. The purpose of the city was not only to showcase British coercion, but it was also to signify that the British would reward good behaviour. The Secretariat North Block designed by Herbert Baker, flanking the Viceroy's House, is engraved with the words: "Liberty does not descend to a people… It is a blessing that must be learned before it can be enjoyed" (Vij 2014).

British concerns while deciding the site further strengthen King's argument. Irving (1981) notes that the Jamuna plain was rejected because it was considered malarial and threatening to the 'British health'. The site where the Coronation Darbar was held in north Delhi was considered too small and more importantly 'unsanitary' for its proximity to the old city. It was also important for the British that the Mughal monuments should not tower the imperial city and hence, the Raisina Hill was selected to dominate the existing landscape. According to Lutyens' initial report submitted in March 1913, the Central Vista was to be closed by a lake which would reflect the north gates of Purana Killa, built by the Mughal ruler Humayun in 1538 (Peck 2006). However, the budget of the project had to be cut down due to the outbreak of World War I and it was no

longer possible to change the course of River Jamuna to create the lake.

The plan of the imperial Delhi is a culmination of two parts. First, the rectangular grid forming the central axis consisting of monumental government buildings and the hexagonal grid which consists of residential and other local aspects. The central axis, known as Kingsway (now Rajpath) and Queen's Way (now Janpath) helms the Viceroy House (now Rashtrapati Bhavan) on the Raisina Hill at the west end and culminates at the All India War Memorial (now India Gate) and the statue of King George V (now removed) on the east end of the axis. Various government buildings (including North Block and South Block) are placed along the central axis, easing into groves of trees and ponds on either side. The majority of local activities, whether commercial, residential or recreational, occupy a triangular base connected via hexagonal pattern links.

The Secretary of Imperial Delhi Committee, Geoffrey de Montmorency drafted the initial residential plans. The logic was to place the bureaucratic dignitaries as close to Raisina Hill as possible, while the radial concentric circles housed the rest of the government. Lutyens accepted Montmorency's formula and christened the officials into three categories: fat whites, thin whites and thin blacks (Irving 1981). While the political incorrectness may not have raised alarms in those times, the missing 'fat blacks' category is testimony that despite Lord Hardinge's attempt of creating a more inclusive federal government, Indians had no place in higher bureaucratic positions. Therefore, creating housing for 'fat blacks' must not have occurred to the master planner. Sengupta (2006) adds that while no thought was given to allocating space for senior Indian government officials, affluent Indians were allotted plots along the roads radiating from Connaught Place. These were mostly for small Indian princes. She further explains that both Indian and British businessmen were allowed in New Delhi, yet they were kept at a distance, as the purpose of the new capital was political assertion.

Cohn (1987) notes that destroying and building monuments are ways of avenging history and making way for a new narrative. The imperial capital, New Delhi, was inaugurated in 1931. In 1947, India gained Independence from the colonial British rule. New Delhi was occupied by the British for sixteen years before another discourse began on architectural expression of the political ideology representative of the post-colonial nation. New Delhi was an embarrassment to the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru. In his letter to the Premier of East Punjab in 1947, he called the city 'un-Indian' (Nehru 1947). Mahatma Gandhi had proposed abandonment of the Viceroy's House (Stamp 2011).

APPROPRIATING IMPERIAL NEW DELHI POST-INDEPENDENCE

While the fate of monuments around Central Vista remained more or less unchanged, the fate of the British statues was different. After the establishment of the Parliament in 1952, the Government of India proposed a policy to remove all the statues of the British colonists (Alley 1997). While the proposals were being drafted to remove statues from all the states of India, most Parliamentarians were concerned that the landscapes in New Delhi and particularly around the Central Vista had to become

new arenas projecting the new nationalism. However, Nehru categorised the statues of the British colonizers in three categories: historical, artistic and offensive; he proposed that, without creating international ill-will, historical and artistic symbols were to be removed gradually while the outright offensive markers were to be removed immediately (Lok Sabha Debates 1957). As a result, statues of Lord Irwin, Lord Reading and Lord Chelmsford were only removed from outside the Parliament House after Nehru's death in late 1964 (Alley 1997). Successively, the statues of Lord Willingdon from the South Block of the Secretariat and Lord Hardinge from the Rashtrapati Bhavan (President's House) were removed. Although in 1965, on 13th August, twelve to fourteen (unidentified) people climbed on the statue of King George V and in a show of protest smashed the nose and the ears of the figure, it was only in 1968 that the statue was shifted to a storage facility in Old Delhi.

Lang (2010) argues that Ganesh Deolalikar (1890-1979), the first Indian to head the Central Public Works Department in Delhi (CPWD) and Shridhar Joglekar, Deolalikar's successor faced problems while developing the Mall area of New Delhi to accommodate the growing needs of the democratic government that required new institutional and administrative buildings. Despite much-debated symbolism of imperial British architects and urban planners, the two heads of CPWD adhered to the British designers' language albeit with some modifications. Much to the chagrin of the modernists'; the Supreme Court (1952), Vigyan Bhavan (1962), Udyog Bhavan (1957), Krishi Bhavan (1957) and Rail Bhavan (1962) follow the language of *chhatris, chhajjas and jalis*[1] with a dome on the top. However, these buildings have been Indian-ized to fit in the Mall area without being complete replicas of the buildings designed by Lutyens and Baker. For example, Deolalikar's Supreme Court building takes cues from the dome of the Viceroy's Palace yet the chhatris supported on a square base surrounding the dome take inspiration from Fatehpur Sikri in much contrast to Lutyens' or Baker's style of designing.

The story of the architecture of Independent India is non-linear and it would be a folly to chronologically categorize development of isolated architectural styles. Mehrotra (2011) purports that in the nationalist agenda of architecture two streams emerged which were not necessarily complementary: one, the stream being folk tradition which subscribed to revivalism and the other stream adopted modernism to represent the agenda of the future. However, by 1930s, modernism had established its presence with the Nationalist Movement and architecture became an instrument to further their ideology. Nehru famously wrote to the leaders of South Asia to embrace the future: "...not go abroad in search of the past, [but] go to foreign countries in search of the present. The search is necessary, for isolation from it means backwardness and decay" (Nehru 1946, as cited by Mehrotra 2011: 30).

1 Let me explain that *Chhattris* are open umbrella or small dome kiosk shaped pavilions, used for decorative purposes on the top of a roof. *Chhajjas* overhang running along a building or an eave of a window or a door and are used to deflect direct sunlight and rain water from entering through the windows and doors. *Jalis* are intricately carved latticed screens added to windows to restrict porosity and allow measured ventilation and sunlight.

Elite patrons of architecture favoured modernism as a bridge between Independent India and the rest of the world. Additionally, it was untainted with the quarrels of history or cultural restraints. Architects returning from Europe and America[2] endorsed the first modernist phase of Indian architecture (1947-1975). This period is marked by influences of several international stalwarts of modernism in India including Le Corbusier, Louis Kahn, Ray and Charles Eames.

Particularly under Nehru's direction, independent New Delhi saw a momentum towards experimental modernism. Some of the landmark buildings include Habib Rahman's Ravindra Bhavan (1961) which housed Sahitya Akademi, Lalit Kala Akademi and Sangeet Natak Akademi[3], Raj Rewal's Hall of Nations in the Trade Fair complex (1972), NDMC (New Delhi Municipal Corporation) building by Kuldip Singh, JK Chaudhary's IIT (Indian Institute of Technology) building and co-operative group housing scheme the Yamuna Apartments in Alaknanda commissioned by DDA (Delhi Development Authority). As I perceive it, post-Independence there were three distant 'Delhis' which were visions of different governing bodies over centuries: Shahjahanabad, Imperial New Delhi and Independent New Delhi. The political ideology came to govern the architectural expressions of the aforementioned Delhis. Mehrotra (2011) highlights that with the declaration of Emergency by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter) in 1975, Nehruvian modernism came to a halt. Furthermore, the liberalization of the economy in the 1990s under Finance Minister Manmohan Singh and Prime Minister Narasimha Rao "witnessed the rapidly disappearing role of the state in the influencing or creation of the built environment and a swiftly fading emphasis on a pan-Indian identity" (Mehrotra 2011: 33).

DEMOLITION OF HALL OF NATIONS, AN EPILOGUE TO 'NEW INDIA'?

In 2004, the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) began an unabashed discourse of tearing down the houses that were built by British architects in the Lutyens' Bungalows Zone (LBZ). These residences were built for colonial administrators and after India gained Independence, approximately 60% of these bungalows were occupied by the Government of India to house the senior officials while the remaining 40%, which were in private hands, were destroyed between 1980 and 2000 (Dalrymple 2004). The debate over conservation of LBZ is controversial; while one sect believes in the sanctity of the heritage value, the other sees it as an embarrassment of a colonial past waiting to be retrofitted with the needs of the present times.

On the one hand, the place and the relevance of the icons of imperial New Delhi are being tested while on the other, the epitome of modernist architecture in New Delhi, the Hall of Nations and the Halls of Industry, were razed to the ground. In 1972, Raj Rewal's buildings in Pragati Maidan displayed Independent India's technological prowess and ingenuity at an international level; however, in 2017 these

2 Some of these architects were Habib Rahman (first Indian architect to be trained at MIT), Achyut Kanvinde (trained at Harvard), Gira and Gautam Sarabhai, Piloo Mody or Durga Bajpai, and later Raj Rewal, Balkrishna Doshi or Charles Correa.

3 Built to commemorate the birth centenary of Tagore. The building houses three National Academies: Plastic Arts, Literature and, Dance, Drama and Music.

monuments were taken down to be replaced in the name of fanciful infrastructure.

In 2017, an agency under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, ITPO (Indian Trade Promotions Organization) brought down five buildings: one Hall of Nations and four Halls of Industry at Pragati Maidan. Sundaram (2011) notes the Asia 72 International Trade Fair was used by the Indian National Congress (INC) to display the technological feats of Independent India, while celebrating the 25th anniversary of the New Nation in 1972. Hence, architect Raj Rewal and engineer Mahendra Raj's buildings in Pragati Maidan not only marked the occasion by creating one of the largest spanning exhibition halls in the world but also exhibited the architectural wonder that could be born only out of the Indian context. Rewal (2017) highlights that structural engineering stalwart Buckminster Fuller was completely shocked on learning that space frames were being made from reinforced concrete rather than using the then-common practice of pre-fabricating steel space frames. Furthermore, Raj (Rewal 2017) explains that on their stringent budget, it was difficult to procure the required quantity of steel and iron, so they devised a cheaper yet ingenious construction method taking advantage of local plentiful skilled labour.

Additionally, the buildings were contextualised to the local weather conditions. For instance, the concrete flaps deflected rain and harsh sunlight and created a cool micro-climate using latticed screen (inspired by Mughal *jalis*) by allowing circulation of sufficient natural ventilation without using mechanical air conditioning. It is important to note that it was only in the 1980s that the Indian middle-class market saw the flooding of western produced electronic gadgets like coloured televisions, refrigerators, etcetera. Until then, most of these electronic gadgets were seen as symbols of luxury affordable only by a slim affluent class of Indians. In this sense, the replacement campus costing a whopping Rs. 2,254 crores (approximately $300 million) (Singh 2017) with fanciful amenities, like a helipad, a hotel, an exhibition hall, a multi-level food court or a high-end shopping mall, signals a change in aspirations. It remains to be seen whether books fairs and exhibitions of discounted displays return after the expensive renovation.

The ever-changing aspirations of the capital city and inadequate conservation legislation has costed Delhi relics of its history. Dalrymple (2004) proposes only Rome and Cairo can compete with volumes of historical ruin in Delhi; however, each year more ruins fall victim to 'unscrupulous property developers and unthinking bureaucrats': "in the competition between development and heritage, it is the latter that inevitably gives way. Besides the conservation debate, one is forced to make sense of the aspiration of the architecture driven by the political ideology of the current times. Can the demolition of Hall of Nations be read as an abandonment of the ethos of Indian modernism? In a city like Delhi which has conclusive remnants of its past masters, what is the place of the Central Vista Project of 2019?

CENTRAL VISTA PROJECT

The architectural history of Central Vista is being redefined to represent the values and aspirations of a 'New India'. Prime Minister Narendra Modi states that he could neither become a part of Lutyens' world nor could he

make the Lutyens' world a part of him, when asked about his regrets in an interview at the end of 2018; he adds he has come from a non-elite background and for him, everything is about the people of India. As Bahl explains:

> There two conflicting versions of this mythical club [called Lutyens' Delhi] that Prime Minister Modi uses in his aforementioned statement –one stands for the commercial lobbyists, bureaucrats, journalists, arms dealers and politicians who were exposed during the Tehelka Sting Operation; and the other representative of 'the insufferable groups of erudite English speaking thinkers who believe in social/cultural liberalism, gender equality, small state, freer enterprise, and a dollop of welfarism. (Bahl 2019)

Since September 2019, the Central Vista Project has faced severe criticism from various factions of the civil society, including conservationists, historians, environmental activists, architects or urban planners. For instance, A. G. Krishna Menon (2019) writes that

> The government appears to have perfected the art of governance by following the imperatives of 'rule by law', and avoiding the inconveniences of adhering to the necessities of the 'rule of law', to facilitate their work. (Menon 2019)

One of the foremost criticisms was the eligibility criteria for firms submitting the proposal –a minimum threshold of financial turnover and project size handled in the past restricted participation to a few firms. Eventually, six firms were eligible to submit proposals, and HCP Design, Planning and Management Pvt. Ltd., headed by Dr. Bimal Patel, a firm based out of the state of Gujarat, was selected for the design consultation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought forth yet another critic of the proposal. Delhi has been one of the worst affected cities in the country by the COVID-19 crisis. In such a time Sabikhi (2020) asks if it would be wiser to spend the money, Rs. 20,000 crores (approximately 2.7 billion USD), allocated for the Central Vista Redevelopment Project to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. A strong stream of criticism comes from those who question whether in the time of economic crisis building a new residence for the Prime Minister and the Vice President should be prioritised along with building a new Parliament. Consolidating the ministries along the entire Central Vista stretch would result in the loss of 'Delhi's version of New York's Central Park' (Kishore 2020). Delhi is one of the most polluted metropolis in the world, Kishore purports that the 2% core of New Delhi according to Dr. Patel's plan would triple in density adding innumerable cars creating a massive carbon footprint. Furthermore, CPWD has sought piecemeal environment clearances, the first being for the parcel of land where the new Parliament will be built. It is unclear why clearances are not being sought for the entire Central Vista Project as the environmental impact will be cumulative. An added caveat to the application is that the clearance is being filed under Category B2 of Schedule 8(a) of the Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006, which means that the project does not

need public consultation and an environmental impact assessment report will not be required (Maanvi 2020).

On 20th March 2020, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs published a gazetted notice indicating changed land use for 86.1 acres of land for the redevelopment of Central Vista in central Delhi. Let India Breathe, a collective, comprising of architects and other members of the civil society started a petition to state their objection to the Delhi Development Authority (DDA). The founder, Yash Marwah, informed of the 86.1 acres of land 80 acres were cordoned off and direct and indirect access to the general public was restricted; the space lost to general public includes spaces for recreation, public transport infrastructure, semi-public and public land use (Nath 2020). Citing Clause 5 of Chapter 10 of Master Plan for Delhi 2021 (MPD), Mr Raman added land-owning agencies and local bodies have to draft a special development plan for the conservation of heritage complexes; since the due process has not been followed, the land use pattern for Lutyens' Bungalow Zone cannot change.

Dr. Patel, architect and director of HCP, explains that for competitions of this scale, it is more important to select an architect who is capable of delivering rather than opening the competition for 'a persuasive first sketch' (Editors & Patel 2020: 91). He adds that it is important to select an appropriate architect and not the appropriate design (Editors & Patel 2020). Additionally, Dr. Patel explains that projects of this scale and complexity demand 'iterative design process' which essentially means the initial conception is restricted to developing 'a fuzzy concept' and surveys, studies and client requirements are developed as the project progresses. Between September 2019, when the design consultants were selected, and now, Dr. Patel emphasises that several studies have been conducted to understand the traffic flow, tree inventories and infrastructure maps. On questions of public involvement in the redevelopment project and democracy, Dr. Patel points out that

> Many people in the government do not believe strongly enough that it makes sense to constructively engage with the public… They are deeply suspicious of the motives of immoderate critics, advocates and activists; they have never experienced open and transparent governance because they are themselves from traditional backgrounds where blind faith, obedience and firm top-down exercise of authority are all seen as virtues; because the organizational set-up has no systems for constructive public engagement. (pp. 97)

When asked to describe the architectural vocabulary and language, Dr. Patel explains that it would be difficult for a layperson to distinguish between Lutyens' buildings and the new buildings (Friese 2020). Dr. Patel also highlights that Lutyens' Delhi has been appropriated by Indians to the extent that he thinks that many Indians imagine the space to be part of the Indian nation-state (Srivathsan 2020). However, he does add that the spire atop the new Parliament has been deployed to reference the "spires of temples and churches" because "in a vibrant democracy such as India's, the Parliament can be thought of as a sacred building" (Srivathsan 2020).

DISCUSSION

The aesthetics of the Grand Manner were used by socialist, fascist, monarchical and authoritarian leaders to build cities symbolising the government's patronage and might; Moscow's Red Square and Nazi's re-writing of Berlin symbolize the fantasy of large-scale remodelling of cities. However, Chandravarkar (2020) argues that even a democracy can adopt traces of monumentality with a view to making citizens perceive the government as a benevolent patriarchal figure effectively, emphasising the grandeur of the head of the polity. As a result, that kind of monumentality would signify a pedestalized position of the government. In this context, I think that it would be relevant to examine whether, as a society, we ought to embrace the continuity of imperial New Delhi or explore a truly alternative spatial configuration, one in which the government and the citizens have a closer, more reciprocal relationship.

When India gained Independence, politicians and bureaucrats furiously debated to change the imperial landscape of Central Vista. Furthermore, the new buildings constructed post-Independence in the Mall area came to symbolize a union between the architectural style used by the colonizers and what they perceived as more 'Indian' elements. These elements were inspired by Buddhist, Rajputana and Mughal architecture. Chandravarkar (2020) argues that while we do not hold any obligation towards the British imperial project, we do need to reflect on the 72-year long history of India's epicentre symbolizing democratic values. Dr. Patel's statement about the current government's mistrust of their critics is alarming. Furthermore, the statement indicates that the current government and Dr. Patel do not believe in democratic participation as far as large public projects are concerned. The statement is reminiscent of the British's dismissal in involving the subjects of the Raj while building New Delhi; albeit India is no longer colonized and is the world's largest democracy.

From the various presentations made by Dr. Patel, it appears that the concerns of executing the project with ease take precedence while design aspirations are an afterthought. Specifically, in the case of the Central Vista Redevelopment Project, which is loaded with historical significance and national collective memory, 'iterative design process' fails to grasp the colossal cumulative impact. Without a well-informed thorough compendium of environmental, economic, social, cultural and historical studies (to name a few), the project appears to be on shaky ground.

Furthermore, one would wonder about the architectural representation of the much-touted 'New India', which is being expressed through the redevelopment of Central Vista. The request for proposal (RFP) for the project emphasises on the expression of 'Indian values'; however, so far, architecturally speaking, 'Indian values' have taken on the disguise passed down from design traditions of the imperialists. References have been made to temple and church architecture; even so, it is questionable why the two places of worship have been singled out when India hosts a diversity of religions and cultures. The discourse on modernism and critical regionalism (which is the Indian adaptation of modernism) that once defined Independent India and Delhi's architecture has been completely left out as far as the Redevelopment of Central Vista is concerned. The current government's departure from the

previous government's political ideology also seems to have resulted in the abandonment of their defining architectural legacy.

Architect and urban planner Charles Correa compared Viceroy's House to the farmer's house from Orwell's Animal Farm (Correa 2010). The animals delay burning the house after expelling the humans from the farm. Gradually, the hierarchy of power is replicated with the pigs on the top and humans are no longer needed to control the other animals. In this regard, Correa writes that "the new regime is being validated by the imagery of the old one" (Correa 2010: 63). The ninth Delhi was built to proclaim glory and magnificence to the Raj subjects by the colonizers. The masterpieces of indigenous architecture of the time were refused due acknowledgement and were portrayed as 'the work of monkeys'. If the redevelopment of Central Vista were to be the building of the tenth Delhi, one would hope it upholds the tenets of constitutional morality, reflecting the secular and democratic ideals of a constitutional republic.

Historical monuments are representational of the collective memory of any society and they are not only preserved to remember history but also to trace and define collective identity. The Central Vista Redevelopment Project is controversial yet had it been better timed, it had great potential to revisit the numerous Delhis without reducing the significance of its history to the confines of museums. The indicative architectural blueprint of the Central Vista Redevelopment Project does not celebrate the rich history of the city. Moreover, the architecture of the Indian Subcontinent is reduced to spires of temples and churches. The project makes no cognizance of the problematic nature of colonial architecture. This project could have been the beginning of a nuanced dialogue between acceptance of past traumas of the city (as well as the colonial past of the Indian Subcontinent) and the aspirations for the future. While making museums out of colonial buildings may be the politically correct move, the Central Vista Redevelopment Project is a lost opportunity merely paying lip-service to selective episodes of an extremely important historical city. It is then not an overreach to say that the Central Vista Redevelopment Project furthers the agenda of polarising an already polarised nation along religious and political lines. The project emboldens a certain vision for a 'New India' envisaged by the current government which has limited space for secular and egalitarian ideas.

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THE LAHORI GATE POLYCLINIC, NEW DELHI, INDIA

BUILDING FOR AN INCLUSIVE CITY

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Architect, RKDS

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In 2008, our architectural studio in Delhi was approached by The Sir Sobha Singh Public Charitable Trust to construct a primary healthcare centre/Polyclinic in the heart of Old Delhi, one of the most densely populated parts of the city. Besides fulfilling its role as a PHC, the centre was intended to focus on early detection of HIV and TB patients. There was a higher than average prevalence of both these diseases in this particular part of the city due to very specific local conditions.

The proposed building was going to be situated on the erstwhile site of a tax collection building owned by the government of Delhi. While the land was owned by the government, the building was intended to be a gift to the city municipality of Delhi by the charitable trust.

The Sir Sobha Singh Public Charitable Trust was set up in 1961 in the memory of Sir Sobha Singh, who was one of the main contractors for the construction of New Delhi for the British Raj. Over the years, the charitable trust has run dispensaries, funded a large a number of 'Not for Profit' organisations across the city of Delhi, as well as constructed buildings for charities that they have donated to city organisations across Delhi. In the recent past, the trust had constructed a number of such buildings, with two of them being designed by our studio. The first of them was a rest home for the poor in East Delhi's Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital, a facility that not only served East Delhi, but also treated patients from the semi-rural areas adjoining East Delhi. Most of the visiting patients were very poor and would be accompanied by their families to the city. The caretakers would not be able to afford paid accommodation and would end up sleeping on the road-side, or within the complex of the hospital. Which was not only unsafe from a health and safety point

due to the harsh Delhi winters, roadside accidents and the presence of vermin and dogs in the neighbourhood. The hospital requested the Trust to commission a building that would be a dormitory for the people accompanying their sick to the hospital. This facility was commissioned in 2003 when the Trust approached us and was inaugurated in 2006. The second health building commissioned by the Sir Sobha Singh Charitable Trust was this primary health care Centre near Lahori Gate Chowk.

LOCATION/SITE

Lahori Gate Chowk, is a square located at the end of a hardware market and near the busy railway station of Sadar Bazar in Old Delhi. The site of the proposed Health Centre was a few hundred feet away from the Lahori Gate Chowk, situated on one of the arguably most interesting sites within the city. The site given for the building was an old railway tax collection building that was dilapidated and unsafe for use. It was the last building on the road next to a large railway storage yard and abutting an ancient Mosque, the Lahori Gate Mosque to its North. Across the road, toward the East was an old disused city library which was the buffer between the site and the infamous GB Road, one of the busiest hardware markets of the city by day and its most notorious Red Light District by night. To the West of the site was a large tract of railway lines that serviced the Old Delhi railway station and the nearby Sadar Bazar Station, and on the narrow strip of land between the site and the railway lines was

a small slum settlement of about twenty-five to thirty dwellings.

The area around the Lahori Gate Chowk, being a commercial hub has a large number of itinerant labour that works around the railway yards as carrying loads to the hardware market and from there onwards to the other parts of the city. Most of the work related to moving hardware packages across this part of the city is done manually, either on two wheeled push carts or carried directly on the persons head and shoulders through the narrow streets of the market.

While there are laws that stipulate minimum wages for labour and limits on the number of hours a person can work as well as safety precautions that must be followed while working, the implementation of these laws are nearly impossible within the existing conditions across most of India. As a result, the wages earned by the manual labour working around this area are abysmally low, and to be able to earn a living wage, the working hours are extremely long.

Most of the daily wage labour are migrant workers to the city where they barely have any social security nets to help them through difficult periods of their life. It is almost imperative to work every day to be able to survive.

Drug usage around the site was high, and it is understandable that the drug of choice was the lowest grade of unrefined heroine; Brown sugar, consumed by burning crystals on an aluminium foil and inhalation of the resultant fumes produced. Inevitably, there was a lesser degree of needle usage as well around this area.

Low nutrition, and fatigue caused by low pay and a long work day leads to low immunity, and the high infection rate of TB and the drug usage inevitably leads to a high prevalence of HIV and TB amongst the population in this particular area.

THE BRIEF

The client approached us to create a primary care centre that focused on the needs of the local migrant population, particularly keeping in mind the high number of TB and HIV patients. This was not intended to be a hospital as much as an early detection and post hospital care centre for the patients infected with both these conditions. This intention of the client also aligned with their long-term goal of building health infrastructure for the city of Delhi.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRIEF AND CONTEXT OF PUBLIC HEALTH BUILDINGS

One of the most seminal health buildings built in the 20th century is the Finsbury Health Centre in London, designed by the architect Berthold Lubetkin and the Tecton group in the late 1930's just before the Second World War.[1]

Situated near a slum, the Finsbury Health Centre came up at a time when the conversations around the role of modernist architecture in society under the influence of the Soviet Revolution and consequent work of the constructivist movement in USSR and Bauhaus in Germany were at their peak. The political, aesthetic and social positions that formulated the design direction for the Finsbury Health Centre were a dramatic shift from earlier thinking in Britain about the role of government and the place of the ordinary citizens in a society distinctly divided along class lines. Ideas of universal access to healthcare, and the responsibility of the state towards its citizens in health, education and social justice were now firmly entrenched within society and architecture was beginning to facilitate some of these conversations into

1 You can take a look at the Finsbury Health Centre at Historic England Homepage, available here: https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1297993

reality. The Finsbury Health Centre was one such important building that not only placed the idea of the importance of health and the role of the government towards its citizens, it did it through a strong modernist language that was considered the new language of architecture for a more equal world of the future. The building brought bright light into the entire healthcare facility, it considered and adopted new ideas of light and ventilation for all the spaces, but more importantly it rose out of its surrounding poor neighbourhood as a beacon of hope for the future.

For me personally, there were many parallels that I as an architect could see with the social condition of 1930's London and the Delhi of nearly a century later. The site of the Lahori Gate Polyclinic was situated in one of the poorer parts of the city, surrounded by railway lands and slum clusters, it was also intended to come up in one of the most vulnerable parts of the city.

The cue for the design intent was taken from the ideals laid out by Lubetkin and the Tecton group in the early part of their practice in England, however, the cultural and political realities of urban India are different from those of pre-war England.

THE DESIGN

If one was to look at the relationship that citizens of the country have with the State it would not be difficult to say that the relationship is one defined by fear. This fear is present in the dealings of the citizens with Law enforcement,

the Administration, the Judiciary as well as the Health services. During our research of health facilities across the city, it was evident that the architecture deliberately or inadvertently added to this relationship of fear. To dismantle this hierarchy, the design of the building had to try and be democratic, welcoming and become a beacon to the neighbourhood.

Recalling ideas of a modernist architecture designed and built for the people, the Polyclinic façade was designed to create transparency as a contrast to normal government buildings and we chose bright colours to emphasize the importance and centrality of public buildings built for a community.

FLEXIBILITY

Preliminary discussions with the stakeholders revealed that a certain amount of flexibility built into the design was desirable as the nature of the working of a neighbourhood health centre was fluid, particularly during times of ailment specific health camps that are often held in neighborhoods. This flexibility had also to be built in keeping in mind the possibility that the Delhi government was considering moving a team of senior doctors to be positioned at the clinic on a rotational basis. This would require surgeries for individual practitioners which would in turn require a different spatial configuration than if the building was to be used as a more traditional Primary Health Care Centre.

LIGHT AND AIR

Usually smaller government medical facilities due to budgetary constraints, are not air conditioned, and this facility was no exception, and did not have any centralized cooling or heating designed for it. However, the site of the building benefitted from a large open tract of land towards the railway lines. This created a great opportunity for the building to benefit from the natural breeze blowing across the city and allow for natural cross ventilation of air through the building, something that is harder to achieve for buildings that are hemmed in on all sides. Keeping the air changes in mind, particularly for a medical facility, the building was designed almost like a sieve, allowing for a great deal of cross ventilation and penetration of natural light throughout the floor plate of the building.

THE ARCHITECTURAL PLAN AND INTENT

The entrance to the building was a double height well-lit space from where the patients would get their appointments slips and then navigate themselves to the respective surgeries where doctors would be stationed to examine them. A dispensary was designed on the ground floor of the building to distribute the prescribed medicines to the patients and an additional space for a visiting General Practitioner and a nurse were also located on the ground floor.

The four-story building was designed such as to create clinics for the doctors on the lower two floors and have a small dormitory and two individual rooms for patients to stay overnight on the upper floors. The ability of the building to be able to allow accommodation to patients for short stays allowed it to programmatically become a cross over between a health care centre and a Hospice.

The Delhi government health department wanted to explore the idea of being able to observe certain patients in a smaller facility like this to see if certain health solutions could be found more locally, rather than having

to refer patients with milder or less serious ailments to the overburdened large city hospitals.

This building was designed to explore a number of health, architectural and community outcomes, and because it was constructed and funded outside the parameters of the Government official design criteria, it afforded the Health Department a certain design freedom to push certain boundaries of health deliveries outside of the bureaucratic framework and to put to practice certain beliefs and theories that had been successfully achieved in other territories and states.

THE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

The building was designed as a simple rectilinear form that had to be cost effective, have an environmentally low footprint and allow a greater degree of insulation to reduce the ambient temperature as it was not mechanically cooled. Designed with a concrete frame with fly ash bricks as the infill structure, it took considerably longer to construct than a similar building of this nature would have on another site.

The presence of petty criminals, drug users and the proximity of the slum cluster abutting the building made the task of finding a contractor agreeable to construct the building difficult. Over the course of three years that it took to construct, two contractors had to change, and four site supervisors and three site engineers quit their jobs to work elsewhere. The progress was slow, however with regular meetings with the stakeholders the importance of creating such projects for the city were constantly reiterated. It was not always the best or the most convincing argument, but it was an important reminder of one of the more prevalent realities of our city. However, besides some petty theft of material and the occasional pockets that were picked, the fear of the area was far greater than the reality of the imagined crime.

THE COMPLETION AND THE INAUGURATION

Towards the end of 2010, the building was nearing completion, and the Sir Sobha Singh Trust was keen to have the local Member of Parliament of the ruling party come to inaugurate the building. After reaching out to the politician several times, a date three months from the completion of the project was given to the trust and the health authorities of Delhi.

After a thorough clean-up of the building and the surrounding site, the Polyclinic was sealed up and was to remain so, in its pristine condition awaiting the politicians' inauguration. Inaugurations are an important part of the political and cultural life of public institutions, as they give political mileage to the representative politician and an opportunity to speak to their constituency, but it also gives the donors and the institution press and publicity.

Buildings once complete grant us as architects very small windows of opportunities to be able to photograph the building in its unoccupied state. This is truer for public buildings as they, once operational, become a beehive of activity and a certain type of architectural imaging becomes nearly impossible. Ten days before the inauguration of the building, early one morning two of us from the architectural studio and an accompanying architectural photographer went to the building to photograph it. As we approached the building, it was clear that there was something considerable differ-

ent about the site. The building was the last building on the site next to a cul-de-sac. After the cul-de-sac, the building was surrounded by small clusters of slum dwellings; three clusters of three to four huts on the south side of the building between the railway stock yards and then a larger cluster of perhaps twenty to twenty-five homes towards the west of the building between the building and the railway tracks.

These homes had been present on the land surrounding the building for the past several years from before we began the construction of the building to during its construction and up to its completion, however, when we approached the building to photograph it, we realized almost immediately that none of the homes remained surrounding the Polyclinic. We first noticed the missing homes to the south of the building and then as we moved around the building to continue our initial recce, we noticed that the entire group of twenty-five hutments towards the side of the railway were no longer there. In their place just a large mound of dismantled and broken walls and plastic sheets remained.

I think the horror of the situation did not dawn upon us for a few moments. Upon finding out from the neighbours and residents of the area, conflicting narratives emerged. Some claimed that there was a voluntary exodus, but the majority very clearly said that there had been a forced eviction drive to remove the hutments in time for the politicians' inauguration of the building.

The irony of the situation that the very people for whom the building had been built, the socially and economically weakest and the most vulnerable, were the very first to be displaced from their homes for the inauguration of the very building built to serve their needs was not lost on anybody.

Now, several years after the inauguration of the clinic, upon revisiting it, the building appears to be in use, not to its full working potential, but substantially, and while a great degree of opacity has been brought to the building through individual actions of the occupiers in the form of opaque partitions and fabric dividers, what still stands out is the original design intent of the building; a contemporary beacon for the community, that serves, if not the entire neighbourhood, a substantial part of it by helping them through conditions like TB and HIV.

What did become apparent is that while political will might be the strongest determinant of the health and wellbeing of a society, architecture continues to have the ability to positively impact societies and neighbourhoods even with small gestures.

It is sad that as I write this piece, just a few days ago, the Supreme Court of India has passed an order to evict 250,000 slum dwellers who have built their homes on the periphery of railway land in the Capital city of Delhi.[2]

Nearly all these residents are from the economically most vulnerable communities

2 For further documentation, see Annie Banerji (2020) or Express News Service (2020).

that work as daily wage labour in the cities unorganized waste and recycling sector, and none of them are eligible for any compensation or rehabilitation. There are already petitions being filed that rightly state that demolishing the homes of the people on the tracks would amount to pushing them further into poverty and that those being evicted should be provided compensatory housing before they are evicted. However, such solutions themselves remain complex and much more nuanced in reality. Most past compensations have displaced evicted people to the periphery of the city where earning livelihood is next to impossible and transport costs to travel across the city prohibitive. There has been a lot written about directives and actions of the government aimed at slums across urban India by activists and academics. As a practicing architect, I have attempted to share a specific experience of engaging with a small sliver of the city while trying to build a public health building. However, while there have been initiatives that have improved the quality of life for the residents of our cities, as a result of the extremely fast pace at which our urban footprint is expanding, singular and occasional interventions will not be able to create equitable and just societies in the near future.

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CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS FROM THE ARCHITECTURAL LANDSCAPE OF WORKING-CLASS SETTLEMENTS

THE EXPERIENCE OF ANKUR-DELHI

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Ankur Society for Alternatives in Education
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ABOUT ANKUR

Ankur Society for Alternatives in Education has been actively engaged in working class settlements in the city of Delhi for over three decades. At present it is working in five locations. A vision of justice, peace, humanism and creativity, regard for diversity and faith in the intrinsic genius of ordinary people, informs the work of the organisation. Its pedagogical interventions involve children and young persons in research and writing on their neighbourhoods. They open doors to varied ways of 'seeing' and 'listening'. Young practitioners learn to 'see' new shades of colours and new contour lines in routine experiences. They start capturing nuances of sounds not heard earlier. The mystery of the architectural construct of the city is drawn out through diverse exercises. A new body of knowledge emerges. Ankur acts as a curator to document these texts and thereby produce a non-elite literature.

THE SETTLEMENTS AND THEIR SOCIAL LANDSCAPE

The residents of these settlements hail from different parts of the country. Distress-migration from rural to urban India is a continuous phenomenon. It is primarily due to erosion of traditional means of livelihood, which rides on the back of development projects. In streams and trickles people have been coming here for well over 50 years. They are from diverse religio-cultural and geographic backgrounds. Cultural signifiers like language, food and dress often continue for some time without creating any conflicts. However, the hybridity of Delhi soon overpowers many, especially youngsters. A lot of people keep in touch with their villages, visiting family members, particularly the elderly, during holidays, festivals and seasons of sowing and harvesting. The tendency of people from the same milieu to live

near each other is but natural. Hence, there are settlements of people professing one religion or belonging to one community, or speaking the same language.

These settlements are usually viewed through two stereotypical lenses. They are often seen as breeders of diseases and dens of vices, Second, they are seen as lacking everything, not just in terms of spaces and basic amenities, but also in terms of human worth and values. They are considered to be bereft of intelligence, talents, skills, sensitivity, empathy and compassion.

Ankur believes that these people are inferior to none. Ankur respects their capabilities and contributions. In fact, the imaginations that go into inventing newer modes of living and expressing are unique to the margins. Within the daily grind of survival, life here throbs with intellectual, emotional and cultural vitality.

We tend to forget that people of these colonies provide essential services to urban centres. Amongst them are cooks, cleaners, drivers, mechanics, waiters, chefs, vendors, cobblers, electricians, carpenters, masons, plumbers, painters, sales and security-persons, coolies, loaders and many others, without whom cities like Mumbai, Kolkata and Delhi would come to a standstill.

People living in close-knit quarters know each other's worlds – births and deaths, joys and sorrows, skills and strengths. There may be fights over scarce resources like water. But more pronounced are help and support in times of need. Neighbours pitch in to look for a lost son. Four orphan girls living under a tarpaulin shed on the edge of a park are supported by families living around. A mother offers her tiny verandah to children from the locality to sit and write. A grandmother and a father share their life histories with practitioners. Two mothers cooperate to undertake different tasks for their children – one takes all children from school to home, the other goes to the market/bank to do errands for both. Men and women tell each other about available openings of work and also share skills they know. Learning from each other is organic to them. Fulfilling needs and desires calls for individual as well as collective efforts. Social relationships are nurtured out of necessity as well as empathy. Experience teaches that social relationships are torn asunder when a settlement is uprooted.

SITES FOR CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS

Finding a place within tightly woven settlements is a challenge. Spaces available in nooks and corners, alleys and lofts are put to multiple uses – cooking, sleeping, working, gossiping, storing, selling and playing. Modern forces convert real, living places into abstract spaces. People do the reverse. A space is renewed into a place through activities and conversation.

Ankur locates itself as a nodal point in the midst of these neighbourhoods. Sites are identified in a range of spaces – staircases, balconies, broken walls, windows, dead-ends of lanes, small shops, vendors' stations and of course corners in one's own homes. Terraces open to the sky are great places to converse, reflect, write and put up art-installations. Terraces and balconies are lifelines for girls and women. A lone tree with a pack of cards kept underneath or festooned with colourful buntings and equipped with loudspeakers, invite young and old from the community to come and

converse, play and recite, write and share, sing and act. Then there are mobile structures like parked hand-carts and cycle-rickshaws, stalls in the weekly bazaars, rides in a train or bus. Ankur creates mobile booths for story-telling and slide-shows. Festivals like Eid and Diwali and celebrations like weddings and community feasts provide themes as well as presentation-opportunities for budding writers. Ankur organises events like 'Let us play' and 'Our Literary Festival' to open up a larger domain of sharing and confidence-building. The writers are also invited to events organised in the outside world - in the city, in the country and outside the country.

Thus ordinary spaces are turned into extraordinary places where the sky is the limit. Architectural constraints do not limit the aesthetic and intellectual outpourings. These vibrant sites host the flowering and exchange of ideas, feelings and expressions.

The Locations of the stories

These sites of Ankur's intervention are located in different settlements of Delhi. The topography of each colours the writings. The small settlement near Khichripur colony in East Delhi, adjacent to the garbage-hill (backdrop of the first story) is a recent one. The resettlement colony of Sundernagari is situated on the North-Eastern periphery of the city and another one, Dakshinpuri in South Delhi. Uprooted from other parts of Delhi, people started living in these settlements 1975 onwards. The so-called resettlement colonies have a common architectural pattern. Rows upon rows of one, two or three storeyed narrow houses are packed like match-boxes, each on 18-20 square-metres of land. The plots allotted by government were paid for by the settlers. Living conditions are abysmal - open drains, lack of sanitation and potable water, poor medical and schooling facilities and long-distance commuting for work on bicycles or on irregular and overcrowded buses.

Sandwiched between two big hospitals in central Delhi the large unauthorised LNJP (Lok Nayak Jai Prakash) Colony got the first residents fifty years ago. Most of the hutments and tarpaulin-tin sheds have been gradually replaced by brick structures. Little partitioned corners and attics have been added to some houses to accommodate expanding families. Some houses can boast of tiny terraces. Many houses have jute-curtains as doors: these curtains speak through gendered voices. Girls and women steal precious moments to exchange jokes and gossip through the canvas. At some places, the meandering strips of lanes are just broad enough for two persons to pass. Basic amenities are pathetic - very poor sanitation, narrow open drains and one water-tap for dozens of families. Several houses are lower than the lanes. During rainy season water and slush enter inside. People build little barrages to keep the slush out. Even then, many buckets full of slush have to be thrown out. Most children go to nearby government schools. Being near two hospitals, medical help is more accessible.

The sword of eviction has been hanging over LNJP Colony for the last one decade. Every time an official comes, panic grips the people and there is a scramble to put together whatever documents they feel might be needed. The politics of votes and elections has somehow prevented the dislocation till now.

Livelihood opportunities for most people have to be squeezed out of whatever is available. The colony's outer edges have rows

of carpenters' shops dealing in packing boxes, cheap and old furniture. Another source of livelihood has been keeping mules which are useful carriers of goods. They are fast disappearing with the arrival of motorised vehicles. There are people who cook food items and sell in the market across the road and elsewhere. There are plumbers, electricians, painters and musicians, whose jobs are erratic. Opportunities are seized to do with less, to realise new avenues of work. Innovation is the name of the game.

The stories selected for this article emerge from these neighbourhoods. They are woven around themes of pollution, joys of childhood, gender and livelihood. The nuances of pollution are picked up in two texts. The joy and sadness of having and then losing one's pet cat has been captured in the next story. The happiness of seeing one's little brother obsessed with momos and then getting satisfied when the mother opens a momo-shop, is expressed in another text.

Gender has been addressed in four stories. A girl realises how having boys as friends in childhood is fine, but things change as she grows up. Then, a group of girls take off on a cycle-rickshaw enjoying their short-lived freedom. Another group does collective cooking and selling rotis (flat bread) for a bit of cash to buy a few trinkets. A teenaged girl ventures out to earn much needed money, working as an assistant to a doctor. The story on livelihood shows how people discover potentials of earning from discards. Thus, these small texts give glimpses of how people of the margins use their imagination to navigate through life and to write about their journeys.

THE STORIES

THE HOUSE NEXT TO THE GARBAGE-DUMP

The door of Rama's house opens towards the garbage-dumping ground, hardly a couple of metres away. Her hutment of 20 square yards has only one opening - the door. Rama gets up at 5.30 a.m. while her parents are still asleep. She cleans the room. The door is right in front of the cooking place. She puts her hand on her mouth while sweeping. She half-closes the door while preparing breakfast in the morning so that the foul smells do not waft in. As soon as she puts oil on the hot pan, a white powder-like smoke spreads all across. She starts sweating and feeling suffocated. Yet she does not open the door. Looking out, she does not feel like cooking.

Once they had gone to attend a wedding in their village. Upon their return after a week they found the house in shambles. There wasn't a dry spot to put one's feet on. Her mother held her head and sat down at the door. The air was heavy with foul smells and dampness. Before going to the village her parents had tied plastic sheets all around and over the shack. But the lashes and weight of rainwater had torn them apart. Bed, television, clothes - everything was wet. Lying down on wet beds with the foul smells wafting in from the ground, sleep was near-impossible. Everyone got up in the morning with a splitting headache.

Mother put her stove out in the street to cook some rice. She kept looking alternately at the stove and at the garbage ground. Papa continued to clean and sweep, wiping his sweat.

Rama got involved in opening out the damp clothes and sheets and folding them afresh. Their smelly dampness was hitting her nostrils and making her shut her lips tight.

Ritu, Grade X, Khichripur

THE CONSTRUCTION GOES ON

On the last day of school before summer vacation Ma'am wished us "Happy Holidays" and said, "You will see a change in your school when you return. Some more classrooms are needed. Construction will begin tomorrow".

Two months later, I walked towards the school in anticipation of seeing the new classrooms. Entering the school gate, I encountered a strong whiff of dust. I started coughing and rubbing my eyes and stopped near a tree. Opening my eyes I was taken aback at what I saw. Digging was going on apace. This was our beloved corner, full of trees and grass on the ground. During lunch-time we used to play here. There used to be shade all over and we could enjoy the cool breeze. But now most trees were gone. A bulldozer was busy digging the ground and dust was constantly blowing out into the air. Anyone entering the gate had to cover her nose with a handkerchief. The person sitting inside the bulldozer was also constantly opening and closing his eyes.

The Principal announced in the prayer meeting that since construction was going on, the children should not venture out to that side during lunch time. My class is not too far from the place where digging is taking place. We can see it from the window. The noise from the digging distracts us. Trucks laden with stones, sands and gravel come on a daily basis. When they are emptied on the ground the particles of sand and gravel are blown towards the classroom. Many of my classmates start having headache. Due to digging, the path to the school gate has narrowed down. When we walk on it, the dust starts blowing. I find it difficult to breathe and try to walk out fast.

Zeba Khatoon, Grade *VIII, Sundarnagari*

MY TINY FRIEND

It was a cold winter morning. My brothers, Shoyeb, Adeeb, and I were still within our quilts, despite Ammi's several calls to get up. Ultimately, she pulled away our quilts. We had to get up, and we started going down the stairs. Suddenly we heard a squeaky little voice "meow... meow...". All three of us started looking around and found a little, brown-kitten trying to hide behind the door.

Adeeb caught him and carried him upstairs. Ammi asked us to take him back from wherever he had come. I said, "Ammi, it is such a tiny thing. He is shivering with cold. Give him some milk." Ammi gave him milk in a bowl. I gave him biscuits. After eating he started running and I started playing with him, which became a daily routine. He accompanied me everywhere. Shoyeb built a little house with wooden planks. I painted it red and green. The kitten started living in it. He stayed with us for three weeks.

One day when I came back from school, the little house was empty. The kitten's mummy had come and taken him away. I became very sad, remembering my little friend.

Adeeba, Grade IV, LNJP colony

OUR MOMO SHOP

My four-year old brother Imran loves to eat momos. A couple of weeks back, he came running to Ammi, "Give me money Ammi, I will buy momos." Ammi ignored him. He pulled at her shirt and again pleaded for money. Ammi pushed him away exclaiming, "this has become your daily drama. I won't give you money." Imran started crying and beating his hands and feet on the floor. Ammi had to give in. He got his twenty rupees and ran outside. I suggested to Ammi, "Imran spends a lot of money on momos. Why don't we ourselves open a momo-shop. We had once opened an eggs' shop. Similarly we can have a momo shop."

Ammi started thinking, "Well, we can open one. But it will need investment of money. We don't know how much is needed." I said, "I will get information from the momo-seller who sits in Naeem's lane." Abbu was ok with the idea, but asked "Who will sit in the shop?" Ammi said she would. I could not stop myself from saying "Sometimes I can sit in the shop too." After pondering a little, Abbu agreed. Next day Ammi went to the momo seller and collected the information. He buys ready-made momos from Daryaganj, and fries or steams them at his stall.

Next day Ammi and I, after taking directions from people, reached the address given. We enquired about the rate and bought chicken momos worth Rs. 100 and vegetable momos for Rs. 30. Then we bought a counter for Rs. 150, some utensils and refined oil. In the evening we opened the shop. Curious children flocked around – "Aunty, how many momos will we get for Rs. 10?" Ammi said, "Four steamed and three fried." My friends also came. And in a corner, Imran was enjoying momos with his friends.

Nazia, Grade VIII, LNJP colony

MAHIRA LOVES HER FRIENDS

When Mahira was 5-6 years old, she had many cousins and neighbours – boys and girls - as friends. In their grandmother's house they played kho-kho and teased each other. Games were stopped when Papa's arrival was imminent. He never realised which were the boys playing with her. However when she grew a little older, Papa asked her not to play with boys, as people might make comments, even if he understands they are friends and cousins. Mahira's response was: "They are such nice friends and you should ignore people's comments."

But gradually when they became 16-17 years old, Mahira herself did not talk to them much, and if they started talking she became nervous and ran away. She thought "they used to be my friends and I was happy being with them. But now I also am aware about what people may say."

Very soon one of the friends said "Why are you so worried about people's words? Why should we break our friendship?" Mahira thought about it. She talked to her Papa also. She would not leave her friends because of what people say. Papa seemed to be ok with it.

Now she spends time with her friends - girls and boys. She also converses with them on whatsapp and does not feel lonely.

Falak Khan, GradeV, LNJP colony

THE RIDE ON A CYCLE RICKSHAW

The wedding tent was looking very exciting. It was echoing with the sounds of the band. But outside, the expansive road was also inviting us. We saw a rickshaw parked by the side of the garbage-dump. Several of us climbed on top of it. Kiran sat on the driver's seat and pushed the

paddle, all of us screamed. But Kiran had taken the rickshaw up on the road.

We kept on going at a high speed, shouting and screaming. Never had we girls been allowed to drive a cycle or a rickshaw. After having travelled quite a distance we heard several dogs barking. Suddenly we saw a light coming towards us, we stopped on the side. The dogs came near. But we laughed. We went on playing for a while - us and the dogs. The dogs left us, realising we were madder than they. We forgot our fears and felt free. Some drunkards walked around staggering, but not bothering us. Suddenly the chain of the rickshaw slipped out. We got scared. But Kiran said 'Not to worry, this is nothing. I'll put it right in a jiffy.' And she did.

We flew on the road and turned towards the tent. It was cold and dark, but our ride was joyful. We were riding so freely on an open road which is always crowded with traffic. All of a sudden we saw my uncle and brother come out. We left the rickshaw and tried to sneak towards the tent. But uncle saw us and beckoned in a threatening way to get inside the tent. Scarcely able to smother our laughter we went in. But the wedding tent was no longer attractive to us.

Bhumi, Grade-VI, Vinay, Grade-VI , Dakshinpuri

COLLECTIVE KITCHEN

We were ten girls – Shafiya, Rukhsaar, Yashoda, Komal, Suneeta, Rabiya, Maya, Amreen, Reshma and Alisha. When we went to the shops we got tempted to buy small trinkets like earnings, hair bands or bangles. But we never had the money. Our parents would not give money for such trivial things. We thought to ourselves: Why not do something. But what? No one seemed to know. None of us had any skill apart from household work. We could not go out of the colony; our fathers would have beaten us. For days we kept on thinking. One day we saw Suneeta taking chapattis (flat bread) for persons living on rent on the first floor.

An idea flashed across our minds. We could now do something within the colony itself. We could cook food and sell to such people. But we had no resources. We put our heads together and found answers. Required stuff was available for free, around us. We made a stove out of bricks and used waste material as fuel. We would gather around 6 a.m. Shafiya would bring the discards, so precious to us, from the nearby factories- pieces of card board boxes, heels of sandals and rags of cloth, which lit up the stove. Some of us put together the flour that each had brought from home and made the dough. The rolling pins and boards were brought out. Somebody would roll out the rotis, others would cook them on a griddle on the stove and yet others would sell them. One roti with a piece of pickle would sell for one rupee. Cooking, serving and eating would go on simultaneously and with many hands working together everything was done within a short time. We made 60 rotis at a time, which would sell off immediately. Later our rotis went to the factories also. People came to our houses to eat. We enjoyed it. Cooking twice a day we made a profit of Rs.1000/- in 10 days. Then we did not need more. We bought what we wanted and then stopped.

We had never imagined that an action fulfilling our desire would fulfil the need of others. The young men were poor migrants in search of work living on rent in the area. They

did not have the means to cook food. They seemed to have restricted our mobility. But now they became our customers. They started collecting at the site of the cooking space, pleading to us to continue with the venture. We wanted to run the service but we were trapped. We had earned a bad name by then. It is not proper for young girls to run a shop, and this was being talked about. People had started looking at us with suspicion, which was neither good for our families, nor for us. What could we do? We did not want to take risks. We closed shop. We wish we could have continued.

Yashoda and Alisha, 20 years,
LNJP Colony

DOCTOR'S ASSISTANT

Papa talked to his doctor-friend in the neighbourhood regarding a job for me. The Doctor's response on seeing me was "She looks such a simpleton, will she be able to cope with the work here? However, you are a friend. I will try her out for a few days and then decide." Standing there I kept thinking to myself, "I am a village-girl who has just come to the city. I have never stirred out of the house alone. How will I come here? I have studied only till grade six. Will I be able to work in this clinic?"

Despite my worries I resolved to do my best if I got the opportunity. Next morning I got up early, finished some household chores and got ready to go to the clinic. I did not have a purse, so I tied a little money in a piece of cloth, put it in a plastic-bag and accompanied Papa to the clinic. I did not know the route to the clinic. Papa took me there for 6 days. Then I told him "I can come and go on my own now. If I have to work, I will have to commute on my own." I never felt afraid while going with Papa. But alone in a shared three-wheeler I was scared. Sometimes I was the only female amongst several males. That made me more fearful, but I never let my inner rumblings come out. Taking control of myself I kept looking at scenes on the road.

After a fortnight Doctor uncle taught me how to prepare admission notes for patients. Then he wrote down in English the names of different instruments used for surgery, in a small notebook. Sometime later he wrote down words like 'bottle of drip', 'O.T.', 'operation theatre', 'physician', 'surgeon', 'physiotherapy' and 'general ward'. Whenever I found time, I started learning them. I developed interest in the subject and started speaking without hesitation. Gradually I learnt how to measure blood pressure and administer a drip. After some time Doctor Uncle took me inside the operation theatre. With time and his encouragement I overcame my fear of watching operations.

Now I get up early every day, cook breakfast for everyone and wash clothes of my young siblings. Then I pick up my tiffin and get ready to go to the clinic. Mummy finishes rest of the household chores. Papa goes to work after dropping the younger children at school. Sometime later Papa got a new dress and slippers for me, which made me very happy. I thought to myself – "Is he the same Papa who used to be angry with me!"

A month later I got my salary and gave it to Papa. He gave back some of it saying, "Buy a suit (pyjama-shirt) of your choice." I went to the market with my friend, bought a suit-material of my choice for the first time and gave it to the tailor to be sewn. Now I walk out with a hand-bag and not with the torn piece of cloth

and plastic to keep money. Several women of the neighbourhood started commenting - "How will this emaciated-looking, uncouth girl work in a clinic! It takes time even for educated girls to learn this work. What will she do!" Listening to them I often felt anger and considered replying back. But the decorum of living in the same lane and the fear of being asked to vacate the flat where we lived on rent, made me hold my tongue. People do not know our financial helplessness. Mummy also asked me to keep quiet and continue working.

After two months the Doctor called my father and told him "I have now kept her on the job. Initially she will get Rs. 1500/p.m. When she has learnt the entire gamut of work, I will increase her salary." That day onwards I started working with greater enthusiasm.

Nazneen, 18 years, Sundernagari

DISCARDS AS PRODUCTS

Naeem Bhai had worked with various means of livelihood. For a while he had worked in one of the manufacturing units that used to be there. Often he regretted having migrated from the village. But what could he do. He would lose face if he went back to the village. So he decided to make a living through anything.

Then with a big bag slung over the shoulders he started rummaging through garbage sites, streets, empty plots, dumps of hospital waste etc. to pick up plastic, steel, cloth, paper, anything that would sell. By evening he reached the godown, where these things were bought. Gradually more people started rag-picking. The godown was no one's friend, things were categorised and the prices set by the owners. They knew that these rag-pickers did not have any choice.

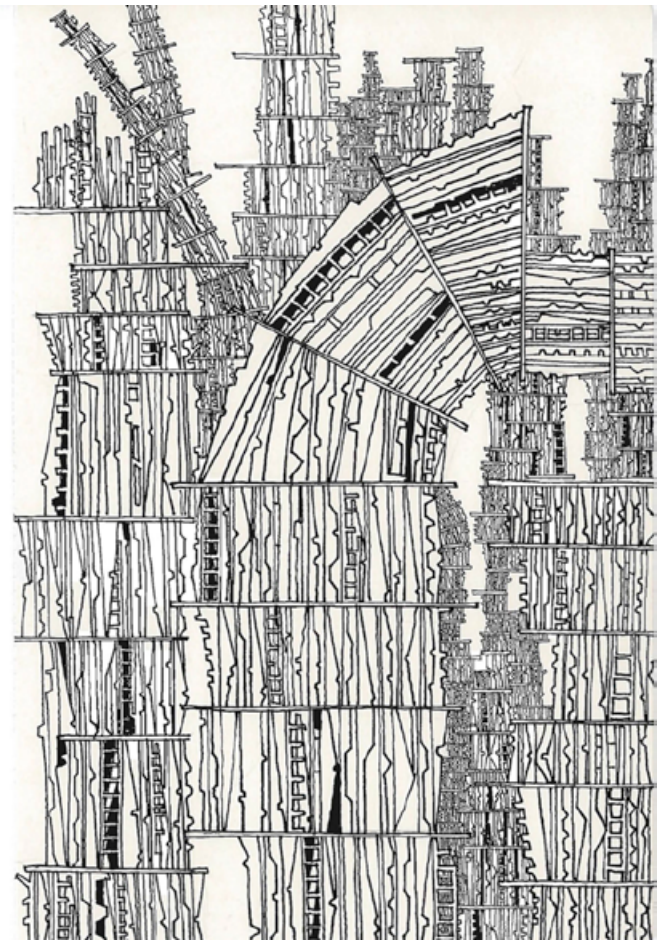
Initially, Naeem Bhai earned well, anywhere between Rs. 70 and Rs. 120 per day. He was alone then and shared a room with nine others. Each one had come from a different part of the country but the job was the same. A person at the godown had arranged for a room. Ten people shared the room, the household chores and the expenses. Sleeping arrangements in the small room were interesting. Five people had their heads towards the door and five had their feet towards the door. Beddings were not needed. It was hot. The floor was cleaned thoroughly.

He was earning well, so he brought over his wife and children from the village. A room could be rented for Rs. 400. For a while things worked well. But gradually the garbage bags were becoming lighter. Was it that Delhi had suddenly been cleaned up? Food became problematic. One vegetable was cooked in the morning to be eaten in all three meals. Since they had come to the city, the children had to be educated. Getting them into school, feeding and clothing them were becoming difficult. Once while walking in garbage his feet got infected. He had to leave the job. Loans piled up. It was the first Eid (festival) that the children did not get new clothes.

One day he chanced upon broken soap cakes. He picked them up in a bag. The good ones were used by the family and the rest given away. He kept going back to the hospital bin for more soap pieces. People at the water tap took the soap pieces eagerly. One day he did not have anything to buy food with. He and his wife took out the good, clean soap-cakes. The weakly fair was on. They put out the soaps there selling each for Rs. 2. That was the day when this improvisation became the source of survival.

The process of collection, classification, cutting, shaping and refashioning involves the labour of the entire family and occupies the full space on the floor of the 12'x12' room. Naeem Bhai sits outside the hospital every day and brings home the sacks of soap when they come. His wife takes them out of the sacks, children sort them out and Naeem Bhai himself examines them with his sharp eyes, cutting them fast into fine square shapes or just slicing small bits to give them a shape. He has become quite an expert at this. At a time there could be 100 good and 50 broken soaps piled up, with a few sacks lying in a corner. This is not a secure job or profession but a bridge of life for the family in difficult times. Now he also sells it by weight, on his cart. Most of the soap is bought by small manufactures, rickshaw-pullers, labourers and people living on the street.

Written by Lakhmi Chand Kohli, as told by Naeem Bhai, LNJP Colony



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THE MICROPOLITICS OF AN 'ADDA' FOR WOMEN IN INDIA: SHAHEEN BAGH

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It was in 2004 that the concise Oxford dictionary decided to include the word 'adda' among the pages of its 11th edition. It was another step for the ex-Colonial masters to appropriate another Indian concept as their own. *Adda* has been associated with the Bengali identity for the longest time but the word never remained limited to the area of Bengal. It is presented as a noun meaning an "Informal conversation among a group of people"[1]. In Bengal, *adda* is used more as a verb than as a noun. The Bengali tradition of *adda* is an especially enriching experience since the conversations revolve around intellectually and culturally stimulating topics. But anyone in India who has witnessed a fully functional *adda* will tell you that this definition is insufficient. *Addas* have been an almost exclusively male space and therefore, any definition of the word without this detail won't ever capture its true essence. Nevertheless, with the changing socio-professional landscape of urban India, some women can often be spotted invading all-male *addas*. This welcome change has gone somewhat unnoticed in the routine din of the metropolis.

The traditional "*adda*" is essentially an open space for strengthening the community. Unlike parks and open-air theatres, the *adda* does not offer any real cultural activity, even though it is a platform for vibrant social and political exchanges. It is just a space which is not pre-assigned this name but acquires it over a period of time with related usage. Even in urban centers where malls, pubs and restaurants dominate the social scene, *addas* crop up in narrow lanes as a spot for social interaction.

Another traditional virtue of an *adda* worth the name is that the discussions are

1 See https://www.lexico.com/definition/adda.

either cultural, political, philosophical or intellectual, basically fields where, it's believed, women don't have much to contribute. In urban parts of the country, women have mostly been limited to marking their presence in restaurants, clubs, bars, discotheques, etc. An *adda*-like space for women is not exactly commonplace. The situation for rural women is even more confined, especially from the perspective of *adda* participation. It's not that rural women don't socialize, gossip or exchange ideas, it's just that they don't have any specific space to do it. This might be the reason why their discussions while talking at the village well are mostly about domestic issues, or at best about films. While women converse at their undeclared *addas*, they usually have a job at hand which needs attention. For example, I have seen women talking freely while getting water and other supplies for the household, or while queueing up at the doctor's clinic, or standing at the threshold of their homes with one eye on the kitchen stove in the verandah. In all these situations, women don't have the mental ease to linger around and digress beyond a point. The discussions are usually short and 'socially acceptable'. There are two reasons for this: first, women usually talk to other women who are either their own relatives or very well known to their families. This creates a situation where women don't feel at ease about sharing any great secrets or making any great query. In fact, this is one of the crucial points which makes these women spaces non *adda*-like. The second reason is that women have a lot more to get done in a day than men in the rural sphere. Their endlessly long days have a million chores to be completed and hence they lack leisure.

I have always felt that *addas* are a great place for understanding any community and their issues. While traveling for social and political pursuits, I have often found myself in rural areas invading male *addas* and trying to become invisible, so that I can assist to an unhindered, colloquial, almost-offensive *adda*-conversation. But alas, I have mostly failed because men change their mannerisms, tone and topics when being observed by an educated urban woman. Consequently, *addas* became a source of much intrigue and interest to me.

Over the last two decades or so, a rich literature has emerged about the politics of public space. This includes Kurt Iveson's (2007, 2013, 2016 (together with Setha Low), etc.) work on the appropriation of public spaces by active/activist citizens involved in 'DIY urbanism, Jeffrey Hou's (2010) work on guerrilla urbanism, James Holston's (2008) research on practices of everyday resistance and insurgent citizenship and Engin F. Isin's (2008) and Douglas S. Massey and Mary J. Fischer's (2000) interventions on claiming rights to the city. All of these works by urban theorists explore not just the idea of public space but also which effects does the sharing of such a space lead to on a societal level. The most interesting aspect of public space studies, in my opinion, is that there is a very strong political undercurrent to them. The activism which Ivenson talks about in his work and most of his interviews is especially relevant if undertaken by women in a country like India.

Women have increasingly been committed to reclaiming their own public spaces. This is mostly done to improve awareness for issues of women's safety and, sometimes, also as an

act of defiance against the patriarchy which tells them to remain behind closed doors, especially after dark. These are bold attempts to hold not just the government accountable for their well-being but also the men at large. But if one were to analyze them further, it is remarkable to note that the mere presence of a few women on the street, without any chanting of slogans or, for that matter, call for attention, could bring about such a conspicuous change… or at least, act as the first step towards a bigger change. Political expression in such cases is limited to the physical presence of women in a public space at a time which is not deemed 'fit' for them. As revolutionary as these attempts can be, they simply use public spaces that during the day function as normal urban-scape. In other words, there is no specific *adda* which is used for the purpose. The being together of those women at that time of the day itself becomes an *adda* of sorts.

In most of the metropolis across the world, there are some designated areas for protests and public demonstrations. These are places either officially assigned by the state for such purposes or just taken-over by dissenting crowds for venting their emotions. Either way, I don't see these areas as *addas*. For example, Jantar Mantar in Delhi is one such site of protest. Now, although there are men and women of all age and provenance who fill up the space, they are not there for a casual, informal chat. They are there for the explicit function of staging a protest against some occurrence. The beauty of a true *adda* is that people get together for an informal chat which can float away in all directions. It can swing easily from the mundane to the philosophical and just as casually from the religious to the extraterrestrial. It is the non-conformed spirit of an *adda* which makes it the perfect avenue of endless possibilities.

Scholars Mokarram Abbas and Bas van Huer (2013) have talked at length about everyday appropriations of public space. Beyond the revolutionary images of people claiming their rights during mass demonstrations at Tahrir Square, Maidan, Gezi Park, and an occupied Wall Street, we are interested in everyday appropriations of public space by marginalized groups and the ways in which they claim spaces of intimacy, privacy and freedom, while seeking to shape the city to their needs. The spatiality of intimacy versus exposure, of visibility versus invisibility, and of recognition versus misrecognition, puts an emphasis on the different ways in which spaces are experienced by individuals and groups. This can be extended to women in public spaces since most of the *addas* for women have to struggle with the dichotomies they mention.

Ivanson (2007) has famously claimed that it is not easy to distinguish the private from the public. This has been made evident by the recent events in Delhi leading up to a great public movement. With a population of 1.3 billion people, India cannot claim to provide a spacious haven to its inhabitants. Space is such a critical issue for us Indians that most times, we completely ignore it, as we do with many other critical issues I daresay. But last year, before Corona made its presence felt, a series of events in Delhi made giant leaps for the cause of female *addas* in the country.

Since December 2019, in Delhi, a silent protest against government's non-secular policy gave rise to an impromptu *adda* for women in Shaheen Bagh area. This movement slowly became a huge phenomenon which would have still been going had it not been doused by the pandemic.

The unique case of Shaheen Bagh must be studied not just for understanding of people's movements can make a huge influence, but also for how women without any political training or inclination can transform a bustling part of a metropolis into an efficient *adda*.

As economic, gender and communal inequality increased in India after the right wing NDA government came to power in 2014, it was becoming clear that a people's movement was on its way. More so because Delhi had witnessed another watershed moment when the Aam Aadmi Party came to power in Delhi as a result of a long hauled people's movement.

The NDA government's tactics of segregation and control reached an apex with the passing of the Citizen's Amendment Act (CAA) which dictates the creation of a National Citizen's Register (NRC). Those who are risking to be worst affected by such a register are millions of people who don't possess all their formal documents. While in the West, it is unthinkable of a person with a national security number and all documents of birth, education and profession, India is a completely different reality. The country has seen enough turmoil for there to be many people left without their documents of identity. This is especially worrisome for the minority communities like Muslims, Christians and tribal communities etc. who do not fit the agenda of the NDA government of creating a Hindu India. There were a few newspapers talking about the CAA-NRC issue but it was largely seen by the majority Hindu population as a 'great initiative' to get rid of infiltrators from Bangladesh, a hogwash though spread by the government to get away with their plan of skimming the population.

Men and women in Jamia Nagar area of Delhi were hearing about this CAA-NRC debate and they became restless. They knew that it may not affect them directly but many others living in far flung areas of the country would find it very difficult to prove their identity by means of specific documents (as the Act stipulates). The women decided to sit outside their homes, by the side of a big road and began talking to each other about it. It was started by ordinary Muslim women but soon, it was joined by people from a cross-section of religions, gender, caste and social status. As their protest against the CAA and the proposed NRC grew louder, similar movements, led by women and students, sprung up in other parts of the country. From Park Circus in Kolkata to Lucknow's Ghantaghar to Bengaluru's Bilal Bagh, relatively less-known neighborhoods in Indian cities began to fill up with people from all walks of life.

The beauty of Shaheen Bagh was that it was the quintessential *adda* because you could spot women talking about their day, their children, life in general with the same enthusiasm, as they did about the CAA-NRC. It was getting cold and the women just refused to go back to their homes. They would walk up to their homes for fixing a meal for their family or for using the lavatory, but they never really left the

adda. They decided to bring their blankets and pillows on the streets and just made the *adda* their home. Visitors would frequent the place, talk to them, hear from them, laugh, cry, offer help, offer food, clothing etc., but these women, they behaved as if they had forgotten what normal life was. The *adda* became their life. I spoke to many women in Shaheen Bagh and they said they liked this idea of being close to one another, not only was it great to talk freely about things, it also gave them a sense of security. They were not alone anymore. And every time I went to Shaheen Bagh, I felt this sense of safety was not just limited to the CAA-NRC. The women felt safe because they were talking about themselves and their idea of India, they felt safe in their self-realization through that historical protest. For weeks, speeches were made, poems recited, songs sung. The Preamble to the Constitution was read aloud in chorus. Political parties made attempts in between to oust the protesters; a man called Kapil Gurjar fired bullets at the gathering in Delhi; communal violence broke out. But the protesters stuck to the rule-book definition of non-violent agitation.

Until 15 December, when women came out of their homes for the protest, not many were aware of the existence of a neighborhood like Shaheen Bagh. But within days, the name came to signify much more than a geographical site: Shaheen Bagh became a trope for the democratic ideals of the Indian nation. It was invoked to remember the constitutional principles that bind the citizenry together: fraternity, compassion, kindness, unity. Although for me, it became that one space which I had been looking for –a women-centric *adda*. It was not that the men were not included. They too were a part of the protest but they were not the pivot of the space. The place hinged on the women and their sit-in. It was remarkable to see Muslim women, who usually follow the custom of purdah, were out in the open battling cheeringly for the rights of the whole country.

The stories of fortitude and valor at Shaheen Bagh have often been told and will continue to be told for a long time to come but the stories of lighthearted conversations and togetherness also need to be highlighted. These women had no political goal, even though they were encouraged by support from Left wing activists and politicians. These normal women, with basic understanding of issues and a human desire to save their fellow citizens from the wrath of CAA-NRC, managed to bring the issue to the fore even on an international level. Their protest was not just relentless, it was creative and had almost a pedagogic element to it, even for their own selves (along with the rest of the citizenry which had to take note of these 'half-educated' women struggling for human rights). The protest was not an overt attempt to reclaim a space or an idea but their wish to just stick together made them reclaim the very soul of democracy in India.

Early visits to the protest made it clear to me that the government would do all in its power to trivialize and infantilize it, after all, it was just a group of women sitting together, smiling, chatting, eating, singing lullabies to their children, singing and, most importantly, refusing to quit. In my view, it is this very nature of Shaheen Bagh protest which made it effective and special.

I find myself in complete agreement with Himada and Manning (2009) in this regard –'Politics' with a capital 'P' is much less the 'real deal' than it presents itself. While 'Politics' operates in the sphere of representation, where precomposed bodies are already circulating, "the micropolitical is that which subverts this tendency in the political to present itself as already formed" (p. 5). The fact which must be acknowledged and underlined is that Shaheen Bagh's women are a part of this micropolitical cosmos. This shift from the 'Political' to the micropolitical can be considered an important achievement of the current times. This cause has also been heavily aided by the social media which have acted as invaluable promoters of such movements. In fact, the presence of children at the protest site brought the micropolitics of Shaheen Bagh to another level. Children not only dissipated any extremism from their protest, they gave the female *adda* validity and fodder. While yawning away in the middle of chilly-rainy winter nights, women would exchange thoughts about their children's futures. Thus, I would like to argue that such *addas*, especially those involving women can become great vectors to the concept of micropolitics and liberate protests from their sharply political edge. This method of disobeying norms by women in a patriarchal set-up can appeal to people across political beliefs. It can also be said that viewing the protests are people who 'politicized' the CAA-NRC issue is entirely unfounded because this specific is a case of a women's *adda* based on micropolitics of a certain kind. They were not in it for any political gain and hence, their actions (at least to begin with) were far from political.

But the government did not let it go so easily. The police was regularly sent to the site to instill fear in the hearts of the protesters. In fact, the entire state apparatus and the corporate media was being used to attack peaceful protestors, their cause, action and ideology. But the women stayed. These women were well aware of dangers of being arrested, of facing lathis, tear gas shells, pellets or guns, of being hit by goons, of being labelled as anti-national, terrorists and jihadis but they relentlessly protested facing chilly winters and rains of Delhi. They dealt bravely with the violent tactics and threats of forceful eviction deployed by police and state to remove protestors as they claimed to have block the roads.

It took a global pandemic and a court order to displace the women of Shaheen Bagh but they have come out stronger and more firm in their resolve to oppose CAA-NRC.

It can be said that Shaheen Bagh protest will go down herstory as a landmark move by women for citizenship rights in India. And its greatest strength will always reside in it being a leaderless, fearless micropolitical *adda* for women.

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VA.6 Pascal

VA.7 Joule

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INVISIBLE PEOPLE AND ARCHITECTURES OF DELHI: STORIES OF A SHIFTING WORKFORCE

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Textile artist, Bindaas Unlimited

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Walking down the street in the urban village of Kilokri of Delhi most days of the year, gives me a wonderful sense of the seasons. The area is full of street vendors of different kinds. Carts loaded with seasonal foods, both cooked and uncooked. Vendors walking around with triangular bamboo stands with more food. Cycle vendors who call out with their characteristic calls and offer to sharpen knives and scissors, or sell all kinds of cleaning equipment like brooms etc. The flute seller who leaves beautiful melodies floating effortlessly behind him, as he walks by. And vendors who sit by the side of the street with their wares on little plastic squares. There are vendors who are there every day with different articles for sale, depending on the time of the year. And then there are those who are from far away areas, and visit occasionally. All these micro entrepreneurs create the structures of their mobile stores and their lives themselves, and carry them around, setting up and dismantling their stores every day.

With a recorded history from the 12th century onwards, Delhi is one of the oldest inhabited cities with a population of 20 million people. A city with a population explosion of 47% between 1991-2001 and of 21% between 2001-2011.[1]

Surrounded by other growing towns like Noida, Gurgaon, Faridabad and Ghaziabad, all of which along with Delhi form the National Capital Region [NCR], its population

1 See Census of India 2011, which can be checked online at https://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/delhi/3_PDFC-Paper-1-tables_60_81.pdf, accessed on October 30th 2020.


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density is almost double than those of Tokyo or New York city, and crime rate is less than half of New York City.[2]

With families that can trace their lineage in the city to well over a hundred years, it is a city with stability and growth. It is also an invisibly shifting city. Much of its working class population comes from outside the city and nonchalantly hops in and out of the city on crowded buses, trains, jeeps, trucks and informal ride shares on the highways leading out of the city. Visible, settled Delhi often does not notice or acknowledge this structure of Delhi that provides many of its essential services.

As the largest commercial centre in North India, Delhi's GDP estimates were $96 billion in 2017-2018.[3] The reasonably priced services and products made in the city are in a large part due to these migrant workers. Most of them earn less than the minimum working wage declared by the Delhi Government, which is USD 202.00 per month for semi-skilled labour.[4] In 2001, Delhi received 1.7 million net migrants [accounting for inflow and outflow of migrants] which was 16.4% of its total population at the time.[5]

Mobile vegetable and food vendors, tailors, plumbers, masons, construction workers, cycle rickshaw drivers, newspaper vendors, domestic workers, gardeners, garbage collectors, recyclers, car cleaners, delivery people, small entrepreneurs and rideshare drivers are some of the people who contribute to this shifting architecture of the city. Except for domestic workers, it is a very gendered world, constituted mostly by men.

People who come from places near the city, go back home as frequently as once a week. Others come and go every harvest season to work on their family land. Others still come and go about 4-5 times a year. There are people who have been living in the city for years and whose families are here with them. They go back for community weddings, government benefit schemes and to vote in elections. Many people live and work in Delhi only part of each year and go back to their villages to farm their lands during the rest of the year.

Like their presence in the city, their homes are also somewhat temporary and shifting. Most of them live in one of the many urban villages of the city, or in 'unauthorised colonies', in which a large percentage of the population of the city lives. These colonies start by people taking over tiny pieces of land and making temporary shelters for themselves. They expand and contract by greasing the palms of

2 These statistics were compiled in preparation for the 13th Urban Age conference by LSE Cities, a research centre at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and Deutsche Bank's Alfred Herrhausen Society, held in Delhi on 14-15th November 2014. See the editorial in *Mint*, published 14th November 2014, https://www.livemint.com/Politics/Zt73mwOmPPbVmlNloecuBP/Delhi-more-densely-populated-than-New-York-Tokyo-study.html, accessed online on 30th October 2020.

3 See Highlights of Economic Survey of Delhi 2017-2018, made available online by the Delhi government at http://web.delhi.gov.in/wps/wcm/connect/ebac160044d712cf8532873726e205c9/HighEng.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&lmod=1042919677&CACHEID=ebac160044d712cf8532873726e205c9, accessed on October 20th 2020.

4 See the data regarding current minimun wage rate published online by the Labour Commissioner, Government of NCT of Delhi, at https://labour.delhi.gov.in/content/current-minimum-wage-rate, accessed on October 20th 2020.

5 See the article on migration made available online by the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India: https://censusindia.gov.in/Ad_Campaign/drop_in_articles/08-Migration.pdf, accessed on October 30th 2020.

the police and other officials in the area. It's a constant battle to protect these homes, which start out as temporary structures with plastic sheets as roofs and gradually become tiny concrete structures. Yamuna Pushta is an area which had hundreds of thousands of people living by the banks of our forgotten once mighty river, the Yamuna. These people took over land by the side of the river and farmed, or just lived there. They would move to higher grounds with tents when the river flooded during the monsoons and moved back down to the river when it came back to its earlier level. About 4,00,000 people from here were relocated to the borders of the city by the government between 2004 and 2009 (Menon-Sen and Bhan 2008)

Construction workers often make basic bamboo frame structures with plastic sheets as covers. Or use the bricks which are on site for construction and pile them into temporary structures on the site itself. Once the construction nears the end, they dismantle their own homes and use the bricks for making the houses they are constructing as a team.

There were about 3,00,000 street vendors in Delhi in 2011, all without registration (Bhowmik and Saha 2012: 38). We had about 6,00,000 rickshaws employing a million people in 2013. Only 99,000 of them were officially licensed.[6]

In 2010 about 7% of the Indian workforce was organized. 93% belonged to the unorganized sector and accounted for 50% of India's GDP (Salve 2013). The situation has not changed dramatically since then. Most of this sector, including self-employed individual workers and small enterprises, struggle to work with little to no State support or benefits.

In sector after sector, the story is the same. We have little to no formal registrations by the city, and no social security net for the people in all these sectors. They provide inexpensive services and everyone including the State pretends as if they don't exist. They are at the mercy of the police, and their employers with no mechanism for redressal. Since there is

6 See the info provided Intercultural Resources and Human Resources Development Foundation (PT 2013).

no registration, they often have to pay bribes to officials who patrol the streets. With very small earnings, and no formal acknowledgement of their existence, they live vulnerable lives that are perpetually on the edge.

Documented below are the outlines of the lives of some of these invisible people, based on interviews with them.

ASHRAFI LAL

Asharfi Lal Ji lives in near the Agra Firozabad border about 235 km from Delhi. He has worked in Delhi for about 25 years and came here at the age of 19. He is a tailor who worked for others earlier, and now runs his own workshop with seven to eight tailors where he works against contracted orders. He goes home every other weekend to meet his 5 children and wife. He would like to bring his children to Delhi, but he is unable to afford the rent for any sort of room in the city. He and most of his workers stay in his rented tailoring workshop for which he pays 125 USD a month. In a room of 315 square feet, with their sewing machines, a room to keep the fabric they are sewing and other equipment, there is not much space for them to sleep.

His unit is in Tuglaqabad extension area, which is an unauthorized neighborhood. He is fortunate enough to have a toilet which is reserved for his rented space, unlike many others who live and work there. They cook inside the workshop in a small room that is also their office. His smartphone helps him get many of his orders and saves him several trips to his customers, as he can send them photos of his work. His workshop is near Okhla Industrial area, which is one of the few official industrial areas in the city, and where a lot of his customers are situated. Getting back to work after the lockdown has been very hard for him and orders are less than 50% of what they were earlier.

Living in his workshop helps him save on some time and effort to commute. He travels in the city using buses, the metro and his trusted old cycle.


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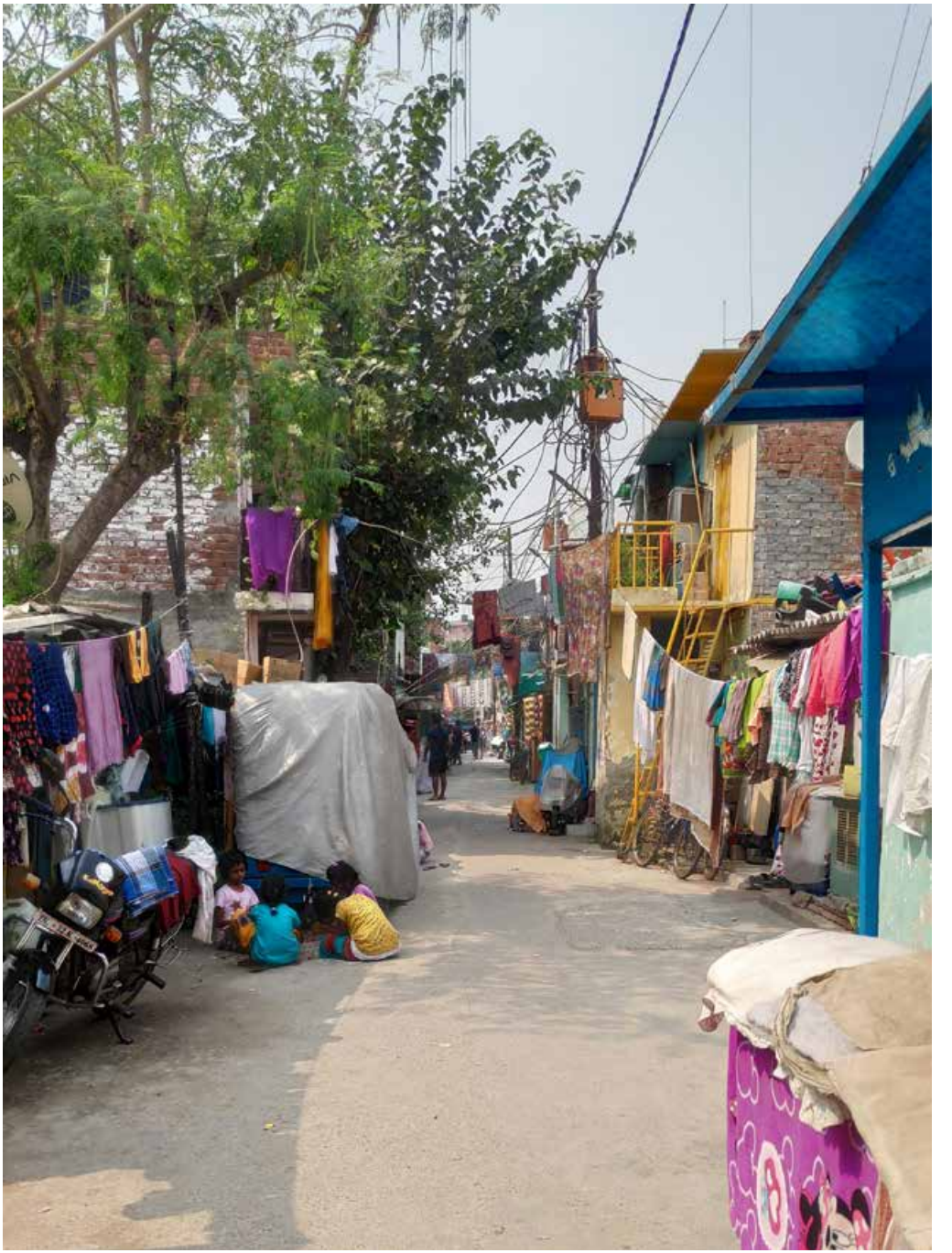
He likes being in the village with his family, but has no source of income there. He has also been a social worker in the village, helping people file "First Information Reports' with the police. It is not easy to file such documents, specially for underprivileged people, as once filed, the police are legally obliged to follow up on this report. Given that he stands his ground socially and does not back off, he has been in serious trouble. In this regard, part of his being in Delhi is also for his own safety. Coming from a Scheduled caste, he is expected to know his place, and being political and feisty as he is does not help. The anonymity of the city helps people reduce the importance of their caste, even if it can't be completely erased. He enjoys the anonymity of Delhi and the camaraderie with his co-workers. The biggest problem of running his own enterprise, as with most Indian enterprises of every size, is that his customers may not pay him. With an overburdened judiciary, there is no way to ensure redressal for small legal problems like this.

NOOR MOHAMMAD

Noor Mohammad Ji's village is in District Chapra in Bihar which is about a thousand kilometres from Delhi. It is telling that despite living in Delhi since 1999, he still refers to his village as home. He goes back home at least twice a year. If he is unwell, he goes back additionally for treatment. He drives a cycle rickshaw in which he transports materials and finished products, between production units and factories in Okhla industrial area.

After working in Delhi for a few years, he brought his family here, but had to take them back to the village since they could not afford to live here. The rents and food prices were too high for them. Another very important factor was the fact that they are Muslims and he felt insecure leaving them at home in Delhi during the day while he went to work. Over the years, attacks against Muslims, specially underprivileged Muslims, have increased



a lot. Both costs and fear led him to take them back to their village.

He earns between 135 and 170 USD a month and pays 14 USD rent for a room that is 5 feet x 6.5 feet. He shares this room with his eldest son, who is learning to run a lathe machine in a factory in Okhla. Their unauthorized residential area is called Amarjyoti camp. With such a tiny room, they can only use the room to sleep side by side close to each other. They cook, bathe and for all practical purposes live outside their door step, as there is no space inside for any of these activities. Their section of the camp has a set of 10 toilets for men and 10 for women, which they share with 5000 other people. They have access to water from tankers that visit the camp between 6.30-7.30 am. They line up with others to fill their small share of water in buckets every day. There are also shared taps, which provide water for short periods of time during the day.

Noor Mohammad JI is one of the hundreds of thousands of people who walked back home during the stringent Covid-19 lockdown in India. He left Delhi during the heat of Lockdown 3 in early May along with his son and fourteen others in his residential camp. It took him seven to eight days to get back home. They walked most of the way and took paid shared rides for the rest of the way. October has come and he is still in the village, as he is scared to come back to Delhi. Many people in his residential camp have got Covid-19 owing to shared toilets and high density living.

The same problems that drove him from his village to the city exist today. There is very little work in his village, and he can't earn enough for all of them there. He has been going to the nearest small town to work as a casual construction worker, but is unable to find work for more than 5-7 days in a month, as there are too many people who have returned from the cities to villages in Bihar. There is not much construction going on, as people don't have money at the moment. Right now he and his family are surviving on the free and subsidized food provided by the Bihar government as a relief measure against the Covid-19 pandemic.

He has his own home in the village on 100 sq yards of land. Even though it is temporarily made with bricks and a tin roof, it is home and saves them rent. His younger boys are about 10 and 12 years old. They go to school and supplement the family income and nutrition by grazing 2 goats that the family owns for milk and meat. Noor Mohammad Ji likes that people are too busy to trouble him in Delhi and the anonymity that Delhi provides him. People with not enough work in his village try and harass him in different ways. He really enjoys the variety of food available in Delhi, even though he can only occasionally treat himself to something out of the ordinary, like fruit.

AYODHYA SINGH

Ayodhya Singh Ji is from Gaya district in Bihar. He came to Delhi 15 years back and works as a car cleaner during the day and a guard in a big bungalow, during the night. He cleans between twenty-two to twenty-five cars every day from 6 to 11 am. He stays in Hari Nagar in south-east Delhi, which started out as a refugee camp

after the partition of India and Pakistan. He walks about four to five kilometres every day between his different jobs. He earns about 240 USD per month and spends 12 USD per month on a room that he rents and shares with four other people. The room is about 15 x 12 feet and they cook and spend most of their time in the passage outside. He shares a toilet with twelve other people and has access to water in the early morning. After coming to Delhi and earning here, he has improved the construction of his village home and has got two of his children married. His thirty-year old son lives with him in Delhi and works as a guard in a security company. He would like to get his twenty-two year old son also to Delhi but he says that there are no new jobs available after the lockdown, in particular as a guard.

He goes back home at least thrice a year. He enjoys sleeping at night when he goes home. Earlier, he used to farm on a small piece of land he has in his village, but it was too much work and not enough return. At the moment, he rents out his farm land to share croppers who put in all the effort and half the investment for seeds and things alike. They get half the value of the crop that they grow and give him half. Coming from a higher caste [Rajput], he has a concrete house and it is socially relatively easy for him in his village, as well as in Delhi.

Ayodhya Ji

This large work force, which lives between rural and urban India, forms communities in Delhi in which they speak their rural languages and cook and eat their traditional food. They see their village as home and the city as their workspace, even after living here for more than twenty-five years. With no registration of any kind, there are not any real figures regarding their number. It was only during and after the lockdown, when they headed back home in every possible (and impossible) way, that people somewhat did realize how they kept the city going, as there were no ser-

vice providers available for most kinds of work after they left.

Invisible Architecture is said to consist of buildings "that are constructed to become invisible for city inhabitants. They not only blend with their surroundings and do not disturb the space in any way—they also disappear, in a way, from the cities using latest solutions and technologies" (Infuture Hatalska Foresight Institute 2017: 28). The individuals in this article give shape to the invisible architecture of the city, which is ever changing. The specific individuals change, but the work that they do constitutes the backbone/frame of this city and there is no way the city can run without them.

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NAVIGATING THE CITY: RITUALS, ROUTINES AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE MAKING OF DELHI'S ORDINARY STREETS

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THE SMALLNESS OF BIG CITIES

Cities are such massive, heterogeneous and excessive creatures that they might appear as impossible to study and understand. In particular, the South Asian city has been constructed as baffling and opaque, its sociality unpredictable and its 'ways and forms without codification', not only for anthropologists but also for its 'natives' (Gandhi and Hoek 2012: 3–5). Studies on Delhi also point to a similar challenge in analyzing the city, which has a fragmented, heterogeneous and discontinuous history, urban fabric and spaces (Vidal et al. 2000) and is characterized by 'extraordinary upheavals and changes' that are disorienting (Chaturvedi 2010: vii). Vidal et al. (2000: 15) argue that it is difficult to fix the complexity of Delhi into a single image: 'The reality of India's vast capital is at once more diverse, more anarchic and at times more intriguing than the semi-mythical Delhi of the tourist book imagination.'

Curiously, the same authors present a single image of Delhi when they point out that unlike Mumbai or Calcutta, Delhi does not evoke loyalty, affection or a sense of belongingness among its (largely migrant) dwellers:

> The inhabitants of Delhi [...] are either indifferent or actively dislike the city in which they live. With the exception of a few chasers of djinns, of the writer, Khushwant Singh, some descendants of long-established Delhi families and a smattering of others [...] hardly anyone is ready to declare a passion for Delhi. (ibid.: 16)

In a similar vein, Sengupta (2007) advances that people who settle in Delhi do so for instrumental reasons—professional, educational or housing—rather than affection for an envi-

Image 1: A tree providing the material locus for a tea shop, which in turn is a 'meeting place' on a street behind Khan Market, south Delhi. Photograph by author.

ronment or a way of life. Moreover, she argues that the deep sense of attachment to the city expressed by long-term residents whose families have lived in Delhi over several generations is not to the city of the present but to a past glory that has been lost, 'their loyalties are to their Delhi, a vanished, magical world of unhurried grace and honest shopkeepers' (ibid.: 7).

It is precisely the size and diversity of cities that makes them amenable to various contradictory 'ways of seeing' and representations. Seeing not only 'establishes our place in the surrounding world' (Berger 2008 [1972]: 7) but also makes that world in its image. Drawing on Berger (ibid.) that the relationship between seeing and the world is never resolved but rather is a continuous process, I argue that the city is not an objective thing outside of us—it is continuously made through our relationship with it. So the same city can be simultaneously made as endearing yet alienating, cruel yet compassionate, abundant yet poor. This is what Raban (2008: 2) refers to as the 'plastic' nature of cities: 'We mould [cities] in our images: they, in turn, shape us by the resistance they offer

when we try to impose our own personal form on them.'

I argue that one cannot see or experience the city in its entirety but rather through what Jane Jacobs (1958) refers to as the 'smallness of big cities'.[1] We live our lives in the city through its smallness—of relationships, communities and places of our making. Whether Delhi's residents have a sense of loyalty or affection for the city or not, whether they comprehend it entirely or not, their everyday lives (and of the city) cannot continue without some sense of familiarity, comfort, attachment and/or affection to small places in the city—a room or a corner in your house, a pavement teashop or a hip cafe where you hang out with friends, a spot outside your office where you smoke with colleagues, a patch on the road where you ply your wares from, the weekly bazaar you frequent.[2]

This essay argues that one way of navigating the megacity of Delhi is through its smallness—its associative milieus of place making around particular streets, street bazaars, pavements and street shops.[3] The pursuit here is not to establish the essence of a 'South Asian city' or the 'culture of the Indian street', whether located in terms of difference from Western cities (Edensor 2006) or as a contested relationship with the project of modernity (Anjaria 2012). Nor is the aim to draw up a classificatory system of streets based on 'indigenous' architectural forms (Fonseca 1969, Soud

Image 2: A game of ludo in progress, Baba Kharak Singh Marg, central Delhi. There are a number of activities happening in the background—a man sleeping and others resting, men praying on the steps of a mosque, with some spilling over into the street, beggars sitting around and passersby walking. Photograph courtesy of Sarover Zaidi.

1 Jacobs argues that what makes a city large is not large infrastructure projects or businesses or monumental architecture but the large number and proportion of small enterprises as well as 'a large collection of small elements, where people can see them, at street level' (1958). I use her phrase here to refer to the smallness of everyday lives in a big city like Delhi and the enormous number and diversity of such small lives, many of which are located in or spill over into the street.

2 Weekly bazaars are makeshift periodic markets set up on a fixed day of the week in different neighborhoods of Delhi.

3 See, for instance, Pani (2020) for an ethnography of place making in Delhi around the ordinary locus of the weekly bazaar, with a focus on routines and practices located in the streets of Nizamuddin Basti.

and Haque 2018).[4] Instead, the essay looks at the *making* of ordinary streets in Delhi—*how do* streets *perform* as public places—through a continuous flow of people, materials, objects, relationships and activities that has 'turned back on itself in a loop or fold' (Nail 2016).[5] Such a processual approach to places provides a way to steer clear of the reified categories of South Asian and Western cities and opens the possibility of thinking of 'a world of ordinary cities, which are all dynamic and diverse, if conflicted arenas for social and economic life' (Robinson 2006: 1).

THE ORDINARY STREET

'In the Middle Ages, a *road* or *way* was merely a direction in which people rode or went, the name *street* being reserved for the made road' (Weekley n.d., emphasis original). What makes the street a *made* road is less asphalt and concrete than the layers, densities and textures of different uses and practices that its surfaces go through and accumulate.

The history of the making of cities has been traced through the building and rebuilding of its streets, whether it was Haussmann's restructuring of Paris in the 1860s through long straight avenues that cut across crowded neighborhoods to manage traffic as well populations (Sennett 1970); the deliberate absence of street corners and squares in Brasília's modernist plan as a means of radical defamiliarization that would help obliterate class differences (Holston 1989); or the construction of a world-class aesthetics in millennial Delhi

Image 3: Ambiguous forms of indexing a street also find their way into signage, which can only be 'read' by those familiar with the street's milieu. The bottom left of this signage for a 'bone setter' on a pavement in Shakarpur, east Delhi, reads 'yeh dukaan bahar wali andar gali mein hai' (this shop is on the outer-inner alley). Photograph by author.

4 Classificatory systems of street forms indigenous to Delhi, such as *gali*, *kucha*, *katra* and *mohalla*, have a historical specificity in the old city and are not useful to apply to the rest of Delhi (they have also not remained static within the old city). Moreover, a focus on form itself tells us little about how street architecture comes to be used and inhabited.

5 By Delhi, I refer to the National Capital Territory (NCT). The old city (Shahjahanabad), which is part of the NCT, has been the focus of a disproportionately large number of studies, historical and anthropological. For this reason, this ethnography consciously looks at streets in neighborhoods outside the old city.

Image 4: Directions to a street food stall that has moved from its original spot for the benefit of its regular customers, Madhu Vihar, east Delhi. It reads: 'Guptaji chole bhature is around the corner in front of Paban Ice Shop. Thank you.' While the arrow is confusing, there is a reference to a permanent shop (a landmark) and a mobile number as well. Photograph by author.

to create a city that *looks* planned through the removal of people and activities that *appear* as informal (Ghertner 2015). Yet streets are far from being completely predetermined and disciplined by the vision of planners, architects and governments as encapsulated in master plans, policies and zoning laws.

Delhi, like many other cities, continues to have vibrant streets characterized by diverse activities, people, rhythms and movements. The alarmist and dystopian discourses around Delhi in terms of the death of public spaces, lack of infrastructure, unsafe streets and bad air quality have their value for corrective measures that need to be taken to make the city more liveable, accessible and democratic. But such discourses can sometimes make invisible the ways in which spaces in the city continue to *function* as public spaces or get *transformed* into public spaces through the ways in which people use and inhabit them.[6]

6 Gambetta and Bandyopadhyay (2012) argue that 'sounding the death knell for the public space of the street'

The streets that form a part of this essay are ordinary. They are often bypassed in the popular trails of tourist and heritage itineraries, in the writing of histories and ethnographies, and in recommendations for culinary and shopping experiences in the city. They are non-descript, their surfaces uneven. They lie in between homes, offices, shops, schools, marketplaces, parks and neighborhoods, sometimes besides and in between the towering architecture of hi-rises, malls, business hubs, metro stations and restored monuments.

The ordinary street is cobbled together by the daily rhythms of bodies moving at different speeds and pausing for different intervals—the office goer running to catch the 9 am bus no. 534; gym friends having a cup of tea, and then another, from Shuklaji's tea stall, after a workout; the housewife taking a stroll through the Monday bazaar, looking but not buying; the college students hanging out and flirting at the corner momo shop in the evening. The ordinary street is indexed in ambiguous and eccentric ways by its different users, making sense only to them and others part of their personal milieu of the street. *Bahar hoon*, *sadak pe*, *bazaar mein*, *chai ki dukaan par*, *hamari jagah pe*, *bus stop ke peeche*, *gate ke saamne*, *dhabe pe*, *kachde ki dher ke samne*, *Munna ke dukaan pe*, *konewalli juice ki dukaan par*, *naale ke parli taraf* (outside, on the road, in the bazaar, at the teashop, at our spot, behind the bus stop, in front of the gate, at the roadside food stall, in front of the garbage dump, at Munna's shop, at the corner juice shop, on the opposite side of the drain). These are the kind of responses that an ordinary person in Delhi is likely to give to the question 'Where are you?' or 'Where should I reach?' rather than the specific street (even one with a name) in a locality. The enactive potential of the street and its malleability derives precisely from this ambiguity—that it means different things to different people, as we will see in the three ethnographic vignettes presented next.

RITUALS OF OUR MAKING

A middle-aged businessman, living in Bhogal, a post-Partition rehabilitation colony, steps out of his house every morning to have breakfast on a street of his neighborhood. 'Main roz yahan pauhaunch jaata hoon—I land up here everyday', he tells me, on a chance encounter at Sardarji's *thela* (pushcart), which serves the day's *dal* and *sabzi*, *raita* and *hari* chutney, along with *naan* or *paratha*, freshly made and served hot, straight from the tandoor. I am intrigued why an Indian man living with his family, with the tacit privilege of being fed and served, would engage in this curious ritual and I ask him this. '*Main sochta hoon gharwallon ko kyun pareshan karoon, aur itna badhiya nashta ho jaata hai yahan*' ('I think why should I trouble my family, and then the breakfast here is so good'), he says. The mischievous twinkle in the eyes and the broad grin, however, seem to suggest that it is more than just a matter of saving the family from the chore of breakfast. I watch him, the daily customer, as he chatters away in between the bites of food, which he is thoroughly enjoying. He encourages me to go for seconds, '*Bahut accha hai, le lo*' ('It's very nice; go for it').

ignores how public life transforms the meanings and uses that are associated with public space as well as how public space is itself utilized as a concept for bourgeois appropriations of urban space.

Image 5: Woman walking in the Monday Bazaar in Madhu Vihar, east Delhi, just before the evening crowds come in. Weekly bazaars are an iconic part of Delhi's street life. Photograph by author.

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Amrit Aunty, a 75-year-old woman, who lives in an apartment in IP Extension in east Delhi, is restless to go the bazaar. 'Bazaar', for her, is a generic term referring to the world outside her apartment complex. It could mean walking up to the Safal booth, or the *kirana* store in the dull, dilapidated Delhi Development Authority (DDA) shopping complex, or a rickshaw ride across the Mother Diary factory to the crowded streets of Pandav Nagar, or roaming through the weekly bazaar that pops up on the road right outside her apartment gate every Wednesday. It's not like she needs anything in particular from the 'bazaar' today. '*Subah se ghar pe baithi hoon, ajeeb sa lag raha hai*' ('I am feeling weird sitting at home all day'), she tells me. Most days, she steps out with Anjali, the domestic help, in the evening—she purchases vegetables and groceries, whether required or not, for the house and for Anjali, and on the way back buys *samosas* for both of them and the *rickshawwalla* who drops them home. Today, Anjali did not turn up, and Aunty is fidgety and restless. She dismisses her son's suggestion of taking a walk around the apartment complex as inane and dull. Aunty insists on going to the 'bazaar', refusing to carry her mobile phone despite her son's insistence and even forgets her wallet at home. She returns from her excursion in good spirits. '*Bazaar ka chakkar lagake, ab thoda theek lag raha hai*' ('Having done a round of the bazaar, I am feeling a little better now'), she says.

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Rani, a resident of Nizamuddin Basti, a low-income locality in Delhi, is a mother of three grown-up children and is part of a women's self-help group for which she makes crochet products. Every Monday, she wraps up her household chores earlier than usual so that she can leave for the weekly bazaar, which takes place in the alleys of the Basti. She reaches her place of work much later on Mondays than other days. Her commitment to this routine is unfailing—in her own words '*Main Monday ke Monday jaati zaroor hoon*' ('I go every Monday for sure')—despite her husband's admonishments about what the need is to go every week and his instructions to not spend too much time in the bazaar. The odd Monday she cannot go to the bazaar for some reason, Rani loves looking at it from her terrace, which provides an excellent view, struggling with the temptation to go down, and sometimes giving in to it. Many other women from the Basti also engage in the ritual of going to the bazaar every Monday. Not only do different women do different things in the bazaar but also every visit is unexpected—you bump into friends and relatives you have not seen in a while, you discover new vendors, new deals, new things, some of which are available only on that day, which is why it is imperative for these women that they go every week.

What is so alluring about the street that compels the creation of routines around it, which are fervently maintained? Is it the commodities that the street has to offer, that we cannot imagine modes of respite from consuming lives without consuming things? But then, why do office-goers linger, loiter, and drag their feet in the lanes, backstreets, and pavements around their workplaces after the customary smoke, ice cream, or *paan* has been consumed at lunchtime? What dis-

tractions, marvels and amusements does the street offer? Or are the things incidental, serving as easy legitimate excuses, and *the rituals of our own making*?

The rituals described in the above ethnographic vignettes are not the Durkheimian rituals that hold society together or represent the abstract idea of society to individuals. Nor are they Goffman's codes of everyday behavior through which individuals collaborate in creating a shared reality and uphold each other's sense of self. Here, each ritual is a habit that has grace (allowing for ease, facility, power to resist) and is a resource of possibilities rather than being mere mechanical repetition (Ravaisson 2008). These habits have no compelling instrumental reasons, and yet, they are often spoken of in terms that are obligatory: *'Mujhe shaam ko chai ki tapri pe jaana hi jaana hota hai'* ('I *have* to go to the tea stall every evening') or '*Main har Somwar, bazaar ka ek chakkar zaroor lagata hoon*' ('I *make sure* I do a round of the bazaar every Monday'). This curious mix of habit, desire and compulsion of being out on the street is what I refer to as *rituals of our making*.

A recurrent response I have received from mostly upper middle class and middle class residents of Delhi while discussing my research on practices of walking, loitering and roaming in streets and bazaars is of sheer disbelief. They tell me that Delhi is not a walkable city, besides being unsafe and polluted, so no one walks in the city, let alone loiter, unless 'they' (usually a reference to the urban poor) have absolutely no choice. At a public event,[7] where I was presenting my work on walking in bazaars, an audience member very categorically told me that no one spends time on the streets of Delhi and that even when the 'poor' go to the bazaar (the rich can avoid such dangerous activities), they shop quickly and head back. Another audience member was willing to concede that there might be some loony characters that roamed the streets of Delhi, loony because, she explained, they were exposing themselves to sexual assault (if they were women) and health risks on account of the pollution. The city of nightmare is not less real than the city that inhabits the street or longs to be in the street. It is not just a domain of discursive regimes but is linked to spatial practices involving exclusion, segregation, avoidance and repugnance.

The street has to be necessarily traversed for getting from here to there in the city, for work, leisure, chores and appointments. A large segment of the throng of bodies (and traffic) moving on the street is out on the street to *get away from the street*. But there's no escaping the street, without passing through it. And the street with its nameless passersby and nameless other users, as well as density of activities, allows for more people *to want to be on the street* because they too can be nameless. So that they can—perhaps like the businessman in Bhogal, the elderly woman in IP Extension and Rani in Nizamuddin Basti—escape routines, through the creation of other routines. Be here, yet elsewhere, create time that does not have to be accounted for, invent diversions that are private.

7 'Of calibrations and conversations, or how to measure time in walking', Sarai-CSDS, Delhi, 18 February 2019.

The very public character of the street allows for private or 'other' or 'real' selves to emerge, being part of the crowd allows the person on the street to drop out of society and be, or strive to be, an individual. The old woman from a middle-class family in Jangpura who eats *rajma chawal* from the pavement at least once in a week, not because it is particularly tasty, but so that she can sometimes break the monotony of eating the bland, healthy food she has to cook for her health-conscious son. The teenage lovers in Nizamuddin Basti for whom walking in the teeming bazaar is the only opportunity for their bodies to brush against each other. The woman who, in the name of buying provisions, not only gets to wander the streets of Bhogal alone but also saves a tiny part of the shopping money for herself. These tiny respites, resistances, possibilities of freedom do not disrupt the tight circle of everyday routines and codes but make tiny breaks in them, making for what Raymond Williams (1977: 132–33) refers to as 'social experiences in solution', emergent forms of practices and experiences that defy definition and classification.

Drawing an analogy between linguistic and pedestrian enunciation, de Certeau (1988: 99) points that 'this location (*here–there*) (necessarily implied by walking and indicative of a present appropriation of space by an "I") also has the function of introducing an other in relation to this 'I" and of thus establishing a conjunctive and disjunctive articulation of places'. One can argue that walking, roaming or being out in the streets allows and establishes a conjunctive and disjunctive articulation of selves—selves different from or in addition

Image 6: Street around the Preet Vihar metro station, east Delhi. Spaces under and around metro stations in Delhi are buzzing intersections, usually revolving around street food. Photograph by author.

Image 7: Malleable street surfaces—railing of a public park in Bhogal, south Delhi, used by residents to dry laundry. Photograph by author.

to those not possible in confined places such as homes or offices or within the roles expected of selves in these spaces. Even as their itineraries and desires (and fears) might be very different, and often remain private, those escaping the street and those escaping into the street together make the street as a place, animating its 'structures of feeling' and setting its rhythm into motion.

THE SHAPE-SHIFTING STREET

The density and diversity of routines that make the street a place would not be possible without a material *locus*, which enables the intersection of relationships, movements and communications. It is this intersection that makes the street a constellation of 'meeting places' (Massey 1994: 154), giving it specificity, yet making it amenable to different imaginations and uses, to conflicts and negotiations, and making it more than just a paved road. A bazaar is among the more evident 'meeting places' that draws in people, commodities, services, enterprises and infrastructures. But the 'meeting place' could also be a tiny intersection of lines of movement on the street—a bus stop, the shade under a tree, a pavement, a concrete slab, a street corner, a traffic light, a T-point, a shop front or the space outside a metro station. Such an intersection, with the enormous flows of people through it, draws into its fold various kinds of street vendors selling a wide range of wares such as mobile chargers and earphones, balloons and plastic toys, meals and snacks, tea, juice, water, *paan* and cigarettes, vegetables and fruits, and a wide range of mending and other services such as shoe, bag, zip and umbrella

Image 8: Makeshift barber shop on a pavement in Ber Sarai, south Delhi. The barber has fixed a mirror on the wall to mark his spot on the street. The plastering around the mirror makes it blend into the materiality of the wall. Photograph by author.

repair, tailoring, key making, cycle repair, ear-cleaning and miracle cures.

The presence of such vendors draws more people to these intersections to not only buy provisions, grab a bite or get something fixed but also rest, relax, hang out, meet up with friends, lovers or colleagues, adding densities of sociality to these points of intersection on the street. People often plan their itineraries around the routines of particular vendors (e.g., a vendor who sells fresh fruits in the morning or a *chaatwalla* who sets up his *thela* at a fixed spot in the evening). Vendors too, in turn, often time their plying hours according to the routines of specific categories of people (e.g., a *chaiwalla* catering to early morning walkers and newspaper deliverymen, a *rollwalla* catering to the hungry evening office crowd). The rhythms, needs and desires of the city coalesce at, and continuously make, such 'meeting places'.

It is difficult to delineate whether the malleability of the street is derived from its different users or whether the surfaces themselves are malleable to different uses. An innocuous road divider that I pass by regularly when I step out of my apartment block becomes different things at different times of the day and for different users—a place for daily wagers to sit with their tools early morning, a spot for a barber to set his shop later in the day, its railing a place for a *dhobi* to dry out clothes, its concrete ends dropping points for vendors to deposit vegetable waste for cows and for residents of the nearby apartments to leave food and water for street dogs and birds. Here, the road divider is clearly exceeding its intended function of managing traffic and is being moulded by its different users, but the materiality of the divider also shapes and limits the extent of the uses it can be moulded into (for instance, it does not transform into a weekly bazaar).

FIELD OF CODES

While the practices and materiality of ordinary streets in Delhi might be relatively flexible, these streets are not without codes. Apart from zoning laws, traffic rules and other spatio-legal codes that regulate streets, there are also various informal codes that regulate life on the street (e.g., not setting up a *thela* at a spot which is already taken). Like any code, the codes that regulate streets are continuously negotiated and improvised, but the street is not a tabula rasa with infinite possibilities of making, as we will see from the following two ethnographic accounts.

Babluji sold tea, *paan* and cigarettes from a cycle in a DDA market in a posh neighborhood in south Delhi. He worked from 7 pm to 4 am, catering to the evening crowd and in particular the late-night customers—people catching the late night film show and people heading back from an adjoining nightclub. Babluji was amiable and always impeccably dressed. Many young people frequenting his shop would chat up with him and hang around his shop. When I interviewed him,[8] he had been working on the street for less than a year. Hailing from a village in West Bengal, he had worked as a cook in Delhi for over 20 years. His last job as a cook was in a *kothi* (bungalow) across the market, where he worked for many years. He was fired from that job, an incident that made him realize he no longer wanted to work for anyone. He wanted to start a food stall in the market, but the existing food vendors were unwilling to make space for him or allow him to find a space for himself. After trying to persuade them for a couple of months, he decided to make a shop of his cycle. The existing *paan* and cigarette shops, however, did not allow him to park his cycle shop close to their shops, regarding him as competition. Finally, he settled for a spot close to the parking lot, which faces some restaurants, a beauty saloon and a gym. He had to persuade each of these businesses to let him be, negotiating over five–six months.

The cycle allowed him to be mobile within the market and its surroundings. Even if it meant that he did not have a lucrative spot of his choice, he could move around to escape harassment (from existing vendors, guards of shopping outlets and the local police) as well as move to different spots in the market that drew customers through the night. He claimed he did not have to pay off the police because he did not have a permanent spot. Despite the perks of his mobile shop, he dreamed of having a 'permanent' food stall in the market (he was proud of his culinary skills and experience as a cook). 'It will take time but I will find a way', he told me the last time I met him. He disappeared a few months later, and on asking some vendors in the market, I was told that he had left and they did not know where. The nightclub had shut down, following a Supreme Court ruling on 1 April 2017 that banned the sale of liquor within 500 meters of state and national highways (the club was adjacent to a highway). This drastically shrunk his customer base and made it difficult for him to continue to ply from that market.

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8 Over the months of January—March 2017.

Guptaji, as people referred to him, ran a fast-food *thela* in the evenings, selling *chow mein,* chilli potatoes, burgers and other snacks, which were reasonably priced and catered primarily to a low-income clientele. He had been operating from a spot on a pavement outside an apartment block in east Delhi for 15 years at the time that I met him in mid-2016. He lived close by in Madhu Vihar with his brother, sister and mother, all of whom helped him run his *thela*. He was doing well and was happy that he was his own boss and did not have to do *naukri* (wage labour) for anyone. Sometime towards the end of 2016, Guptaji added a new item to his menu—pizza (or 'pijja' as he called it). He had a gotten a separate banner made for his pizza menu, which was tied to the front of the *thela*. The pizzas were an instant hit with his customers and also attracted a new clientele, residents from the nearby apartments. Priced at Rs 100–150, with generous toppings of a branded cheese and fresh vegetables, they were affordable and a novelty for his loyal customer base and a steal for the apartment people. He would make the pizzas himself, not letting his sister or brother try their hand at it, and would do it with a lot of care, often customizing it to the requirements of his customers. He would even do limited home deliveries to the apartments close by. His pizza was a staple for me on days I returned late from fieldwork and had no energy to cook dinner. He would love repeating to me on such occasions how pizza outlets are actually ripping off customers and are miserly with their toppings, while he is managing to do well without compromising on the ingredients. About six months into introducing the new item, Guptaji stopped serving pizza regularly and even removed the pizza menu from his *thela*. When I asked him about it one evening, he said, '*Jab tak burger, chow mein bech raha tha theek tha. Pizza itna chal gaya ki main ab nazar mein aa gaya hoon. Policewalle ab zyada paise mang rahe hain*' ('Till I was selling burger and *chow mein*, it was fine. The pizza did so well that I have come under scrutiny. The policemen are demanding more money now'). While Guptaji himself would be often be cryptic about this 'scrutiny'—he would sometimes say, '*Woh chalne nahin denge*' ('They will not allow it')—there were rumors abound in the street that the multinational pizza chain that had an outlet in a parallel street was putting pressure on him through the local police. At some point, Guptaji stopped serving pizza entirely, telling me that it was not financially viable for him to pay the hiked protection fee that the policemen were demanding. He was also thinking of moving from here to avoid harassment and had found a spot in Indirapuram (in Ghaziabad), '*Mera yahan guzara mushkil hote ja raha hai*' ('I am finding it difficult to survive here'). He left a couple of months later.

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Babluji partly abided by the code of respecting those on the street before him and partly subverted it by plying as a mobile vendor and creating a new customer base for himself (the night-time clients). He was managing to dodge the code of paying monthly protection money to the police in the short run, but he knew too well that his dream of having a permanent place in the market would mean he would eventually have to fall in line and pay a lump sum to police to be allowed to do so. The closing of the

nightclub made it impossible for him to continue even as a mobile vendor, let alone save for his permanent stall in that market.

Despite following the code of being in the good books of the local police (many of whom ate at his stall) and paying the protection fee for 15 years, as well as having the benefit of a fixed spot, Guptaji was forced to start his life on the street elsewhere. He had violated a key code of the street—of being too big for his shoes, of having the audacity to introduce an item that is served in cafes and restaurants, of being unwilling to give in to the demands for the hiked protection fee. Removing pizza from the menu, however, did not restore his position on the street, with the police harassment continuing and resulting in his leaving 'his' place on the street.

How street codes play out is not always predictable, but that does not make them inconsequential in the making and remaking of streets and their everyday lives. These codes also connect the street to larger structures of power and inequalities in the city, making the street precarious and fraught with the possibility of disruptions.

CONCLUSION

The dynamism and vitality of ordinary streets in Delhi is not an intrinsic characteristic but rather is enacted through diverse small activities and routines. This continuous enactment makes the street a shape-shifting creature that transforms itself through different times in the day, week and year, through the different uses it is put to and through the different people that are drawn to it out of compulsion, affection or other reasons. It is this that makes the street a 'multiplicity', which is 'defined not by the elements that compose it in extension [...] but by the lines and dimensions it encompasses in "intension"' (Deleuze and Guattari 2013 [1988]: 286), what I refer to as the *fold* of the street. This is why, sometimes, the removal of any one intersection of lines from the fold of the street—a teashop or even a tree—can transform the affect of the street and, in some cases, even turn it into dead space. This is the reason why street vendors and weekly bazaars resist attempts by local authorities to relocate them at alternative sites because the unique folding in of actors, materials and rhythms they are part of cannot be easily replicated elsewhere.

The idea and value of the street cannot be traced to its essence but through how people work in and inhabit the street *in time*, how they join up with the street to create meanings, relationships, routines and the street itself. It is these practices that make concrete the idea of a street. When people speak of a street or a weekly bazaar or a *chai* shop as being unique, special, as having *raunak* (effervescence), as where they want to be, again and again, when a vendor starts and ends his day selling vegetables on a *thela* by praying to the patch of road where his *thela* stands, all these people are making *their* street, *their* meeting places, *their* city.

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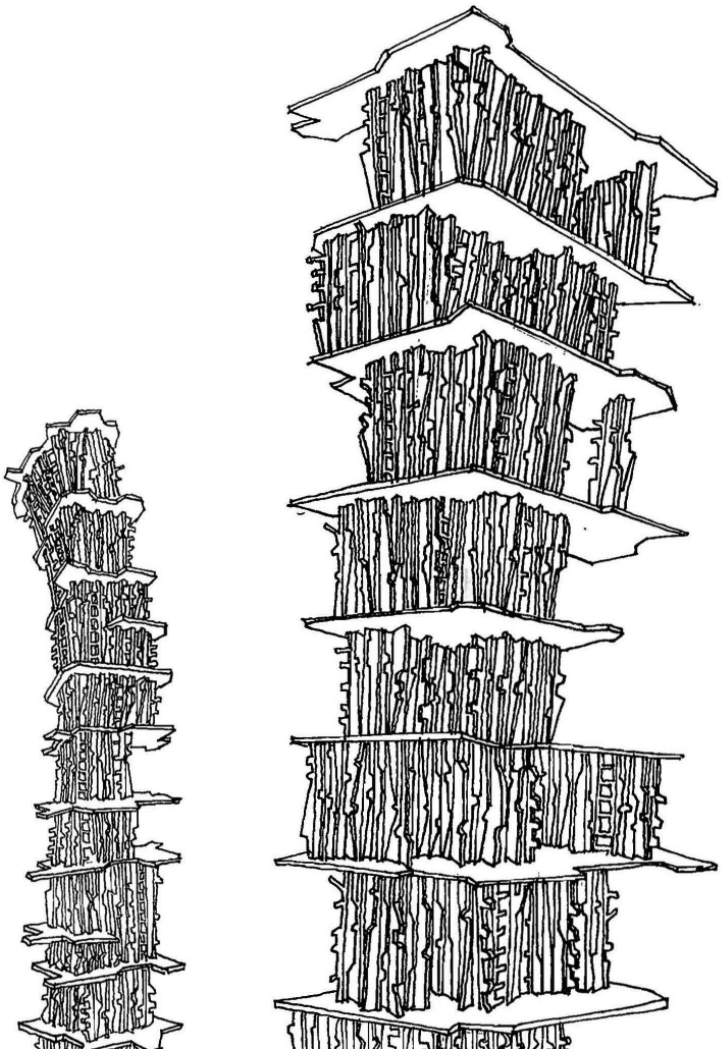
VA.8 Upwards



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A TOPOGRAPHY OF SURVIVAL: 1984 AND THE MAKING OF A STREET IN DELHI

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'Never forget 1984.'
—Poster in Bhogal Chowk, Delhi, 2017

'Story telling reveals meaning without committing the error of defining it'
—Hannah Arendt, 1962

The idea behind this article goes back to a conversation in a classroom at an architecture and urban planning institute in Delhi. The students, a majority from Delhi, future planners and architects for the city, had not heard of the anti-Sikh pogrom that had affected large parts of Delhi in November 1984. Violence triggered after the assassination of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, by her Sikh bodyguards, had culminated in a genocide against the community[1], which had made Delhi its home after the partition of British colonial India into the nation-states of India and Pakistan (Zamindar 2007). If one imagines drawing a map of violence in the city, it would probably not leave a single area unmarked. However, somehow, in the public and pedagogic sphere, a mnemonic failure ensues, and the memory of 1984 is slowly not spoken of. This text attempts to trace the contours of one locality in Delhi that was severely affected by the 1984 riots, as well as its interlaced topography of survival with several other post-colonial events in and around the Indian subcontinent.

In post-partition India, Delhi served as a refuge to the Sikh and Hindu families escaping from Pakistan, in one of the biggest migrations of the 20th century. Through its constant association with violence, riots and looting, the city's relationship with those who sought refuge in it is seemed to be marked by some kind of Stockholm syndrome. Survival meant

1 Veena Das in her seminal work, speaks of the collation of events of operation Blue star, Indira Gandhi's assassination and the eruption of violence against Sikh population in Delhi. Here she discusses how smoothly the events got collated into justifying the violence against Sikhs, not only as revenge against the perpetrators, but also the creation on a specific Sikh character, who needed to be avenged, by the Hindu male (Das, 2007).

Image 1: Banners featuring Bhindranwala, one of the key leaders of the Khalistani movement, emerge here every year during the first week of June. This was the time that the Golden Temple (the most sacred spot for Sikhs in the world) was attacked by the Indian army, killing hundreds of Sikh men, and their leader Bhindranwala. These posters are today organised by young Sikh men, who have only heard the stories of the 1984 pogrom.

living with its pathologies and accepting them too. The contiguous areas of Bhogal and Jangpura, which accommodated the influx of partition refugees, are now also habited with people from many communities affected by war, in northern Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Kashmir. This article engages with streets, stories, and the built environment of this locality to mark the evidences of violence, memory, death and survival of its different refugees.

Image 2: Train station in Bhogal–Jangpura, also known as the Lajpat Nagar station. Stories of dead bodies of Sikhs found in trains coming into Delhi were often repeated. My own uncle recalls the first week of November and how people found bodies at the train stations, both here and at Nizamuddin station, across Bhogal–Jangpura.

Urvashi Butalia (2014), in her book *The Other Side of Silence* narrates an incident that occurred on March 13, 1947, in which a group of Sikhs were attacked and killed in Rawalpindi (now in Pakistan). Every year at a gurudwara (Sikh place of worship) in Bhogal–Jangpura, a prayer meeting is held as a memorial to the widows of the Rawalpindi incident. The set of stories on the Sikh community in this area provides it with continuous narratives of endurance and survival. While conversing with the older Sikh residents in the area, their stories often jumped from one event (namely that experienced during the partition) of violent experience to another (the 1984 Sikh Pogrom), traversing different spaces and timelines.

> "What we had seen during the partition, we got to see it again in 1984," said an old Sikh gentleman from Bhogal.

Each time I asked about the trucks being burnt in Bhogal, people pointed from one street to another, repeating, "Trucks were burnt here, trucks were burnt here." "There was curfew, we could see the smoke coming from that side," I was told. It seems that the streets had all become smoke and whispers of what was being burnt there, trucks and even people. "They pulled Sikh men and boys out and burnt them alive" is another repeated story one hears of the violence that marred the city. The Bhogal narratives connote a sense of pride through repeated motifs of self-protection and survival. The young priest at the main gurdwara exclaimed, "They came with burning balls of wool and threatened to throw them into the gurdwara to burn it down, but we were able to hold fort and protect this! Ours was one of the only few gurudwaras that were not burnt during the days of violence." The priest is 26 years old, born nearly ten years after the 1984 violence, but he narrated the story as if he had been an actual eyewitness. He gave me the contact numbers of many older Sikh men, adding, "You can always read on what happened, but it is different to hear their stories."

Image 3: The one gurudwara that was saved during the 1984 attacks; two others in this area were also under threat.

Testimonies and court cases are many, so are witnesses, and the stories never stop telling themselves out. An old lady who runs a small grocery store explained that the shops were shut for days and that she had to hide away. *Do we let go of every word to find its way into the page, or do we let the street tell its own tales?* "The Texla TV shop was ransacked, and we don't know what happened to its owners. When the army came in, some people even left the looted televisions back on the road." "Some trains pulled up with bodies of Sikhs, we didn't know who had done it; the city was a fortress onto itself." "Why do you ask about 1984? Will this bring justice and why do you want the younger generations to know? Let them not know, let them forget." Perhaps, writing about it does not bring justice and maybe 'surviving it' does, I wished to tell the old, slightly agitated Sikh gentleman.

Evoking Agamben's reading of Primo Levi's literature on Auschwitz (Agamben and Heller-Roazen 1999) the idea of 'bearing witness', moves into the conversations of the streets of Bhogal. Much tougher for the survivors to hold onto their stories, tell and retell them, especially with the very fraught legal processes on in the cases of the 1984 pogrom. Yet, many wish to explain, what they had seen or heard over generations. A motley of words, my own childhood memories of watching the billowing smoke from Bhogal, as I lived not far from here, intermingle with stories I have heard from childhood, voices from All India Radio, declaring curfew in parts of the city, visions, which did not present themselves with coherence, whispers, rumors, sadness, words without bodies, all assemble to initiate a new

archive of this street. Now so banally laid under the rustle of the everyday bazaar, plumbing shops, bakeries and merchants, sellers, people and survivors. The survivor not only bears witness and gives testimony for those who can no longer speak, but in being heard, the survivor is borne witness to by the world.

Image 4: This Afghani bread shop used to be run by a young man from Badakshan. Due to quick turnovers and constant movements between India and Afghanistan, shops in Bhogal keep changing hands. The shop in its last avatar was run by a migrant family from Qandahar and sold Afghani hand produced ice cream, it eventually became a mobile phone shop owned by locals.

The street embedded with stories of violence, looting, even anger and sadness, also suggests another archival quark, something known only in its effects, namely, that of wars and bombings in the region, as well as the refugees that these have created. Refugee populations from Kashmir began to come and settle here after the second Intifada in the late 1990s. Similarly, the Afghan wars led to a large influx of Afghani people to Bhogal and Jangpura. Refugees were given refuge by others of similar dispossessions, and today a space emerges that has the endurance and experience of absorbing pluralities. Today, we can hear Pashto, Dari, Kashmiri, and Punjabi that all resonate on the street, especially in the area now called "Kashmiri Park." . This small semi rectangular park, built by the local municipal authorities of Delhi, stands in a non-descript manner in the area. There is nothing particularly special about it, and from season to season, or year to year, it could either look well maintained, park with greenary, or succumb into a dusty field, used intermittently by young boys playing cricket. Interestingly, a staccato of languages, wars witnessed in different regions, violence endured have settled in and around this park, where much of the banal everyday ensues.

Image 5: Kabul Burger Shop. This is a typical old-style property of the early inhabitants of Bhogal, now possibly cohabited by different communities. One can see a tile of a Hindu goddess on the façade.

Hannah Arendt (2018), departing from the Heidegger's "being towards death," explained *natality* and *plurality* as continual aspects of human life. Natality, located much more in her own biographical context, is the ability of human life to begin anew, undertake action to be able to start again, while plurality is an aspect of human existence that she uses in order to explain the ways in which people reveal and express difference or uniqueness and communicate it to the world, so as to then be able to live in it with others.

Image 6: Innumerable property dealers have opened businesses here to cater for the significant influx of people looking for rental properties. These include a majority of refugee populations from Afghanistan. This shop poignantly stood out for its name, a haunting presence of Gandhi in a mercantile world of refugees.

The metonymic chain of signification and intimacies with cities and areas that are now part of another country inhabits this area. Shops with names such as Lyallpur Cloth House, Kadimi Sweet House, and Lahore General Store all provide the street with the archive of a memory. These shops somewhere also unsettle the archive of the partition, which had categorically separated the two countries and its people. One wonders if there is some Delhi in Lahore still, as there is so much Lahore in Delhi. If not as names, the two continue to coexist in each other, through tastes, food, music and languages.

Another signage has begun to emerge in Bhogal in the last few years, namely, the Perso-Arabic script. A medical store run by a Sikh shopkeeper seems to have two names, "Guru Nanak" (after the Sikh guru) and "Afghan Medical Store." Its owner explains that he got the signage changed last year, as his main clientele were Urdu and Dari speakers. There is the "Qandhahar Ice-Cream Shop," Badakshan bread makers, Kabul general stores, and many other traces of other lives and memories. The street is both the material evidence and the materiality through which people rebuild and continue their lives. In it, an anatomy, a body and its signification become inseparable aspects of one field of existence and survival.

The topography of survival accounts for itself, through petty disputes, adaptive property dealers and prices, a thriving competitive marketplace, kinship networks, everyday precarity, conviviality and a *vita activa*, the life force that induces this survival.

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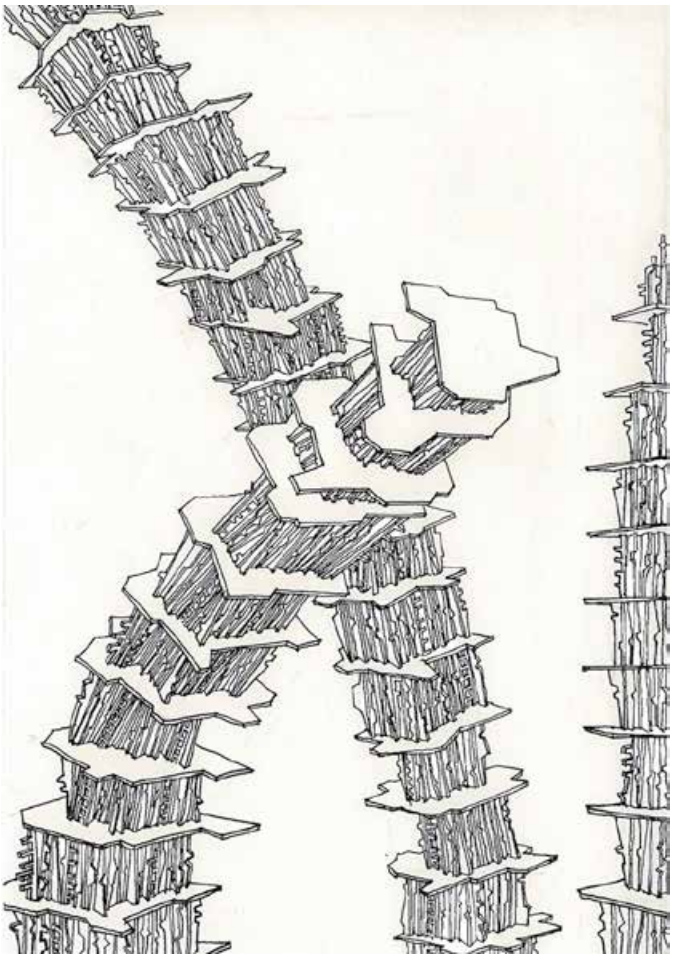

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BOOK REVIEW

A CALL TO EPHEMERAL URBANISM

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From a research project to an exhibition, and then to formalization in the pages of a book. *Ephemeral Urbanism: Does permanence matter?* gathers photographic and quantitative records on the construction of ephemeral landscapes on an urban scale, a detailed immersion in the largest religious event in the world, the Kumbh Mela, and finally, the exhibition of the research results, at the 2016 Venice Biennale. Unlike most of the books on temporary architecture, this work expands the discussion on the temporariness of spatial production to the scale of the city, becoming one of the main bibliographic productions on the subject.

Through examples that were carefully separated into seven "ephemeral landscapes", illustrative drawings help us to understand construction techniques and the relationship between these spatial manifestations and the fixed environment. In "Religion", "Celebration" and "Transaction", the authors immerse us in the most diverse forms of temporary spatial organization, carried out not by architects, urban designers or planners (although this technical presence is necessary for some of them to happen), but by the union of popular forces, common beliefs and feelings. In "Extraction", "Disaster" and "Refuge", we ask ourselves what are the real differences that separate the spaces between a "camp" and a "city", when, in fact, both end up being practiced in the same way. For that argument we are directed through examples with social constructions and material organizations larger than the urban settlements usually considered permanent. The authors question how temporary settlements can be used politically as a form of control and power in "enemy" territories, permanently changing the environment to which they were inserted.

Regarding the examples brought to us, perhaps the only slip-up performed by the group was to include manifestations like Occupy in Hong Kong and the occupation of Tahir Square, in Egypt, as spaces of refuge, when, in fact, they have organizational structures much more related to military tactics insertion and presence maintenance in conflict zones. We are surprised not to see other huger demonstrations resulting from these same forms of political manifestation, such as Occupy Wall Street and the ones in London, which lasted longer than its respective origination. This point, however, makes us realize that, like the cities and human settlements analysed in the book, the research on the *Ephemeral City* is also open to changes. When one reads this book, it will be impossible not to think which examples from our daily lives could be added to the already abundant list of ephemeral landscapes. (Could we expect a second edition, perhaps?)

Another remarkable point before reading this book is understanding its different construction temporalities. The chapters are not organized according to the time-order of data production. Historically speaking, its content started from incitements of the 2012 research project coordinated by the two authors –Rahul Mehrotra and Felipe Vera– for the study of Kumbh Mela, the largest religious event and human concentration in the world, held in India. Actually, the text about Kumbh Mela present in this book was previously published in another book, called *Kumbh Mela. Mapping the ephemeral Mega City* (MEHROTRA & VERA, 2015), which comprises the central and only chapter that looks closely into a single case: "Kumbh Mela: Extreme case".

The content on ephemeral landscapes (entitled "Ephemeral Urbanism"), mostly developed by Felipe Vera, comes before the Kumbh Mela's chapter. However, its examples were collected simultaneously (2013-2016) to the Kumbh Mela's research project in an almost independent way, through discussions and disciplines taught by the university professors involved in it (including the partners José Mayoral and Jeannette Sordi, among others). This chapter operates as a catalogue of temporary camps, cities, markets, religious and celebratory events and gathers together almost all pictures and drawings included in the book. It works as a visual complement of the theoretical introduction at the beginning of the book –in fact, as we read it, we will miss photos and images to aid understanding all the correlations between all the different landscapes and locations discussed by the authors–. In order to get a sense of its dimension, there are more than 300 different pictures of ephemeral landscapes with a brief description of around 50 of them –a huge work done by the team involved in the project.

From the contents gathered during both these research projects came the exhibition at the XV Venice Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism held in 2016, whose installation sought to reconstruct the techniques and materials (bamboo, ropes and fabrics) of the Kumbh Mela's festival. Records on the exhibition and an appreciation written by the Chilean architect and biennale's director, Alejandro Aravena, are organized in the last chapters of the book, its main unpublished content. This part summarizes all of its questionings. It also reveals the meaning and origination of the book cover and its provocative title: *Does permanence matter?* At least during the development of the

exhibition's concept, the examples demonstrated that permanence *didn't matter* so much for certain types of urbanity, once long-term resistant forces of informality and ephemerality had made their ways into the entrails of stable cities and in no-man's land for many generations. This emphasis on the *informal* characteristic of urban space, focused here on temporary settlements, reflects the personality of Rahul Mehrotra's line of research, which is also characteristic of other works, like his article about the *Kinetic City* and his last books about Mumbai and Bombay. Their focus on Kumbh Mela also reflects the importance that India and the Indian-born architect, with a distinctive perception of time-space cycles, had on the command and development of the contents gathered in this book and exhibited in the Biennale exhibition.

The direct association between ephemerality and informality might be one of the main weaknesses of the theoretical discussion initiated in the first part of the introductory chapter – "The Kinetic City as Ephemeral Urbanism". If one associates directly –that is, uncritically–, formality with permanence and informality with ephemerality, one can easily be misguided into believing that formal forces of urban space production aren't ruled by temporary rhythms, a fact that is far from being true. Actually, formal forces of dominance manage and conduct many examples gathered in the book, such as those from "Extraction", "Military" or "Refuge" chapters. In these cases, temporality is a mid-term solution for political and territorial conflicts and space is managed by a temporal exceptionality inside the long-term stable logic of urban space reproduction. Additionally, in other cases, from "Celebration" or "Transaction", some of the ephemeral landscapes might be understood as a product of a macrologic of capital reproduction, in which spatial consumption and once-in-a-lifetime experiences are stimulated and created to expand capital accumulation and to sustain this economic model through time.

This misunderstanding of urban production rhythms and forces might be read as an unfortunate attempt to directly adapt the writings about the *Kinetic City*, a concept developed by Mehrotra in his 2008's article (which doesn't mention the word *ephemeral* even once), to the idea of an *Ephemeral Urbanism* – already presented in *Ephemeral Urbanism: Cities in Constant Flux* (2016), a book with basically the same content of *Does permanence matter?* Therefore, despite that some informal and temporary settlements (the ones studied by Mehrotra in his countless works) might be considered ephemeral urbanism (or a way of creating urban space based on its ephemerality), such as informal markets, independent religious manifestations, nomadic camps, etc., others are far from touching temporariness, like informal housing settlements that commonly (and historically) become permanent (i.e. Brazilian favelas, Indian slums, shanty towns, among others). In short, samples from the kinetic city might be part of an ephemeral urbanism, but not all forms of ephemeral urbanism are part of the kinetic city.

As we continue reading, it is clear how the introduction was composed of multiple writing temporalities. The topics "Ephemeral Urbanism" and "Negotiating the Ephemeral: Between Absolutism and Coexistence" comprise most of the critical content of the book. Here, the authors detail the examples illustrated in

the following chapters, but also quote other events and situations that are missing from the book. This leads us to believe that these topics were developed after the publication of the texts on Kumbh Mela and the ephemeral landscapes. Besides, it is also here where authors like Koolhaas, Agamben, Han, Arendt and Agier are used to discuss the social and political implications on each kind of ephemeral landscape. Furthermore, wider arguments on heritage and memory, power and control, *nomos* and *polis* are wisely introduced to encourage experts on these subjects to consider multiple ephemeral spatialities when debating urban space production.

Finally, both the "Preface" and the "Afterword", respectively written by Richard Sennett and Ricky Burdett, comprise the last cycle of writings used in the construction of the book. Sennett's preface refers directly to the [research] project, not the book itself, as a way of reinforcing the questions its theme brings up, instead of the answers it tries to give. His ideas on the Open City and its derivations might result of his understanding of *Ephemeral Urbanism* as a work in progress instead of as a final production. Burdett's afterword does a good job in contextualizing the book, the research projects and the Biennale exhibition as important reflections on the contemporary city through the lens of ephemerality, connecting these productions to the present spatial urban condition of increased fragmentation and inequality and reduced environmental responsiveness. Through his eyes, Mehrotra and Vera's works are a reflection of their own contemporaneities, as well as the questions they raise.

This non-linear construction enables us to read the book in multiple directions, in such a way that each chapter stands by itself.

Mehrotra and Vera's book invites us to think about why we consider some spaces ephemeral and others as permanent, going beyond time compositions. Their insight makes us realize that, from a historical point of view, every city could be considered ephemeral when one analyzes it through time cycles that go beyond the duration of human life. However, we should not see this fleeting characteristic, intrinsic to any form of spatial manifestation, either as a fatality or as a product of nihilism. In contrast, it is an opportunity for learning from the concrete adaptive forms that are already capable of giving us a version of the urban space that is not based only on aspects of stability and closeness.

Thereby, one of the most interesting examples of the book might be the Ise Grand temple in Japan. In the introduction, the authors show how we can sustain history and culture for centuries through teachings and moments of renovation and reconstruction. On my view, the understanding of heritage (and thus, permanence) through an immaterial basis, more open and adaptable to the conditions of the present, is another important insight of the book. According to the authors, history is preserved by an eternal present built by practice, and not by the materiality of the same built space, which reproduces unreal scenarios for touristic and economic reasons.

The most interesting examples found in the book are those originated in Eastern countries and cultures –the same region and place of birth of Mehrotra. The concepts of *anicca* or *anitya* (impermanence) play a fundamental role in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, three different schools that share the same principle: the impermanent condition of the world, where

nothing lasts and everything is in a constant state of change. These ancient philosophies preach for the apprehension of time, not understood as a line towards an always progressive future, but as composed of cycles, in which ends are as important as the act of creation and its development –an eternal rebirth. This is the main question that the authors ask their readers: How can we incorporate aspects of this understanding of the world into our dominant way of making cities? How can we make impermanence matter as much as permanence did for all our earlier generations? In this regard, our present hyper-concentrated, accelerated urban conditions could turn our concepts of urban thinking and creation upside down, as well as this book, intended to fracture the idea of cities as eternal and immutable spaces.

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ASTRAGALO

CULTURA DE LA ARQUITECTURA Y LA CIUDAD

ASTRAGALO is a publication that aims to analyse the thought of experimentation and critique of the current state of the construction of cities and the craft of architecture, eluding the more or less sacralised theories that formalise the evanescent condition of the contemporary metropolitan scenario in accordance with the mercantilist ravages of advanced capitalism and gathering marginal critical reflections specifically those produced today both in America and in Europe.

In the face of the abuse of digitalised images and the excessive manipulation of illusions or appearances, ASTRAGALO aims to summon discourses that attempt to recover the essential conditions of inhabiting and in it, the framework of values in which the tasks of Urbanism, Urban Art and Architecture and in general the critical activities and management of urbanity can and should be deployed.

It will therefore be a project based on texts rather than illustrations, a space for reflection rather than mirages.

The initial and current purpose of the publication is to disseminate the work of a group of American and European intellectuals capable of offering contributions that propose a critical analysis of Architecture in its insertion in urban cultures.

Therefore, the aim is not only to question the banal or ephemeral nature of habitual practices in international metropolitan contexts, but also to explore alternatives. Alternatives that evaluate the validity of the building trade and the mechanisms of the rigorous technical and social project, but also of the aesthetic, technological and cultural knowledge that can be considered to recover the social quality of urban and metropolitan life.

The name of the publication -ASTRAGALO- alludes to a piece of the architectural order that articulates the vertical and the horizontal, the supported and the supporting, the real and the imaginary. It is a small but fundamental piece that unites and separates, that distinguishes and connects. It also suggests clusters of flowers, sometimes solitary.

ASTRAGALO

CULTURA DE LA ARQUITECTURA Y LA CIUDAD

DIRECCIÓN
Roberto Fernández / Carlos Tapia

ASTRAGALO es una publicación que se propone analizar el pensamiento de experimentación y crítica del actual estado de la construcción de las ciudades y del oficio de la arquitectura eludiendo las teorías más o menos sacralizadas que formalizan la condición evanescente del escenario metropolitano contemporáneo en acuerdo con los estragos mercantilistas del capitalismo avanzado y recogiendo reflexiones críticas marginales específicamente las que hoy se producen tanto en América como en Europa.

Ante el abuso de las imágenes digitalizadas y de manipulación desmesurada de ilusiones o apariencias, ASTRAGALO pretende convocar discursos que intenten la recuperación de condiciones esenciales del habitar y en ella, del marco de valores en que pueden y deben desplegarse las tareas del Urbanismo, el Arte Urbano y la Arquitectura y en general las actividades crítica y de gestión de urbanidad. Será por lo tanto un proyecto basado en textos más que ilustraciones, un espacio más de reflexión que de reflejos.

El propósito inicial y actual de la publicación es difundir trabajos de un grupo de intelectuales americanos y europeos capaces de ofrecer aportes que propongan el análisis crítico de la Arquitectura en su inserción en las culturas urbanas. Por ello la pretensión será no sólo el cuestionamiento de lo banal o lo efímero de las prácticas habituales en contextos metropolitanos internacionales, sino la exploración de alternativas. Alternativas que evalúen la vigencia del oficio de la construcción y los mecanismos del proyecto riguroso en lo técnico y en lo social, pero también de los conocimientos estéticos, tecnológicos y culturales que pueden considerarse para recuperar la calidad social de la vida urbana y metropolitana.

El nombre de la publicación –ASTRAGALO– alude a una pieza del orden arquitectónico que articula lo vertical y lo horizontal, lo soportado y lo soportante, lo real y lo imaginario. Es una pieza pequeña pero fundamental que une y separa, que distingue y conecta. También sugiere racimos de flores, algunas veces solitarias.

ASTRAGALO

CULTURA DE LA ARQUITECTURA Y LA CIUDAD

DIREÇÃO DA REVISTA
Roberto Fernández / Carlos Tapia

ASTRAGALO é uma publicação que visa analisar o pensamento da experimentação e da crítica do estado atual da construção das cidades e do ofício da arquitetura, eludindo as teorias mais ou menos sacralizadas que formalizam a condição evanescente do cenário metropolitano contemporâneo de acordo com a devastação mercantilista do capitalismo avançado e coletando reflexões críticas marginais especificamente aquelas que hoje são produzidas tanto na América como na Europa.

Diante do abuso das imagens digitalizadas e da manipulação excessiva de ilusões ou aparências, ASTRAGALO pretende convocar discursos que procurem recuperar as condições essenciais de habitar e, nele, o quadro de valores em que as tarefas de Urbanismo, Arte e Arquitetura Urbana e, em geral, as atividades críticas e de gestão da urbanidade podem e devem ser implantadas.

Será, portanto, um projeto baseado em textos em vez de ilustrações, um espaço de reflexão em vez de miragens.

O objetivo inicial e atual da publicação é divulgar o trabalho de um grupo de intelectuais americanos e europeus capazes de oferecer contribuições que proponham uma análise crítica da Arquitetura em sua inserção nas culturas urbanas.

Portanto, o objetivo não é apenas questionar a natureza banal ou efêmera das práticas comuns nos contextos metropolitanos internacionais, mas também explorar alternativas. Alternativas que avaliam a validade do comércio da construção e os mecanismos do projeto rigoroso nos aspectos técnicos e sociais, mas também do conhecimento estético, tecnológico e cultural que pode ser considerado para recuperar a qualidade social da vida urbana e metropolitana.

O nome da publicação -ASTRAGALO- alude a uma peça da ordem arquitetônica. alude a um pedaço da ordem arquitetônica que articula o vertical e o horizontal, o suportado e o de apoio e o suporte, o real e o imaginário. É uma peça pequena, mas fundamental, que une e separa e separa, que distingue e conecta. Também sugere cachos de flores, às vezes solitários.