

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

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

Keywords : aesthetics, ambivalence, governmentality, power, World-class

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