DOMINION GEOMETRIES: Colonial construction and Postcolonial persistence of the Imperial in the New Delhi Plan.

by
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Bachelor of Architecture
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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning | Department of Architecture
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degrees of

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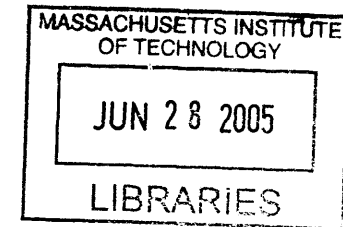
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Abstract

New Delhi is not only the capital of India but the capital of the world's largest democracy. Conceived and built by the British, the New Delhi plan translated British India's home policy in sandstone. The government's administrative hierarchy and centralization of power was directly represented in the physical plan that impressed its magnificence and power over a country awakening to freedom. A realized grand vision imperial plan in an ideologically contradictory circumstance of independence and democracy is the unique departure point for this work. Divided in two parts corresponding to the colonial and postcolonial timeframes, this thesis attempts to answer the central questions of:

- *How was the Imperial constructed in colonial Delhi?*
- *How and why has it persisted in the postcolonial evolution of New Delhi?*

At the macro level, this research engages intersecting themes of political ideology, physical planning, policy, culture and evolution in contemporary city form. The motivation for this research emerges from my own subscription to the fact that "[New Delhi today is] a kind of an overgrown capitol complex, resolutely detached from the rest of the city."[1] In my view, it is the persistence or resistance of the "Imperial" in the post colonial democratization of New Delhi that is largely responsible for the fractures in the city's identity, urban form, sustenance and evolution.

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[1] Vale, Lawrence J. *Architecture, Power and National Identity.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992): 96.

was born and raised till the age of three in New Delhi. After a hiatus of nearly thirteen years, I returned to my home city to go to architecture school. It is here that I really came to respect and appreciate the rich history, architecture and cultural legacy of my great city. However, I simultaneously longed to understand the reason behind certain disconnects, fractures and general inequity that is explicit in the fabric of the city today. Three enriching years of my education at MIT has provided me the tools and intellect necessary to frame my questions in order to understand the city. Through this thesis, not only have I been able to examine the issues plaguing New Delhi, but in the process I have developed a personal appreciation for the complex roots that have caused such cleavages in its urban fabric. Although it is true that this journey has tempered my optimism (as a citizen) greatly, I will always carry a glimmer of hope (as an architect and urban designer/planner) that a better, more livable, equitable and sustainable city will rise giving its citizens the much needed pride that they deserve.

Unless otherwise mentioned, all views and conclusions in this thesis are entirely my own.

Aubhav Gupta

DOMINION GEOMETRIES

COLONIAL CONSTRUCTION AND POSTCOLONIAL PERSISTENCE OF THE IMPERIAL IN THE NEW DELHI PLAN
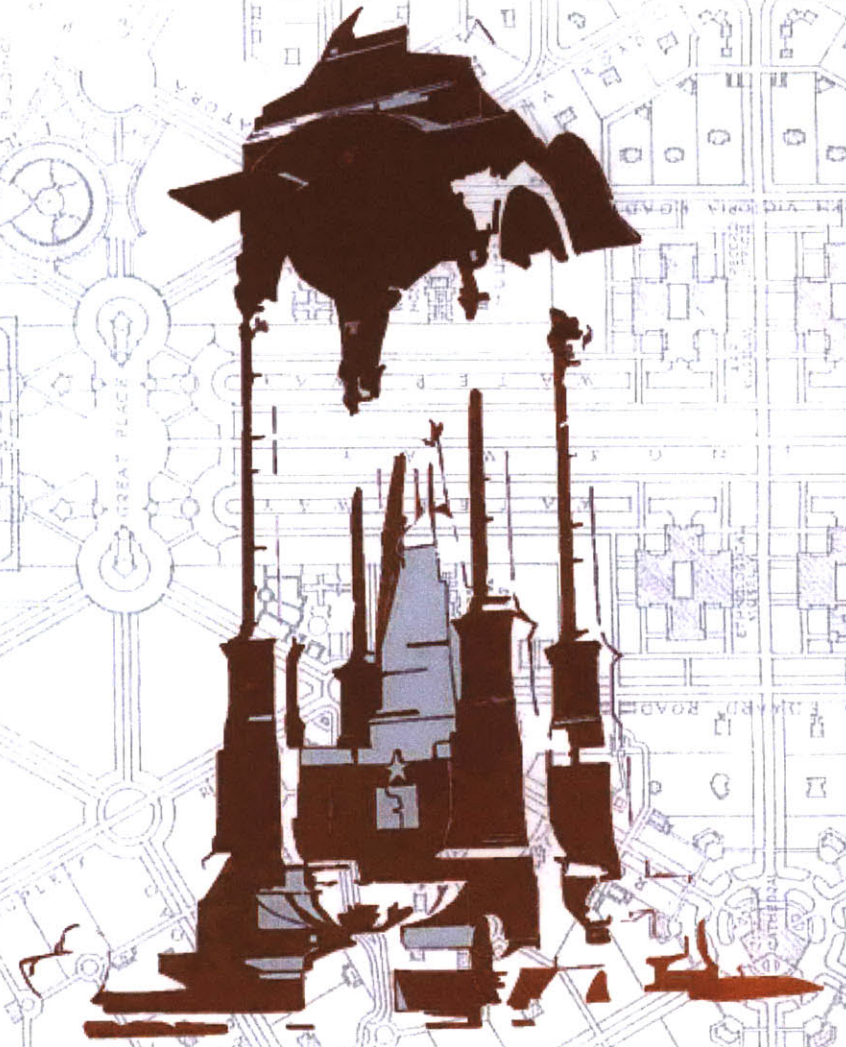
ANUBHAV GUPTA

DOMINION GEOMETRIES
COLONIAL CONSTRUCTION AND POSTCOLONIAL PERSISTENCE OF THE IMPERIAL IN THE NEW DELHI PLAN

ANUBHAV GUPTA

To my Parents
You are to me what every parent hopes to be to their child.
Thank You!

To the Citizens of New Delhi
Who patiently await its regeneration as a truly democratic capital city of India.

Front Cover

Plan of New Delhi, Canopy of George V
Sources: Andreas Volwahsen, Imperial Delhi
Robert Grant Irving, Indian Summer

Rear Cover

Plan of New Delhi, Canopy of George V
Sources: Andreas Volwahsen, Imperial Delhi
Robert Grant Irving, Indian Summer

1 INTRODUCTION

2 PROLOGUE

3 COLONIAL PERIOD

4   POSTCOLONIAL PERIOD

Thesis Introduction

1.1   ON DELHI

New Delhi, the capital of India represents a palimpsest of over 3,500 years of history and splendor witnessed in the remains of many cities built, abandoned, plundered, renovated and rebuilt over succeeding waves of time. Its persistence and continuous existence has lived through nearly four centuries of documented urban planning since Shahjahan's old Delhi (1638) through Lutyens' New Delhi (1912) and the continuing Master Planned Delhi (1957 onwards).   In the past, this strong tradition of planning has often been informed or perpetuated by events of political upheaval. These include the Mughal occupation of India (pre-nineteenth century), the East India Company defeating the Mughals in 1803 to take over Delhi, shifting of British India's capital from Calcutta to New Delhi (1911) and finally the partition & independence of the country in August, 1947.

Today the National Capital Territory of Delhi occupies an area of 1486 sq. km., housing a population of nearly 13.8 million people[2]. In comparison, when conceived by the British, New Delhi was to cover an area of 13 sq. km. for a projected population of 65,000 people[3].

Fig. 1 *Walled City of Shahjahanabad*

Fig. 2 *British Planned New Delhi*

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[2] From: http://www.economywatch.com/stateprofiles/delhi/profile.htm Date Accessed: April 11, 2005.

[3] Singh, Patwant and Dhamija, Ram. (eds.) *Delhi: The Deepening Urban Crisis.* (Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1989): 17.
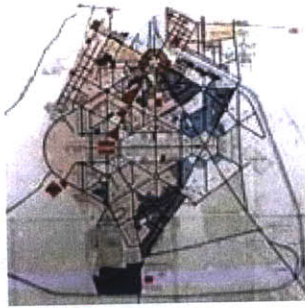
Fig. 3 *British Planned New Delhi*
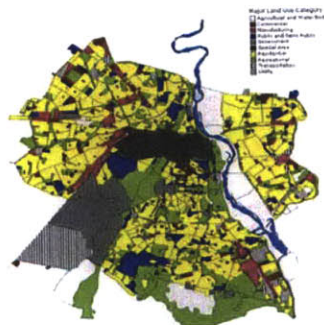
Fig. 4 *Master Planned New Delhi*
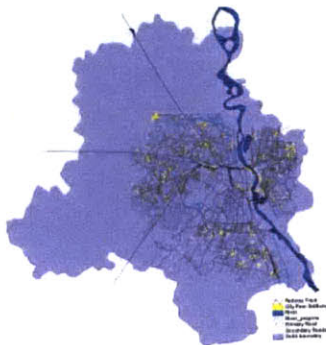
Fig. 5 *National Capital Region*

At this time in 1911, the population of Delhi was about 400,000[4] which rose to 636,000[5] (in the rest of Delhi and the new planned city which spread over an area of 170 sq. km.) in 1931 after the completion of the capital. The advent of Indian independence and partition saw an exodus of nearly 500,000 refugees from Pakistan to Delhi between 1947 and 1950.[6] Over the following years, New Delhi assumed the significance of a capital as well as a central employment center for North India continuing to attract numerous migrants from the rest of the country. Today, a National Capital Region (NCR) covering 30,000 sq. km. has been delineated to manage its growth while the city continues to sprawl outward attracting a and population explosion is the persistence of a 'garden city' suburb with low densities in the heart of the city (British planned New Delhi). The lack of public infrastructure and growth management strategies, rising land values, unemployment and a dysfunctional planning mechanism have further caused visible fractures between the center and rest of the city.

Whether there is a disconnect between the planning process and existing ground realities or simply the lack of socio-political will that drove strong traditions of urban planning in the

[4] Ibid., 17.

[5] Jain, A.K. *The Making of a Metropolis: Planning and Growth of Delhi.* (New Delhi: National Book Organization, 1990): 73.

[6] Singh, B.P. and Varma, Pavan K. (eds.) *The Millennium Book on New Delhi.* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001): 56 (caption).

simply the lack of socio-political will that drove strong traditions of urban planning in the past, "[New Delhi today is] a kind of an overgrown capitol complex, resolutely detached from the rest of the city."[7] For many reasons (as discussed below), this thesis begins it's diagnosis at the heart of the city – *British Imperial Delhi* to find symptoms that may lead to the root cause of Delhi's present day problems of inequity, inefficiency, sprawl, constrained resources, rising land values etc. Although the basis for the first colonial settlement in Delhi was perhaps directly related or influenced by the Mughal walled city of Shahjahanabad, this study assumes British planned New Delhi to be the precursor for urban form and evolution of the capital as we see it today.

The documented historical evolution of the imperial (British) city reveals inherent physical, economic, socio-cultural and political drivers implicit in the plan that propagated the development of the city (land use patterns, density distribution and segregation) in the post colonial era. The consequence of these implicit drivers of form allowed to manifest in the absence of a comprehensive master plan (in the postcolonial era) has New Delhi struggling with the densities and urban implications of contesting tri-polarities - in simultaneously representing a defensible seat of power (ceremonial precinct), a residential enclave for the elite and a central business district for the entire city. Furthermore, the imperial plan's relationship (more so the lack of it) with Shahjahanabad is briefly discussed in the
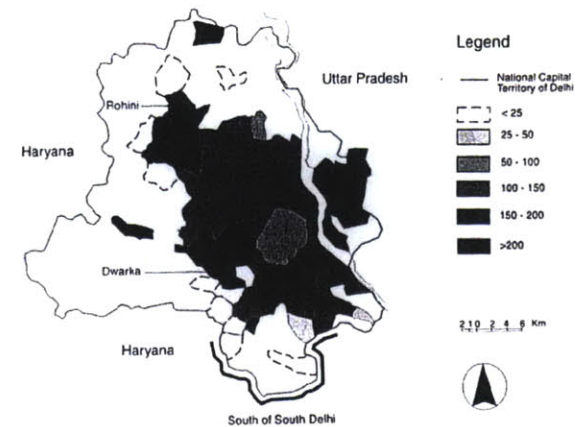
Fig. 6 *Density distribution*
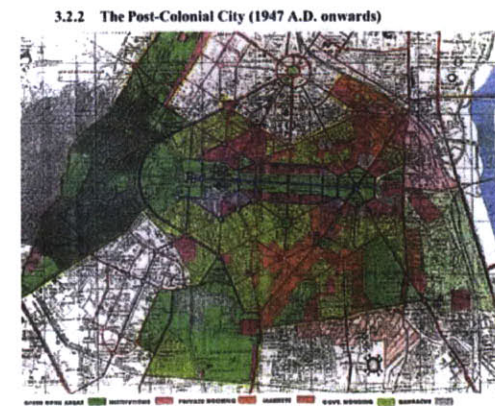
Fig. 7 *Tri-polar Nature*

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[7] Vale, Lawrence J. *Architecture, Power and National Identity.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992): 96.

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planning of the imperial city but mostly discounted for the lack of its determinant role in the postcolonial period of the city's evolution. This elucidates the fact that the implicit drivers of form responsible for segregation between the British planned city and the native city continued to operate in the postcolonial era. Hence, it is the persistence of these drivers that has isolated the Capitol District from the haphazard development of rest of the city (Shahjahanabad included) and in part responsible for contrast created within the city.

1.2   ON COLONIAL AND IMPERIAL

It may be useful at this early stage to make a distinction between the *colonial* and the *imperial*. Several writers have used these terms interchangeably. In his article '*A Definition of Colonialism*', R.J. Horvath maintains that the important difference between the two phenomena appears to be the presence or absence of a significant number of settlers from the colonizing power residing in the colonized state. He asserts that while "Colonialism refers to that form of inter-group domination in which settlers in significant numbers migrate permanently to the colony from the colonizing power, Imperialism on the other hand is wherein few if any, permanent settlers from the imperial homeland migrate to the colony."[8] Anthony King, on the other hand does not accept Horvath's classification of New Delhi under the imperial order for two reasons – "first, the British community in India referred to themselves as 'colonial' and to their society as a 'colonial society'; [second] because there were always a large number of permanent roles in the colonial system in India which were continuously filled from metropolitan society."[9]

Fig.8 *British Imperialism*

Fig.9 *Britain's Colonial Empire*

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[8] Horvath, R.J. '*A definition of Colonialism*', in *Current Anthropology*, 13, 1, 45-57. (1972).

[9] King, Anthony D. *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, social power and environment.* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1976): 17-18. King describes New Delhi as a colonial city. "The British colonists may change but as fast as one man goes, another steps into his place…"

This thesis takes into account both views. While it acknowledges King's contention that British presence in India was in fact 'colonial', however, the act of British planned New Delhi was 'imperial' for two reasons – first, the British themselves referred to conceiving the city under imperial collective memory and under the imperial mode of urban design; second, by the time the capital was completed in 1931, the inevitability of Indian independence had catalyzed the steady decline of the British empire. The years between 1931 and 1947 witnessed the gradual return of the British administration to their imperial homeland. Hence, New Delhi's circumstantial existence rests upon unique parameters that validate its imperial antecedents - a city conceived to enshrine the ideals of western imperialism, populated by a declining colonial population in preparation to be handed over to house the capital of the largest democracy in the world under Indian self rule.

1.3   **ON IMPERIALISM**

"The British when they built New Delhi, for example were clear about what they wanted - they wanted an Imperial City. They were also clear in their mind when they developed Calcutta, Bombay and Madras – they wanted colonial cities."[10] At the time, the collective memory of the classical imperial city, pre-eminently Rome, had a marked impact on urban design across the globe especially for competing British imperialists.[11] Although Rome itself was little more than a provincial town with some impressive ruins, the idea of Rome was ubiquitous. As torchbearers of the Roman imperial legacy, the British used Classical architecture to represent the idea of Rome, because to them "…the Classical was the embodiment of the highest aspirations of imperialism…"[12]

Britain's self proclaimed imperial inheritance from the Romans "took shape in a variety of ways, from the iconography of individual buildings and public statutory, through the shape and form of public spaces, both permanent and ephemeral, to the planning of the whole

Fig.10 *The idea of Rome*

Fig.11 *Classicism*

[10] Evenson, Norma. *The Indian Metropolis: A View towards the West.* (London: Yale University Press, 1998): 182.

[11] Betts, R. *'The allusion to Rome in British imperialist thought of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries'* in *Victorian Studies*, 15. (1971): 149-159.

[12] Lang, Jon and Desai, Madhavi. *Architecture and Independence: The search for identity – India 1880-1980* (Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 1997): 147.
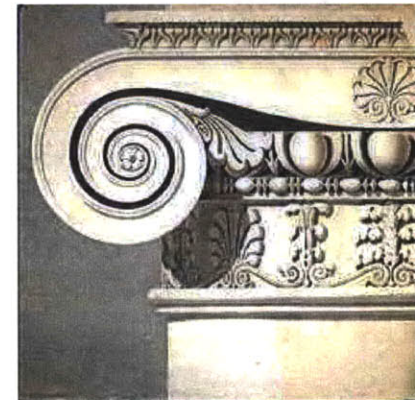
Fig.12 *Built manifestation – idea of Rome*

cityscapes."[13] In New Delhi, the imperial memory was manifested through the overwhelming scale and Classical iconography of buildings strategically placed at the termini of hexagonal axial geometry which was imposed on the cityscape. It's embodied meaning - that of a new dominating social order was carefully choreographed in spatial organization almost in a theatrical display of power and control at all times. Also implicit in the metaphor of exhibition and theatre (discussed later in further detail) were the hierarchical separationist structures between the theatre (imperial) and the circus (native); inclusive and the exclusive and finally the haves and the have-nots. [14]

In their article 'Imperial cities: Overlapping territories and intertwined histories', Driver and Gilbert cite Eric Hobsbawm's foreword to Art and Power in which he "identifies three demands which the state makes on public art and architecture – the glorification of power itself, organization of art as public drama and service of art as education or propaganda."[15] They further assert that imperial urbanism has time and again used these demands to exploit

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[13] Driver, Felix and Gilbert, David. (eds.) *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity*. (New York: Manchester University Press, 1999): 9.

[14] Various Sources: Fletcher, Yaël Simpson. *"Capital of Colonies: real and imagined boundaries between metropole and empire in 1920's Marseilles."* (136-154) in Driver et al.; Ryan, Deborah S. *"Staging the imperial city: The pageant of London, 1911."* (117-135) in Driver et al.; Jyoti, Hosagrahar. *"City as a Durbar: Theatre and Power in Imperial Delhi."* (83-105) in Alsayyad, Nezar. (ed.). *Forms of Dominance*. (Brookfield: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1992)

[15] Driver et al.: 10.

architecture and urban design. The case of New Delhi exemplifies this exploitation and points to a deeper meaning implicit in Hobsbawm's three demands revealing a duality in the nature of imperialism (one of power accompanied education). The same duality is also embedded in the term 'dominion' which implies domination and subjugation, but by the same token engenders political allegiance to the subjugated in working towards the peaceful betterment of the whole. Seen as two contrasting sides of the same coin, a **regressive** desire to express power and superiority reinforces a **progressive** responsibility to educate and modernize the subjugated. Similarly, the responsibility to modernize requires the necessary superiority and power to bring about positive change. The exploitation of architecture and urban design that Driver and Gilbert refer to stems from this dual nature of imperialism. Here the built expression of power is justified by the responsibility to modernize, often leaving the latter unfulfilled, rather dubiously magnifying the former as a result. It is to make this distinction clear in intention and action for which imperialism may be understood as the combination of the following:

Fig.13 *Dilemma of progressive/regressive Imperialism*

- *Conservative Imperialism:* Form of imperialism primarily concerned with the subjugation/domination of new territory and its subjects which is usually manifested through a regressive desire to display power and control at all times.

- *Liberal Imperialism:* Form of imperialism primarily concerned with the pledge of political allegiance which is usually manifested with a progressive responsibility to uplift, educate and modernize the dominated territory and its subjects.

While one may be used as the means to the other's end (discussed later on), either way, New Delhi may be seen as an imperial *urban artifact* of British Colonialism in India. The terms colonial and postcolonial are strictly used to refer to time frames while the term imperial is used as the primary qualifier in this study. Although the Mughal city of Shahjahanabad also fits an imperial qualification, British planned New Delhi remains the focus of this thesis.

1.4   **ON URBAN ARTIFACTS**

The term *urban artifact* is borrowed from Rossi's *The Architecture of the City* where he argues that their characteristics return us to some major themes of individuality, locus, design and memory[16]. He consciously excludes the theme of function in these attributes voicing his critique of naïve functionalism maintaining that "any explanation of urban artifacts in terms of function must be rejected if the issue is to elucidate their structure and formation." [Rossi conceives that] "Function, physiological in nature, can be likened to a bodily organ whose function justifies its formation and development and whose alterations of function imply an alteration of form."[17] While Rossi rejects *function*, he advocates for *type* as a more accurate classifier of urban artifacts.

Although New Delhi adheres to all attributes laid out in Rossi's construction of an urban artifact, it also differentiates from it in the complexity of its nature. While the *imperial* may be classified as the type[18] of its form, the change in the city's identity (from imperial to democratic) over time remains ambiguous to the physically limited clarity of Rossi's

Fig.14 *Cognitive structure of Delhi*

Fig.15 *Imperial iconography*

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[16] Rossi, Aldo. *The Architecture of the City*. (Cambridge, USA: The MIT Press, 1983): 32.

[17] Ibid., 46.

[18] Evenson (1998): 106. "Baker advocated a type of architecture that may be called 'imperial' rather than specifically European."

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Fig.16 *Imperial urban artifact*

construction. Perhaps the attributes of Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City* (Legibility, Structure, Identity and Imageability)[19] describes better Delhi's qualification as an urban artifact. As for the notion of memory, on one hand, Rossi's concept of memory is compounded by the clash between the physical determinism of the imperial type (manifested through strong iconography, axiality, scale, hierarchy and segregation) and the desire to democratize as a result of it (after independence); on the other hand, it is burdened by antiquity and pressures of preservation inhibiting functional evolution of a contemporary metropolis. "To some, the city embodied an obsolete imagery and a waste of urban land. To others, it seemed a precious artifact to be preserved."[20]

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[19] Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City.* (Cambridge, USA: The MIT and Harvard University Press, 1960): 1-13

[20] Ibid., 190.

1.5　　　　　**ON PERSISTENCE OF THE IMPERIAL**

Examining the capitol district of New Delhi as an imperial urban artifact then provides physical, social, cultural and political benchmarks of comparisons (through colonial and postcolonial time frames). These comparisons are used to construct a coherent narrative that corroborates the claims made in this thesis. Although on the face of it, New Delhi appears to have accepted changes in use and identity over the years, the physical determinism of the imperial (not limited only to type but also ideology, symbolism, identity and institutionalization) persists and embodies the city's inertia to resist change. The relatively unchanged characteristics of the plan's built imperial ideologies are a testimony to this inertia. They have therefore led to a notion of persistence of the imperial, which has defied the democratization of the plan as attempted through the master planning of Delhi in its postcolonial era. Many have viewed this persistence more as a resistance in support of an imperial image of Delhi "as a sheltered enclave for the administrative elite."[21]

Anthony King points out that the symbolic representation of imperial power continues to persist in Delhi. He argues that "the inherently separationist structures of the [imperial] city and its asymmetrical power relations are being continuously reinvented, albeit in an internal

Fig.17 *Persistence of the Imperial*

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[21] Evenson (1998): 192.

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[imperialist] form."[22] Kevin Lynch comments on the 'bi-polar' form (native and foreign) of colonial cities, "Once the colonial hold is broken…as in Delhi today, the hierarchies and segregations are simply taken over and perpetuated by the new native elite."[23] In his essay *'The Contemporary Architecture of Delhi'*, Menon concurs citing an institutional persistence of the imperial propagating the continuance of assumptions and policies implicit in the imperial plan. "After independence, continuing the pursuit of these urban and architectural intentions became an article of faith with planners of Delhi."[24] Menon's view owes its origins to western import of experts recruited by the Ford Foundation to set up the first Master Plan of Delhi shortly after Independence. "Far from rejecting westernization, many Indians persisted in equating it with progress, optimistically anticipating an era of technical advancement and industrial prosperity."[25] It seems ironic that the preservationists (to mobilize two decades after independence) were fighting for the same cause as the progressivists at the advent of independence while the ideologists still continue the struggle to break away from their imperial ghosts in pursuit of a purely indigenous paradigm. "The preservation of the colonial buildings and layout of Lutyens' New Delhi is largely the result

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[22] King, Anthony D. *Spaces of Global Cultures: Architecture Urbanism Identity*. (London, U.K.: Routledge, 2004): 142.

[23] Lynch, Kevin. *A Theory of Good City Form*. (Cambridge, USA: The MIT Press, 1981): 21.

[24] Menon, A.G.K. *"The Contemporary Architecture of Delhi."* in Dupont, V., Tarlo, E. and Vidal, D. (eds.) *Delhi: Urban Space and Human Dimensions*. (Delhi: Manohar, Centre De Science Humaines, 2000): 147.

[25] Evenson (1998): 183.

of the extent to which political and administrative elites continue to invest in this area."[26] Whether it was the plan itself, the ideology it promulgated, the origins and development of the post-colonial planning process, vested political interests, antiquity or simply the lack of foresight and comprehensive planning, the imperial persists and impedes sustainable development and the future of New Delhi. It is in the light of these views, that this thesis is conceived.

Broadly divided into two parts corresponding to colonial and postcolonial time frames, the thesis attempts to answer the central research questions of:

- *How was the 'Imperial' constructed in colonial Delhi?*
- *How and why has it persisted in the postcolonial evolution of New Delhi?*

Through an urban historical narrative, the first part examines the construction of the 'Imperial' while the second part validates its persistence by analyzing critical decisions that were influential in the inception and urban evolution of the postcolonial city.

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[26] Gupta, Narayani. *"Concern, Indifference, Controversy: Reflection on Fifty Years of Conservation."* in Dupont, V., Tarlo, E. and Vidal, D. (eds.) *Delhi: Urban Space and Human Dimensions.* (Delhi: Manohar, Centre De Science Humaines, 2000): 147.

2.1   **DELHI: OF WHORES AND LOVERS**

The introductory excerpt from Khushwant Singh's book *Delhi*, reads:

> *"I return to Delhi as I return to my mistress Bhagmati when I have had my fill of whoring in foreign lands. Delhi and Bhagmati have a lot in common. Having been long misused by rough people they have learnt to conceal their seductive charms under a mask of repulsive ugliness. It is only to their lovers, among whom I count myself, that they reveal their true selves."[27]*

Fig.18 *Old Delhi, today*

In contrast when the famous Indian poet, Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib[28] asked his soul:

What is Delhi?

It replied: *If the world is the body, Delhi is its soul.*

The journey from Ghalib's soul of the world to the Singh's mistress of the east begs the conjuring of Delhi's eternal ghosts that inhabit its tirelessly revisited palimpsest.
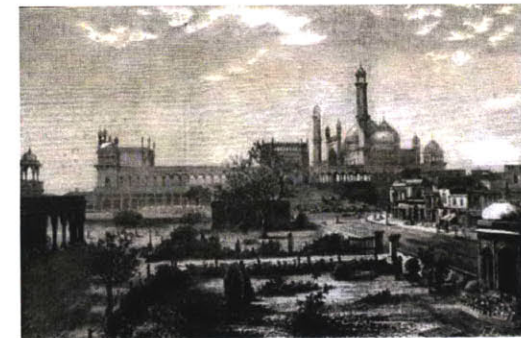
Fig.19 *Ghalib's Delhi, 1870*

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[27] Singh, Khushwant. *Delhi*. (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1990): 1.

[28] Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib was a famous poet in late eighteenth century (1796-1869) during the Mughal occupation of India.

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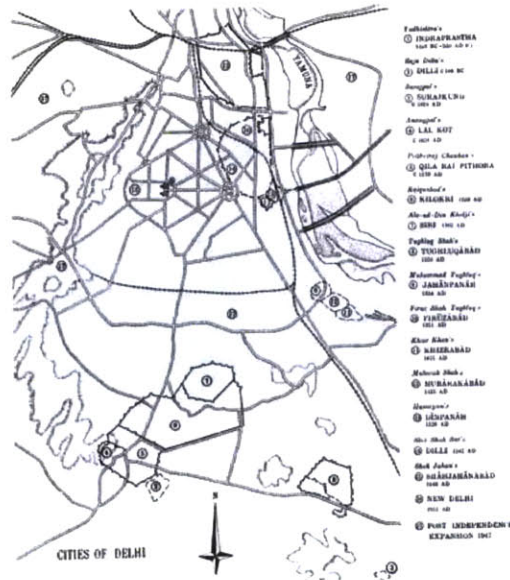
Fig.20 *17 settlements of Delhi*

2.2 THE GHOSTS OF DELHI

Different authors have argued on the actual number of cities or settlements that have occupied Delhi since its origins in 1450 B.C.[29] It has also been rare that any two successive settlements occupied the same site in the environs of Delhi partly alluding to documented evidence of River Jamuna shifting its course gradually eastward to its present position. Whether there have been seven cities[30] as documented by Hearn in 1906 or seventeen[31] settlements in all, Delhi's permanence today is embodied by several transient existences carelessly embedded within its fabric over time. In comparison to Delhi's timeless historic origins, the content of this thesis deals with a rather recent past spanning only the last hundred years. In recent living memory, these hundred years remain a good indicator of Singh's analogical reality of misuse and transformation between Ghalib's nineteenth century question and today's exhausted urban metropolis.

[29] Singh et al. (2001): Introduction.

[30] Hearn, G.R. *The Seven Cities of Delhi.* (London: W. Thacker and Company, 1906).

[31] Breese, Gerald. *Urban and Regional Planning for Delhi-New Delhi Area: Capital for Conquerors and Country.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974): 4-7 adapted from Kulshreshta, S.K. *Image of Delhi: Capital of India.* Paper at 17th Annual Town Planning Seminar, New Delhi, 1968.

Colonial *Period*

3.1 BRITISH IN INDIA/DELHI

In 1498, Vasco da Gama's discovery of a sea route to the Indies opened up the possibilities of European trade with the east. Soon to follow the Portuguese in lure of indigo, spices and silk were the British (1608), Danish (1616), Dutch (1658) and French (1664) traders who began to set up trading out posts off the coast of India. As history would have it, British East India Company's quest for trading monopoly in India soon gave way to Britain's colonialist ambitions.[32] By 1784 the East India Company was appointed governor of India holding unprecedented autonomous power as vested in it by the British Parliament.[33] With Calcutta as the first capital of British India, the Company gradually began moving westward towards the struggling Mughal controlled territory of northern India.

Fig.21 *East India Company*

In 1803, British forces first arrived in Delhi at the invitation of Mughal ruler Shah Alam II who was losing to the powerful forces of Maratha leader Daulat Rao Scindia. General Lake of the East India Company defeated the Marathas and subsequently installed "the first [British] Resident of Delhi as the 'protector' of the Mughal crown."[34] From then on, Delhi witnessed a tightening British hold followed by an eventual dissolution of the Mughal rule in
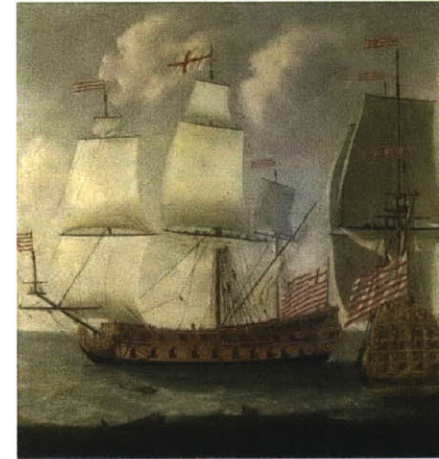
Fig.22 *Sepoy Mutiny, 1857*

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[32] Cohn, Bernard S. India: *The Social Anthropology of a Civilization.* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1971): 69-78.

[33] Alsayyad (1992): 85.

[34] Jain (1990): 65.
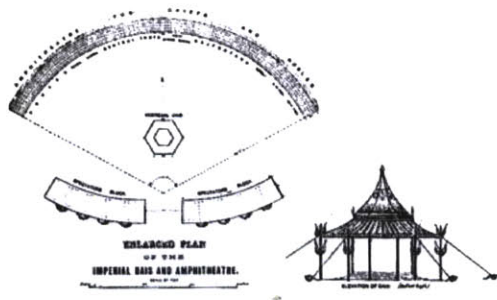
Fig.23 *Coronation Durbar spatial order 1877*
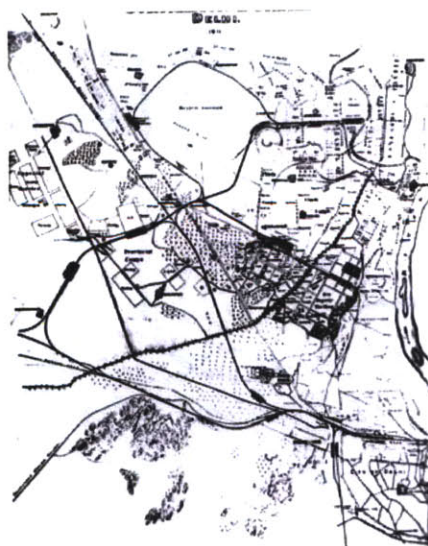
Fig.24 *Coronation Durbar site, 1911*

1858. The demise of the Mughal Empire was a result of the 'Sepoy Mutiny' in 1857 (also referred to as the First War of Indian independence) that attempted to re-install independent Mughal rule in India. Following the mutiny, the British Parliament passed the India Act on August 2, 1858 transferring all powers from the East India Company to the British monarchy in London. By this time, British troops had already set up Civil Lines north of the walled city as a planned development. Parts of the old city wall were demolished to create access and better living conditions for the new British residents.

In 1877, under the auspices of Lord Lytton, the first Imperial Assemblage was held in Delhi to proclaim Queen Victoria the empress of India. It is interesting to note that the Mughal Durbar (formal court) which the British sought to displace with their Assemblage also had in it the same implicit separationist structures, strict spatial order and public drama common to the ideals of conservative imperial urbanism. The Assemblage's successful mimicry of the Mughal urban spectacle sowed the seeds of Delhi's British imperial lineage. With more of such Coronation Durbars[35] to follow, Britain had begun its theatrical display of imperial power over the native Indian race. Soon the sights of the empire would be mapped upon the sites of the city.

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[35] Two other Coronation Durbars followed in 1903 and 1911.

3.2   SHIFTING THE CAPITAL

It may have either been to escape from Calcutta's unhealthy climate and political instability[36], or, Delhi's strategic central location in the Indian subcontinent that may have prompted the notion of shifting the capital of the British *Raj* from Calcutta to Delhi. Geographically, Delhi is equidistant from Karachi, Bombay, and Calcutta, which were the main cities of trade and power at the time. It was also a junction of six railway lines that connected the northwest with the rest of India. It seemed only obvious from then on that conditions for a plan of previously unknown proportions was feasible in the vast environs available around Delhi to construct a living tribute to British imperialism and its unified rule over the Indian race. After much discussion, the British administration agreed that, "the ancient walls of Delhi would enshrine an Imperial tradition comparable with that of Constantinople, or that of Rome itself."[37] Rumored to be a closely guarded secret until in December 1911, at the Coronation *Grand Durbar* held in Delhi, King George V formally announced the transfer of the British capital from Calcutta to Delhi.

Fig.25 *Coronation Durbar, 1911*

Fig.26 *Location of Delhi*

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[36] A growing sense of nationalism in Calcutta as a result of the partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon in 1902 had the British government worried. They saw Delhi's Mughal imperial lineage as a ripe opportunity to seamlessly replace authority and gain loyalty to proceed with their own imperial ambitions.

[37]Volwahsen, Andreas. *Imperial Delhi – The British Capital of the Indian Empire.* (New York, USA: Prestel Verlag, 2002): 11.

Fig.27 *Indo-Saracenic, Mysore, 1912*
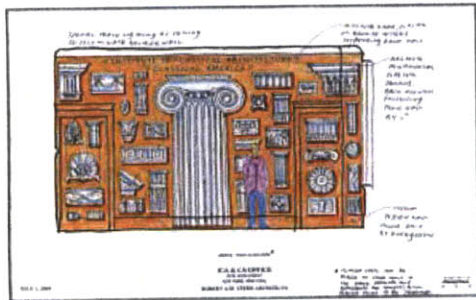
Fig.28 *European Classicism*

As the official word percolated through the British intelligentsia, there were fierce debates in the architectural, social and political circuits in England regarding the question of style employed in the formation of the new capital. A definitive "Imperial Style" had never been achieved, although the search for one had preoccupied the British throughout their stay in India. On the one hand were the partisans of Indo-Saracenic[38] design, who proposed the use of the pre-existing architectural traditions of Akbar's Fatehpur Sikri and Shahjahan's Shahjahanabad, and on the other were whose who promulgated assertive imperialism, insisting that European classicism alone could represent the empire in stone. For various political reasons, the king himself was strongly in favor of the vernacular Mughal style of architecture – "I do hope all goes well", Edwin Lutyens wrote, "and I shall be able to satisfy the King's *Mogul* taste."[39] This issue remained an ongoing debate throughout the planning process.

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[38] Lang et al. (1997): 99-106.

"Indo Sarcenic Architecture was an effort to provide a visible symbol of an aspect of British policy in India...It was supposed to serve as an imperial gesture to revive Indian traditions...also had political aspirations as a symbol of power that had displaced the Mughals. It helped to obscure the exploitative nature of British Imperialism."

[39] Percy, Clare and Ridley, Jane (eds.) *The letters of Edwin Lutyens to his wife Lady Emily.* (London, UK: Collins, 1985): 260.

3.3   **SETTING THE STAGE**

3.3.1   The Patrons

There were two key political figures put at the task of the design, construction and execution of the new capital by the British crown. The British secretary of State for India, Lord Crowe (in London) and the Viceroy of India, Lord Hardinge of Penhurst; both remained in constant touch with each other throughout the project.   As the plot thickened, Lord Hardinge emerged as one of the key influences on the master plan.[40] Hardinge was posted in Washington DC as a diplomat during which time new plans for the American capital reviving L'Enfant's vision were being put forth by the McMillan commission. Impressed with the conception of the American capital he "repeatedly adopted Pierre Charles L'Enfant's and George Washington's ideas as a yardstick for comparable decisions in the design and construction of Imperial Delhi."[41] Hardinge was also instrumental in identifying the site atop Raisina Hill, which formed the terminating element of the celebrated main axis of Lutyens' scheme for the imperial capital. Due to his strong preferences and ideology,

Fig.29 *Lord Hardinge*

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[40]Volwahsen (2002): 29.

The budget for the construction of Imperial Delhi was fixed in London at £6,113,600 for an estimated time of construction for 6 years. The official opening of the new capital happened only nineteen years later in 1931 at an incredibly inflated budget, which was far more than expected. It was Hardinge's sheer grit and determination that drove the colossally expensive project to completion in the twilight of the declining British Empire.

[41] Ibid.

Fig.30 *Delhi Town Planning Committee*

Hardinge was often a difficult client to the architect, and as a result, there were clashes as described by Volwahsen, similar to 'Michelangelo and Pope Julius II'[42] between the patron and the architect. For political reasons and his acquired sensitivity to local context, Hardinge was always in favor of incorporating the Indian aesthetic in the imperial design for the capital.

By 1913, the Delhi Town Planning Committee appointed by the British Viceroy (Hardinge) and the India office consisted of **Edwin Lutyens** and **Herbert Baker** (newly appointed architects); **John A. Brodie**, a municipal engineer, **Capt. George Swinton** and others. **Henry V. Lanchester**, the only member with prior experience in India was appointed the advisor to the committee. Other engineers like T.R.J. Ward, W.B. Gordon and C.E.V. Goument played important roles in rationalizing proposals made by the designers during the design process based on possibilities of planting the ridge, minimizing blasting and alterations to natural drainage patters inherent on the site.

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[42] Ibid.

3.3.2   The Designers:

3.3.2.1   Sir Edwin Landseer Lutyens – The Artist

Although a prominent country house architect in London at the time, Lutyens was "perhaps a surprising, though imaginative choice"[43] given that he had never designed a large public building let alone cities or townships. He came to India with the grandiosity of Rome and Paris in his mind and more importantly as a dejected man after his failures in Britain's other big colony of South Africa. His marriage to the daughter of the former Viceroy of India, Lord Lytton, clientele contacts in London's elite gentry and his successful work in the Hampstead Garden Suburb had definitely opened some doors for him. His primary focus was to procure the architectural commission of the government house, a precondition that he imposed in return for serving on the Town Planning Committee during the first meeting with Sir Raymond Ritchie.[44] Lutyens displayed a lack of interest in the greater plan beyond ensuring views to and from his buildings. This seems evident as he moved from site to site during the selection process with little or no change to his initial sketches of the government house. The urban plan seemed subservient in creating the appropriate setting for his iconographic buildings.
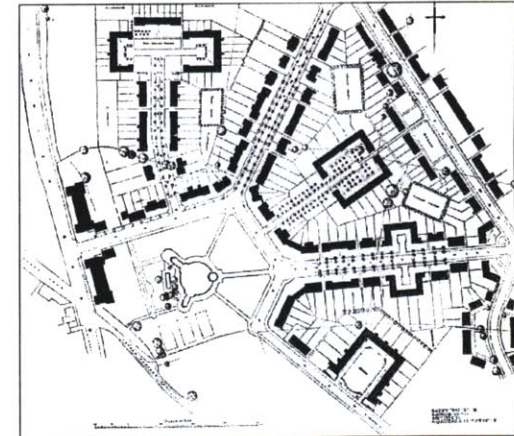
Fig.31 *Hampstead Garden Suburb*
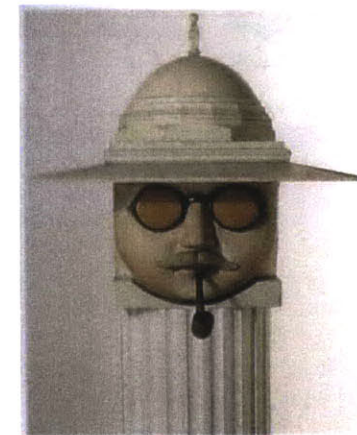
Fig.32 *Caricature bust of Lutyens*

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[43] Gradidge, Roderrick. *Edwin Lutyens–Architect Laureate.* (London, UK: George Allen & Unwin, 1981): 68.

[44] Hussey, Christopher. *The Life of Sir Edwin Lutyens.* (London, UK: Country Life Limited, 1953): 245.

Fig.33 *Imperial views*
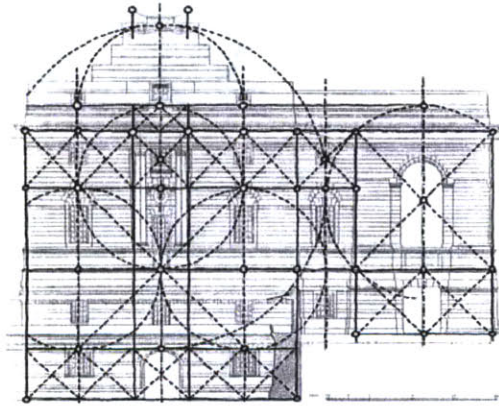
Fig.34 *Geometrisized Palladian idioms*

Indian architecture, to Lutyens seemed to be 'all pattern' and 'veneered joinery'[45] which was offensive to his Ruskinian ethic of simplicity, grand massing and honestly expressed materials. Hence, Lutyens cared less for historic monuments that did not conform to his plans, pronouncing them as 'awkwardly situated' and a 'nuisance spoiling avenues and proposed building sites. He dismissed the Eurasian hybrid Gothic (as in Bombay) and the Indo-Sarcenic buildings as a 'particular form of vulgarity' that the British Rule had as its monument.[46] The arrogant political incorrectness in his views and design ideology often worried the British administration.[47]

Urbanistically, Lutyens was more of an artist than a town planner looking to create a majestic (read imperial) setting for his architectural masterpiece. Architecturally, his convictions were crystallized in Palladian and Western Classicist idioms. In his mind, the only architectural vocabulary that could represent the British Empire and be adaptable to various climates was Classic. He described his buildings akin to an Englishman dressed for the climate rather than

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[45] Percy et al. (1985): 250.

[46] Hopkins, Andrew and Stamp, Gavin. (eds.) *Lutyens Abroad*. (Rome, Italy: The British School at Rome, 2002): 169.

[47] Hopkins et al. (2002): 187. "He has, I fully believe, great genius; but, uncontrolled, he will produce a building or buildings intended to insult the aspirations of everything Indian."

being paraded with native costumes like in a fancy dress ball.[48] Lutyens' fear of losing the project, rather than an acquired taste for the Indian aesthetic made him finally adopt a few elements from the local palette as seen in the realized plan and its architecture. Symbolically, although oblivious to content (imperialism), in the majestic settings created for his buildings and the Western European Classicist imagery of his architecture, Lutyens (by default) created the impetus for the imperial capital.

3.3.2.2   Sir Herbert Baker – The Imperialist

In 1913, Baker, who had just successfully completed building projects in Pretoria, joined the capital project on Lutyens' recommendation. Many speculate that the British Crown agreed to commission Baker to keep a check on Lutyens' politically incorrect genius. "Unlike Lutyens, whom he felt focused his genius increasingly on the abstract and geometrical elements of architecture, Baker always believed in the importance of content in art."[49] In his ideological aspiration for the new capital, Baker wrote to Lutyens – "It must not be Indian nor English, nor Roman, but it must be Imperial."[50] He further qualified this in his paper, *'Architecture in relation to the Empire'*, where he perceived Imperial rule to be principally for the benefit of not Britain but of the subject peoples, raising them to standards and ideals
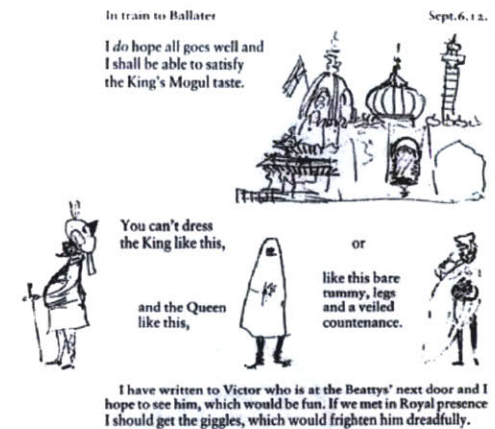
Fig.35 *"The King's Mogul taste"*

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[48] Irving, Robert Grant. *Indian Summer*. (London, UK: Yale University Press, 1981): 167.

[49] Hopkins et al. (2002): 174.

[50] Hussey (1953): 247.

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Fig.36 *Sir Herbert Baker*

befitting self-government.[51] Baker equated his Liberal Imperialism with progress of the Indian race and saw it as a responsibility of Britain over its colonies.

For this reason, Baker also had respect for the Indian context and existing typologies in view of the long-term future of his built imperial postage on the country. His guiding principles were to weave into the fabric of the universal forms of architecture, the threads of Indian traditional shapes and features that were compatible with the climate, and use of the building. His fusion of indigenous architectural forms with European Classicism in his Secretariat buildings was a calculated response to practical climatic needs as well as the requirements for political symbolism. Baker believed in creating a British imperial stamp on Delhi, but doing so in a way, which was sensitive to the local context by giving function to recognizable Indian elements through his design genius.

Architecturally, Baker's buildings embodied a strong (intentional) imperial iconography although, with many Indian elements that were subservient in serving climatic and functional needs of the building. Symbolically, based on Edward Said's[52] construction of Orientalism,

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[51] Hopkins et al. (2002): 175.

[52] Ridley, Jane. *'Lutyens', New Delhi and Indian Architecture.'* in Hopkins et al.: 185. Edward Said has shown that Orientalism (the development by the West of a Paradigm of the East) was an attempt by the West to gather knowledge about the East to invent the Orient and therefore control it. By his definition, the western advocates

Baker's use of Indian elements out of choice and Lutyens' use of them for the lack of it only darkened the built form's imperialist shadows cast upon the native people; symbolic with an air of masterful control of everything Indian within the dominant imperial superstructure.

3.3.2.3   Henry Vaughin Lanchester

Planner of Cardiff[53], Lanchester was already in India practicing and courting the Viceroy.[54] He is probably the least credited of the plans contributors.   He was responsible for introducing the cross axial plaza, the first vistas to Indrapat, Humayun's and Safdarjung's tombs and the proposed water park at the King's Way terminus. These ideas were initially
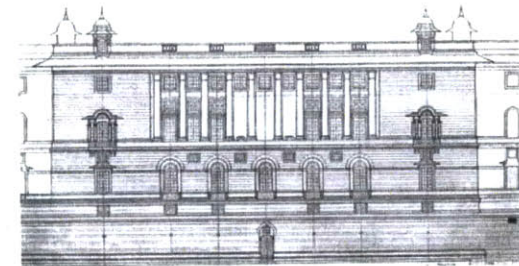
Fig.37 *Chattris, Chujjas, Jallis*

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of the invented style of oriental architecture were true Imperialists as their agenda was one of control. (Orientalism, 1995).

[53] Ridley, Jane. *The Architect and his Wife*. (London, UK: Chatto & Windus, 2002): 212.

[54] Volwahsen (2002); Lord Hardinge to Sir Raymond Ritchie. Simla, July 11, 1912. Lord Hardinge's Papers. Cambridge University Library, Cambridge, UK.

In his book, Imperial Delhi, Andreas Volwahsen describes Lutyens' apprehension of working with Lanchester fearing professional rivalry for the commission of buildings in the new capital. Lord Hardinge had displayed a preference for Lanchester's proposals time and again, which was a constant worry for Lutyens during the initial stages of the project.

ridiculed by Lutyens[55] but later adopted by him in his plans. They form the popularly recognized characteristics of the imperial plan today. Lanchester, "like his friend Patrick Geddes, evinced a preference for corrective surgery on existing fabric, rather than for wholesale development."[56] He believed that every necessary improvement should maintain the general character of the city. Hardinge described Lanchester as "by far the most practical and sensible" and felt that in a month in India he had accomplished much more than the committee had done in nine weeks.[57] It cannot be ascertained from the available texts if Lanchester was in definite favor of the Indo-Sarcenic view but he was certainly against the creation of a brand new geometry to be imposed on the existing palimpsest of Delhi.

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[55] Miller, Helen. *Patrick Geddes, Social Evolutionist and City Planner.* (London: Routledge, 1990): 235.

[56] Irving (1981): 57.

[57] Ibid., 62

3.4   IMPERIAL DESIGN & PLANNING PROCESS

Fig.38 *Survey of Delhi*

3.4.1   Site selection

After a rigorous two-month site study exercise, the committee on May 2, 1912, selected a site three miles southwest of Shahjahanabad around the Raisina Hill for the imperial capital. This was a well-drained, healthy area between the ridge and the river, which was chosen for its 'aspects, altitude, water, health, virgin soil and views across old Delhi to the wilderness of ruined tombs that form the remains of the seven older Delhis'. The Raisina Hill stood 50 ft. above the ground plane and commanded a splendid view of the entire area. There was still speculation about the site as late as January of the following year when the Viceroy announced a change of decision in favor of the North Delhi Durbar site. The committee reassembled and after an extensive study, rejected the latter site for lack of space, flooding issues and distance from military cantonments. The original south site (of Raisina Hill) at the foot of the Delhi ridge was resubmitted and agreed upon.
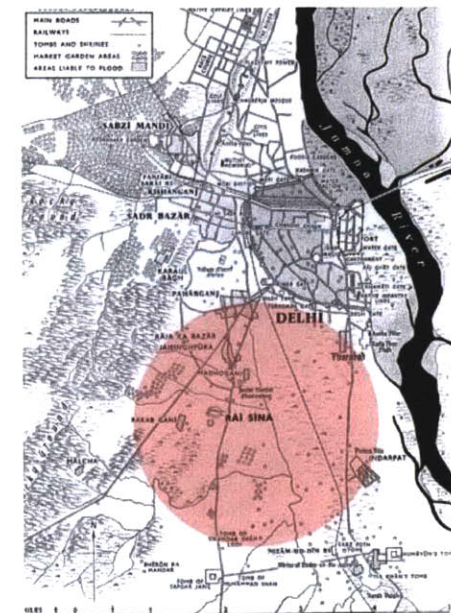
Fig.39 *Selected site*

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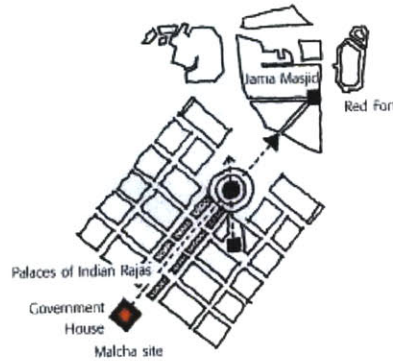
Fig.40 *Stage 1*
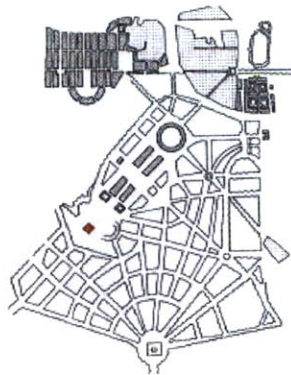
Fig.41 *Stage 2*

3.4.2 Evolution of the City plan

Stage 1: Lutyens, Swinton and Brodie – July 16, 1912

The first design consisted of a principal axis running from the Jama Masjid in Shahjahanabad to the Government House that sat on top of the Malcha hill. This northeast-southwest axis was to be conceived on the lines of Champs Elysees in Paris. The axial view from the Government house to India's largest mosque, the Jami Masjid, was the key theme to express continuity from the previous Mughal Empire. Palaces of the Indian royalty lined up between the Government house and a large Circus that sat on a low summit between the hill and the mosque. The Viceroy objected to frequent right angle intersections which were similar to the normal layout of cantonments and civil stations in India.

Stage 2: H.V. Lanchester – July, 1912 onwards

The second design retained the siting of the government house but introduced a cross axial plaza with two secretariat blocks to break the monotony of long main avenue. There was sensitivity to historical monuments and landmarks by preserving them in parks. Curved street concepts were especially borrowed from Regent Street in London to unfold variety. There was a residential grid and a commercial zone with a system of open spaces for

'adequate aeration.'

Stage 3: Lanchester's revised layout – August – September, 1912

The main avenue planned through the village of Paharganj would alone incur costs of £180,000 excluding the relocation of its 15,000 residents. To avoid this expensive expropriation (as expressed by Hardinge) the main axis was turned 45 degrees southeast towards the ancient fortress of Indrapat. Lanchester suggested 3 avenues radiating from the government house towards many identified focal points instead of a primary avenue. This design did not fulfill Lord Hardinge's standards. He was opposed to too many curved streets and the suggestion of 6 secretariats in front of the Viceregal residence.

Stage 4: Hardinge and Lutyens. Appraisals from Michael Nethersole and C.E.V. Goumet – December 1912.

Lord Hardinge had 'discovered' the Raisina Hill as a potential site for the government house during a site visit in July 1912. He thought that the Malcha site was 'far too distant' and suggested that the government house should face east and occupy the rear of Raisina Hill to dominate the cityscape. Engineers and forest officers were consulted regarding the deforestation of the Hill, which was deemed possible.
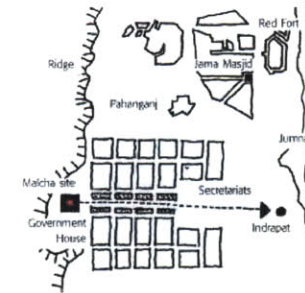
Fig.42 *Stage 3a*
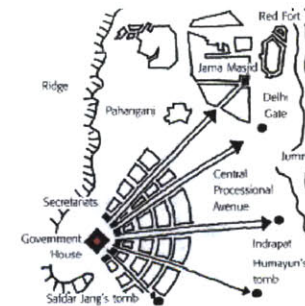
Fig.43 *Stage 3b*
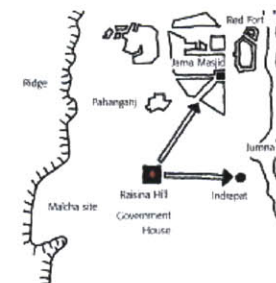
Fig.44 *Stage 4*

Fig.45 *Stage 5 a*
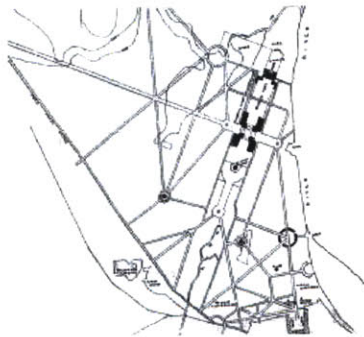
Fig.46 *Stage 5 b*

Fig.47 *Stage 6a*

Stage 5: Hardinge- January – February 1913

Yet another reversal of Lord Hardinge's mind caused the committee to reconsider the North Delhi site in January 1913. The exhausted (possibly desperate) committee concluded that a small dense city could be built on the site at great expense with minimal chance of future expansion. Two different options were produced as layout A and B to satisfy the viceroy's contention. The decision was reverted back to the original South site on Raisina Hill.

Stage 6: Lutyens, Baker and the committee – February – March 1913

Lutyens and the committee quickly reoriented their previous proposals towards stage 4 and gained control of the planning process. The Government house that sat on top of the Raisina faced a primary axis to the river Jamuna. A large commercial circle and a train station was planned at the northern end of a cross axis. The Viceregal Lodge (earlier government house) was moved further back to make room for the 2 Secretariat blocks. The view to the mosque from the Lodge was hence lost.

Interestingly, common to all plans was an alien geometry imposed on the cityscape. Its centerpiece was always conceived as a pedestalized acropolis, protected by an embattlement of secretariat buildings and approached by a ceremonial axis or axes that subsumed the traditions of the past; reaffirming its power and control over the native landscape.

.3.4.3 Sanctioned Plan

The final plan with its characteristic hexagonal and triangular pattern was now emerging. Nodes were used as either monumental terminuses or to place other functions like museums and archives. The interface with the Jamuna River formed a marina at the east end of the main processional avenue. The final plan was approved for detail drawings on March 20, 1913 based on the rationale presented in the third and final report of the Delhi Town Planning Committee. With an overarching need for foresight, "the final report maintained that a well planned city should stand complete at its birth and yet have the power of receiving additions without loosing its character."[58]

The theme of the imperial was explicit in the layout of the sanctioned plan where the Viceregal Lodge and its flanking secretariats "commanded, like an autocrat, with its two fists, the view of India Gate [All India War Memorial Arch added to the vista in 1920], or symbolically India."[59] To the east of the acropolis was the processional Kingsway that led to the ancient fort of Indrapat symbolically subsuming the origins and past empires of Delhi. Articulated with giant Jamun trees and water bodies on either side, the progression of the vista to the capitol complex was symbolically deliberate where "imagination is led from
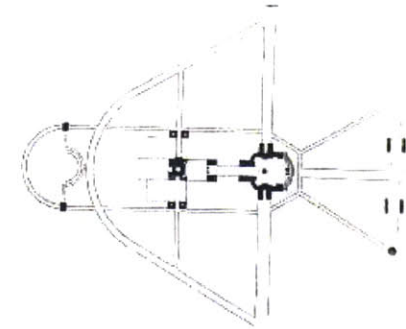
Fig.48 *Stage 6b*
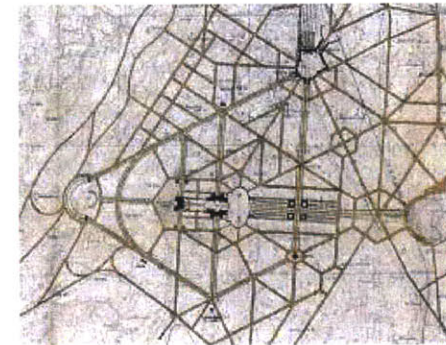
Fig.49 *Sanctioned plan*

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[58] Breese (1974): 14.

[59] Ibid.
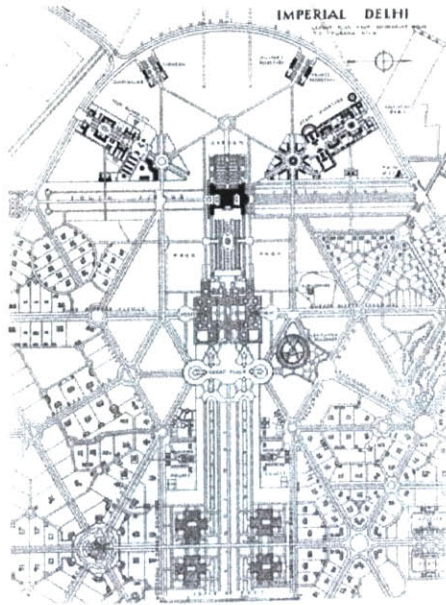
Fig.50 *Sanctioned plan*

machinery to the prime moving power itself."[60] Halfway down the avenue, at right angles with this celebrated vista was the Queensway that terminated with a new railway station on the north and the Anglican cathedral on the south. The Queensway was envisioned as a processional route for the distinguished visitor moving south from the railway station through the intersection of the two avenues progressing westward to the capitol complex. The junction formed an 'intellectual plaza' around which four civic buildings (Oriental Institute, National Museum, National Library and Imperial Record Office) were carefully placed. Secondary routes from the railway station radiated southeastward to the river & the east end of the Kingsway, and, southwestward to the capitol complex and a loop road behind it. While the central vista was about 440 ft. wide, all other avenues ranged in width from 60ft. to 300 ft.

The conception of New Delhi's geometry was a combination of imperial aspirations, limited response to local context (only where it fitted an imperial frame) and numerous precedents that were sometimes made explicit (by its patrons and designers) and other times remained implicit during the planning and design process.

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[60] Irving (1981): 73.

3.4.3.1 Geometry

Various texts have attempted to explain the origins of the hexagonal geometry as employed by Lutyens and the Town Planning Committee in New Delhi. Of these the most prominent are:

- Direct influences from precedents – Paris, London & Washington DC as described further in the thesis.

- Prevalent ideas of hexagonal planning developed on the City Beautiful and Garden City ideals to incorporate economic advantages, efficient land use and provision of sustainable growth as demonstrated by Charles Lamb, Noulan Cauchon, Arthur Comey and Barry Parker between 1904 and 1934.[61]

- Triangle and the Hexagram – Masonic Symbols, Hindu Cosmology and Mughal Geometry.[62]

- Geometrisized morphology of a system of natural waterways on the topography.[63]

Fig.51 *Hexagonal planning*
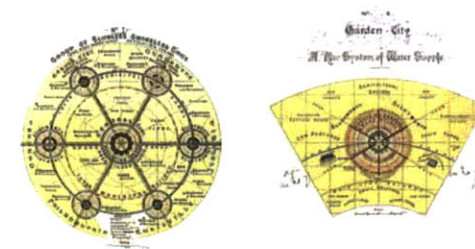
Fig.52 *City Beautiful, Ebenezer Howard*
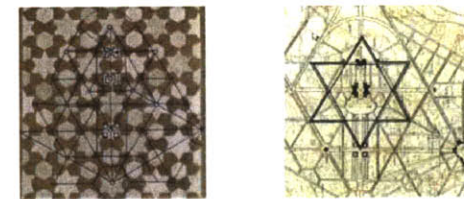
Fig.53 *Mughal geometry, Hexagram*

[61] Ben-Joseph, Eran and Gordon, David. *"Hexagonal Planning in Theory and Practice."* in *Journal of Urban Design,* Vol. 5, No. 3, 237-265. (2000).

[62] Volwahsen (2002): 60-73.

[63] Cherian, Danny. *"The New Delhi Plan: Borrowed Visions, Fragmented Landscapes and Unified Plans."* Unpublished paper, MIT. (2003).
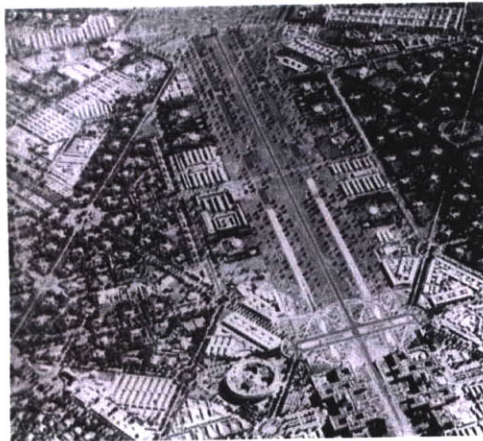
Fig.54 *Imperial geometry of Delhi*

Based on available texts, the geometry of New Delhi's plan seems to be conceived more as a result of western influences rather than derived from pre-existing references within the local context. Therefore, this thesis primarily subscribes to the first two theories listed. While Volwahsen makes an interesting argument in favor of the Hexagram and Masonic symbols, the idea seems far fetched as the driver of the entire plan form.

For the purposes of this thesis, it is more important to understand how the hexagonal geometry was interpreted, built and what it signified rather than limit the discussion only to its origins. From the various stages of the plan's evolution, it remains clear that an imperial preoccupation dictated the arrangement of the plan. While the site and directionality of the entire plan changed as the design evolved, its armature, anchored by the imperial axis remained the same. "In European history, the representation of power, or the military demonstration of power, has often been a fundamental reason for designing large axes in town plans."[64] Volwhsen describes the imperial axis as an assembly of the Palace, Obelisk and Triumphal Arch which was used effectively in New Delhi.

New Delhi's hexagonal geometry was always subservient to the creation of the imperial. Apart from providing the basic armature for its imperial axis, the hexagonal grid was used as a discriminatory device for separation and segregation to further reinforce the imperial.

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[64] Volwahsen (2002): 75.

While the following section focuses on the origins of the geometry (inspiration from precedents), section 3.5 discusses it's dominion dilemma as a function of its origins in contrast to its built interpretation.

Fig.55 *Haussmann's Paris*
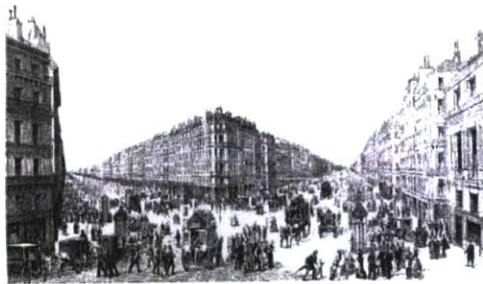
Fig.56 *Programmed Parisian boulevards*

3.4.4   The Precedents: Models of Inspiration

3.4.4.1   Baron Von Haussmann's Paris

"Haussmann and Napoleon III invented and built in a single massive economic and employment related political act of power the very same splendid metropolis that Napoleon Bonaparte had once dreamed of."[65]

The Paris geometry was not only an inspiration of radial avenues drawn from Versailles but it was also a new way of conceiving the city in terms of an entire technical infrastructure, land use, transportation, livability and density that lay embedded in it's form. The power wielded on the fabric by strong axiality was to become a source of inspiration for the newly formed team of imperialists working on Delhi. The principal axis of the Champs Elysees bears a striking similarity to the Kingsway, which forms the primary axis of the New Delhi master plan. Lutyens and others have made this inspiration explicit time and again during the design process. Interestingly, while adopting the axis from Paris, Lutyens also understood the limitations of the transplant. The boulevards, avenues, shops, theatres and dance halls that flanked the Champs Elysees were appropriately programmed as per the spending power of one of Europe's richest cities. In comparison, the context of Delhi offered no such luxury in density and spending power from the Indian locals or the British.

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[65] Volwahsen (2002): 35.

gentry. Hence, the lavish programmed edge of Paris was replaced by large native *Jamun* trees and manicured green lawns that ran the length along both sides of King's way.

3.4.4.2   Christopher Wren and John Evelyn's plan for London (1666)

Lutyens had recognized Wren's plans from his visit to Rome. Wren's overarching network of radial arterial roads were reminiscent of the Roman pattern of axial roads at the piazza del Popolo, only supplemented by a rectangular system of secondary residential grid. Lutyens was able to distill from Wren and Evelyn's plans the combination of a contradictory grid and radial system that formed a supremely ordered yet complex pattern.

"Major monuments were isolated in great plazas from which radiated multiple avenues connected by circumferentials, creating a spider web polygon that Lutyens was to employ in his New Delhi layout at both the railway station and the commemorative column."[66] The hexagonal form of Evelyn's spider web, monumental cross axes and diagonal terminating vistas were other sources of inspiration for the architect. Although the London plans were never realized, one can recognize parts of it in the imperial plan for Delhi.

Fig.57 *Wren's London plan*
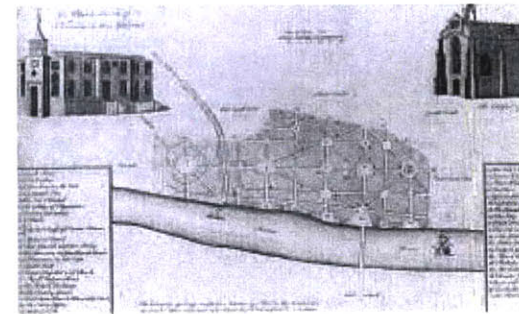
Fig.58 *Evelyn's London plan*

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[66] Irving (1981): 82.

Fig.59 *L'Enfant's Washington D.C.*
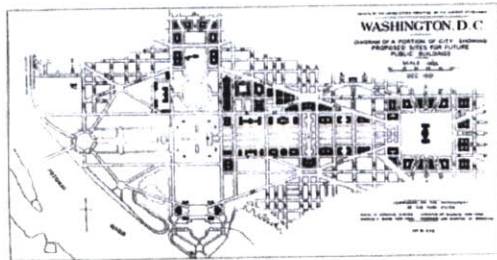
Fig.60 *Capitol Hill, Washington D.C.*

3.4.4.3   Pierre Charles L'Enfant's plan for Washington D.C.

"Diagonal avenues, rond-points, axial arrangement of buildings & open spaces, and terminal vistas were all integral parts of L'Enfant's design vocabulary when he drew a capital city for the fledging American republic that envisioned itself heir to Rome's greatness."[67] Herbert Baker had estimated L'Enfant's scheme as 'at once original, practical and beautiful.' Lord Hardinge, himself had been a witness to the building of the federal capital (under the auspices of the McMillan commission) and was thoroughly impressed by the plan's concepts. Lutyens justified his hexagonal geometry for Delhi as a 'sorry nuisance' to those persons whose minds could not 'embrace the intelligence of L'Enfant's Washington. There was a definite link between the Washington plan and the conception of Imperial Delhi. In his book, *Indian Summer,* Irving asserts that if the Washington plan is viewed from the North, the correlations with the Indian capital are even more obvious. Irving also traces town-planning preoccupations of the City Beautiful movement in America and Lutyens' inspiration for the Hampstead Garden suburb (completed before he came to Delhi) that was on the lines of the Garden City theorists in England.

The system of grand diagonal avenues delineating giant hexagons, interlocked with a grid pattern and a commanding Capitoline acropolis from which radiates a patte-d'oie, including

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[67] Ibid., 82.

a broad two-mile parkway terminating at a monument on the river's edge forms a compelling likeness to its imperial Indian counterpart. The Capitol building sited on the hill and the Mall, bear notional resemblances to Viceregal Lodge on Raisina and the King's way respectively although primary considerations for the main axis were from the Champs Elysees in Paris. The central section of the ground plan and the elevation of the Capitol Building are also said to have strong similarities with the spatial disposition found in the Viceregal Lodge in Delhi.

3.4.4.4 Walter Burley Griffin's Canberra

Documented evidence reveals that Griffin's plan for Canberra was among the eight others reviewed by the Town Planning Committee in Delhi amidst their deliberations over the choice of sites and preliminary designs for the imperial capital.[68] What makes Canberra an interesting case is not the elements of the plan that may have been used as an inspiration for Delhi, but its striking contrast in applying the same urban design principals of ceremonial axes, elevated buildings, low density development and the City Beautiful ideals to represent democracy.

The Canberra plan like New Delhi originated with an axial arrangement of key functions relating to the topographical features of the city. While New Delhi's capitol district was
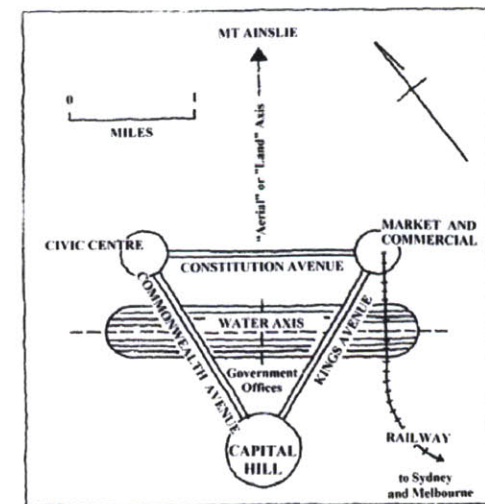
Fig.61 *Canberra's geometry*

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[68] Ibid., 87.

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                    │  INTENTION   │
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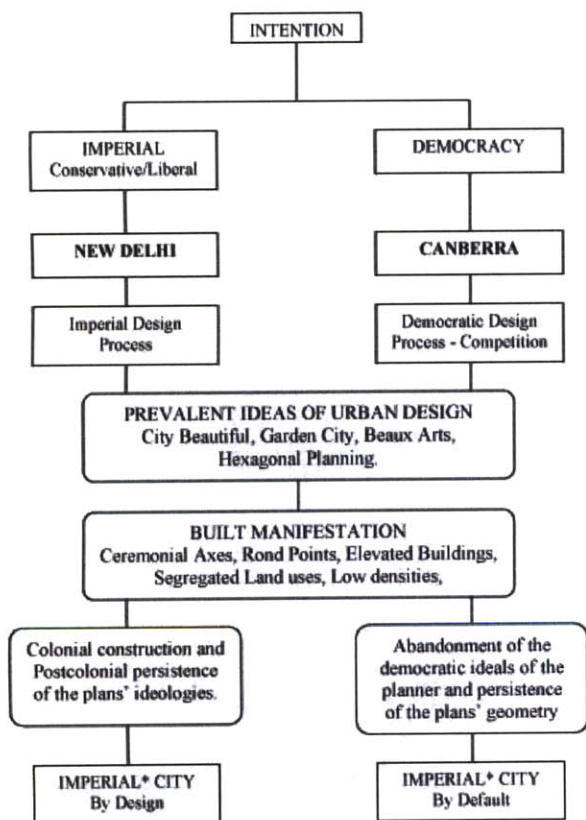
Fig.62 *Different intentions, similar destinies*

bound by an equilateral triangle consisting of the Raisina Hill, Connaught Place (initially also the railway station) and India Gate, Canberra's was made up of the Capitol Hill, Commercial Center with a railway station and Civic Center also connected by axial avenues of prime importance. Symbolically, however, there were key differences in the plan to reflect the notion of democracy. Griffin's Capitol Hill was more of a museum commemorating Australian achievements rather than the pinnacle of power as in New Delhi. Griffin recognized the need to inhabit diversity in his plan exercising no supervisory control over aesthetics and built expression. He also realized that such a plan would only work if neighborhood units had their own local civic centers, shops, offices and town halls. Unfortunately, Griffin was fired in 1920. While Griffin's geometry was adopted, much of his key policies aimed at democratizing the power in the plan were abandoned.

The Canberra case reveals that 'the imperial' as a *type* of urban design is not necessarily limited to the geometry or the built manifestation of the plan. Prevalent reformist ideas of urban design were used to interpret common political ideals of Britain's politically correct liberal imperialism and Australia's built aspiration for democracy. The geometries evolved were powerful in nature – ones where power reinforced a new and improved social order for it's citizens. While New Delhi's dominion geometry negotiated the debate between the conservative and liberal imperialists, Canberra's plan solely rested upon the democratic ideals of its planner for sustainable evolution. A deliberate imperial intention magnified by the victory of the conservatives (as shown in the proceeding chapters) rendered New Delhi an

Imperial City by design. For Canberra, "Griffin stressed the need for both a public transit system (borne as a public expense) and a diversity of house sizes and prices within each residential community in order to avoid social segregation, yet subsequent planners abandoned these goals."[69] The absence of Griffin's democratic ideals within the powerful geometry of Canberra rendered it an Imperial City by default. "While it was intended to spell out democracy, Griffin's plan still spoke an aristocratic and imperial design language."[70]

Urban design ideas based on Western reformist movements were a reaction to adverse living conditions spawned as a result of wars, congestion, disease, crimes and other social ills. Their use in territories devoid of such context (those needing reform) was an imposition of a new social order on the pre-existing cityscape. Although the imposition of a powerful new geometry could itself be seen as an imperial act, it is the policies/ideologies dictating the plan's conception and development that are central to its symbolic and functional orientation as imperial or democratic. While Paris may be regarded as a 'successful' urban environment due to its foresighted planning policies vis-à-vis its powerful geometry, New Delhi and Canberra remain unsuccessful (in comparison) for the lack of them. Hence for this study, the "imperial" as a *type* may be seen as a product of intention, built manifestation (symbolism, geometry, organization, ideology) and planning policy governing the evolution of the plan.
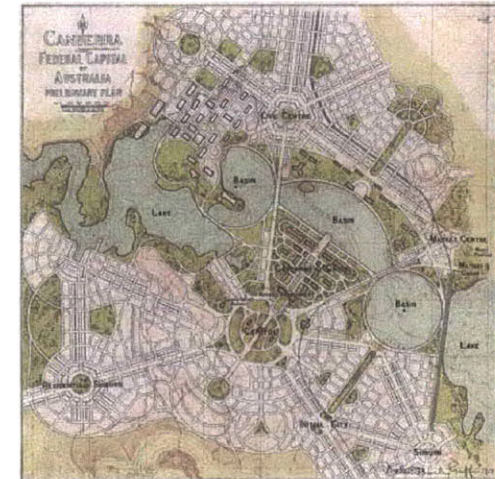
Fig.63 *Griffin's Canberra plan*

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[69] Vale (1992): 75.

[70] Ibid., 87.

It is for this reason that this thesis studies New Delhi under two time frames where intention, built manifestation and policy seen as a colonial construction of the imperial could be reversed in favor of democracy by introducing key planning policies to democratize the plan's geometry in the post colonial era. Unfortunately, it is the persistence of imperial policies that forms the second hypothesis of this thesis.

3.5 IMPERIAL DESIGNS: INDIAN REALITIES

3.5.1 Separation, Land use and Zoning

Although built adjacent to the native city of Shahjahanabad, New Delhi had little to do with it. In 1916, the New Delhi Municipal Committee was constituted, which only became effective by 1925. As a part of its five-year sanitary public works program, the committee proposed demolition of the old city wall between the new capital and Ajmeri Gate. Lutyens strongly opposed the idea "to protect New Delhi from the rats of Old Delhi"[71]. This opposition befits elitist ideals of Conservative Imperialism in contrast to ideas of native upliftment preached by liberal imperialists such as Baker and others in the Town Planning Committee. While the new imperial city was being laid out, a significant increase in population, particularly from migrant laborers that came to work on the capital made matters worse. Their over consumption of the already deteriorating infrastructure of Shahjahanabad and its quarantine like separation from the new capital was eventually reducing the indigenous settlement to a giant slum.

Apart from its clear distinction from the old city, the imperial geometry of the new capital also had within it clear hierarchical separation marked by land use and zoning. "From the Viceroy, via the Commander in Chief, Members of the executive Council, senior gazetted
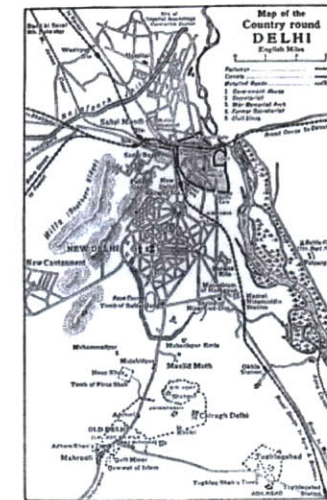
Fig.64 *New Delhi and Shahjahanabad*
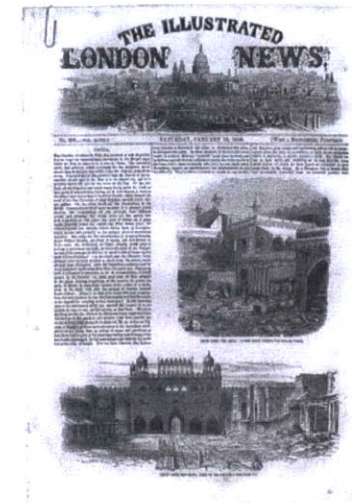
Fig.65 *Shahjahanabad, the 'slum'*

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[71] Jain (1990): 74.

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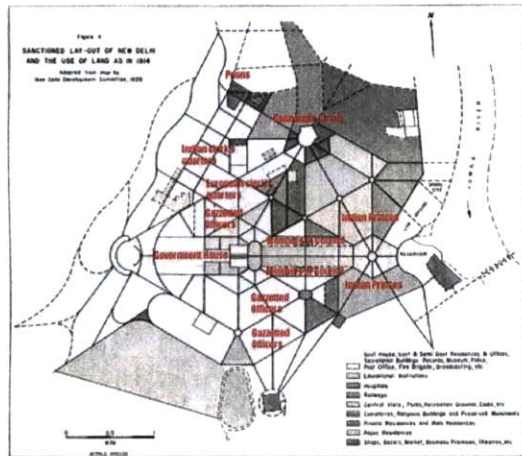
Fig.66 *Imperial taxonomy of the Plan*

officers....down to sweepers and *dhobis*, a carefully stratified order was integrated, both in terms of physical distance and spatial provision, to the social structure of the city."[72] Proximity to the Capitol complex and the central vista directly corresponded to the race, rank and socioeconomic status of the placed citizen. The allocation of plot size and compound within each of the occupational categories was also based on status and position within it's ranks. Urban nomenclature further reinforced the imperial taxonomy of the plan. As pointed out by King, "the status of any particular accommodation was communicated by one or more of ten indicators: elevation, distance from Government House, size of compound, size of dwelling, width of road, name of road, name of area, number and index of housing type, quantity of vegetation and presence of various facilities."[73]

Besides the intended symbolic and physical separation, New Delhi's stratified land use and zoning presented functional hardships for lower income employees (placed at a greater distance from the center) to get to work in the absence of a robust public transportation system. "New Delhi with its vast dimensions has been described as the first city specifically designed to the scale of the motorcar."[74] The provision of a tramway (initially discussed) was

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[72] King (1976): 246

[73] Ibid., 268.

[74] Evenson (1998): 153. More appropriately, the city was designed to the use and the scale of private transportation. While the horse carriage may have been the primary mode of private transport when the capital

also rejected as it was unlikely to generate a satisfactory return given the sparse density of development. The plan's tribute to the motorcar was further exemplified by the zoning of Connaught Place[75], the city's proposed commercial center. Evenson points out that the placement of Connaught Place (zoned halfway between the capitol complex and the old city, 1917) relative to the residences of upper class residential districts reflects an assumption that the patrons arrived in automobiles akin to a contemporary suburban mall like setting. In other words, the proposed commercial center was neither meant for, nor was conveniently accessible by the native population. The rising commercial need to service local population was hence met by the over consumption of services in the *Chandni Chowk* area in old Delhi.

Fig.67 *Figureground plan of New Delhi*

Fig.68 *Connaught Place*

was conceived, it soon gave way to the motorcar by the time it was completed in 1931.

[75] Irving (1981): 311-314.

"The town planning committee had envisioned a monumental plaza ringed with shops, hotels, businesses and dominated by a railway station on the north terminus of the Queensway…. Railway authorities later decided that a terminal station at Connaught Place was impractible and abandoned the idea in favor of a large interchanging station at Paharganj, near Shahjahanabad." The north terminus of the Queensway retained its conception as a commercial plaza and was eventually built as present day Connaught Place.

3.5.2 Duplicitous Imperialism: Plan, Landscape and Buildings

Prevalent throughout the planning process, was an ongoing battle between the conservative and liberal imperialists. While the liberals showed more respect for the Indian context and the need for its social reform, the conservative camp concentrated on their elitist agenda of power play and domination over the natives. Although it remains difficult to ascertain the ideology behind each decision, the common overall situation presented was hypocritical in nature – one where ideals representing holistic native reform were employed in plan, landscape and building (which the British maintained as their politically correct position throughout) but clearly manipulated them to serve their conservative imperial aspirations. When not intentionally manipulated, the embodied power of the plan and the rest of the structures were strong enough to override nobler intentions.

3.5.2.1 Plan

The New Delhi plan was conceptualized under the City Beautiful (in America) and Garden City (in England) ideals that were prevalent at the time. "City Beautiful plans with their antecedents in the Baroque have been widely used throughout the world to symbolize a variety of political ends [reformist – Chicago; democratic – Canberra; imperialist – New

Delhi]."[76] At the turn of the twentieth century, the City Beautiful Movement in America was characteristic of wide, tree lined boulevards and monumental but low lying buildings – libraries and museums, town halls and train stations which were designed to break up the familiar American gridiron of clogged streets and uncontrolled growth. In New Delhi, these characteristics were interpreted with the grandiosity of Rome symbolizing imperial power and it's imposed new social order over the Indian race. Far from being the province of the elite, City Beautiful ideals depended on popular participation from voter approval of bond issues to citizen activism on behalf of beautification. The built ideology of New Delhi's plan and its separationist structures on the other hand, were an attempt to separate and sanitize for elitist concessions rather than evolve out of a democratic social reform agenda.

3.5.2.2 Landscape

Lutyens had completed his buildings in the Hampstead Garden Suburb on the lines of the Garden City principles prior to his work on Delhi. The Garden City Movement arose in 19th century England as a reaction to the pollution and crowding of cities in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. In 1898, Ebenezer Howard published the book *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*[77] in which he laid out his ideas concerning the creation of new towns.

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[76] Lang et al. (1997): 151.

[77] Howard, Ebenezer. *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*. (London: Routledge, 2003).

Fig.69 *Lavish greens of New Delhi*

Fig.70 *Bungalow housing typology*

Howard believed in a return to the romanticized British countryside where self-contained urban pockets with low densities would be scattered in landscape or agricultural land. As a city, New Delhi was neither plagued with the aftermath of the First World War nor the advent of the Industrial Revolution like much of Europe. However, there was a need for reform as living conditions in the native city deteriorated. The reformist ideals of the Garden City were employed in New Delhi's landscape but reinterpreted to create majestic settings for imperial buildings rather than improve living conditions for native population (which was quarantined to the old city by the plan's geometry itself). New Delhi, as Nilsson points out, "represents a garden city in its most superficial form and the lush greenery conceals a social structure which is far from democratic."[78] Although, contextually similar to the local Mughal Garden typology, the low densities and lavish greens (built mostly for imperial/elitist concessions) also seemed far too extravagant in contrast to the high densities and deplorable living conditions of the old city. Large public gardens (those built by the British around Mughal monuments – Lodi Tombs etc.) too seemed questionable where the native public had little or no room to live but lavish gardens to enjoy, clearly indicating the nature of conservative imperialism and its power over the urban realm. While the use of these ideals may have functionally worked for the bungalow housing typology (built for the British), it was ill suited in application to the civic structure of the capitol complex. "Again if the buildings in the complex, secretariats, parliament etc. are to be separate and placed in

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[78] Mittal, Ranjana. "*The Dilemma of Densification*," in Architecture + Design, vol. XVI, no. 6, (Nov-Dec 1999): 33.

their own settings we shall never get a city. We shall simply get a forest with buildings in it."[79]

3.5.2.3 Buildings

As discussed previously, it was the question of style in the architecture of New Delhi that first opened the debate between the conservatives and the liberals. It always seemed clear from the patrons and designers (with the exception of Lutyens) that a level of respect for local forms and building traditions be maintained in the design of buildings for the imperial capital. Whether it was the mere inclusion or adaptation of Indian architectural elements for climatic purposes, subscription to the emerging Indo Sarcenic style or simply for the lack of choice to be politically correct, the buildings of New Delhi contained varying degrees of Indian influence as desired by its administration. While the intention behind such fusion was mostly liberal, its built impact was seemingly conservative as shown by Lang et al. and Said (see footnotes 36, 50) - one where imperial symbolism and hegemony fully consumed native Indian traditions.

Fig.71 *The buildings*

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[79] Cullen, Gordon. *"Ixth Delhi."* in *Architectural Review*, vol. 127, (February 1960): 113.

Fig.72 *Viceregal Lodge*

Fig.73 *Dome on Viceregal Lodge*

Fig.74 *Sanchi Stupa*

The Vicergal Lodge

Almost grudgingly, Lutyens incorporated many Indian elements in his design for the Viceregal Lodge. From his choice of material in buff and red rhubarb sandstone to his inclusion of *chujjas*, *chattris* and *jallis*, Lutyens succeeded in creating a sophisticated Anglo-Indian aesthetic keeping his Ruskin principles and appreciation for European Classicism almost intact. The sheer scale, setting, deliberate horizontality and geometrisized proportionality of his building simply overwhelmed the observer from independent cognition of identifiable Indian elements. The central dome of the building, claimed to be inspired from Buddhist *stupa* structures in India too, seemed to be very imperial in its built manifestation and as a part of the entire ensemble. "It [Lutyens' Dome] broods over the city, astoundingly animate, like the topeed head of a British soldier, district officer, missionary of Viceroy, while great arms below grasp to subdue in their embrace an alien land and culture."[80]

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[80] Irving (1981): 186.

All India War Memorial and King George V Memorial Canopy

From the initial conception of the Kingsway, Lutyens imagined a decorative feature marking the east end of its terminus. In 1920, the capital committee finally approved his designs for an All India War Memorial Arch to be built on the east end of the Kingsway vista. The 139 ft. tall monument commemorated on its walls the names of 13,516 British and Indian soldiers who fell in the third Afghan war of 1919.[81] Quickly earning the sobriquet of 'India Gate' the impressive portal was true in its form to Lutyens' purist aesthetic of European Classicism. Although the monument commemorated fallen Indian soldiers, "it was also an edifying reminder of India's response to her King Emperor's call [one of loyalty, service and sacrifice] celebrating the ideal and fact of British rule over India."[82]

Fig.75 *All India War Memorial*

In 1936, five years after the completion of the capital, Lutyens also designed a seventy-three foot monument to the late King George V, which was to be placed east of the War memorial marking the convergence of nearly a dozen roads. It consisted of a sandstone baldachin raised on a circular basin set in the center of a rectangular pool. It was adorned by a westward facing white marble statue of the late monarch. Framed by the Memorial Arch and looking towards the capitol complex, the statue of the late monarch put the finishing

Fig.76 *King George V Memorial Canopy*

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[81] Ibid., 258.

[82] Ibid., 259.

Fig.77 *Secretariat Blocks*

Fig.78 *Battle of the gradient*

touches on the symbolic territoriality and power of imperialist design.

Secretariats and Council House

Baker's twin Secretariats too incorporated Mughal building traditions of *chujjas, chattris* and intricate stone *jalli* work. "Baker rejected the prettiness of much Indian ornament, however, preferring a simplicity which subordinates details to a big conception."[83] Rejecting their decorative value, Baker appreciated the functional content behind traditional forms and used them effectively to address local climatic issues in his Secretariat buildings. However, his tasteful inclusion of local forms was entirely consumed by the sheer spatial experience of the entire ensemble (leading to the Viceregal Lodge) that made the Secretariats seem more like embattlements with an imperial stronghold over the Indian landscape. "Thirty-foot-wide flights of red sandstone stairs set at right angle's to Kingsway evoked visions of imperial Persepolis and the approaches to its sanctum."[84] The famous battle of the gradient between Lutyens and Baker further reiterated both designers' imperial need to pedestalize their built masterpieces.[85]

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[83] Irving (1981): 280.

[84] Ibid., 282.

[85] Ibid., 142-165. While the initial plan envisaged Lutyens' Viceregal Lodge as the sole occupant of Raisina Hill, it was later suggested by Baker that the Secretariats be placed on the same elevation to convey clarity in

In 1919, the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms resulted in the need for a Council house to accommodate a newly created Legislative Assembly. A combination of physical proximity for the honorable officials that sat in the Assembly and the need to screen an 'awkward' junction between the axis from the old city and the Secretariat blocks provided the site for the Council House (later Parliament House). Although the building promised to screen the junction, it "did destroy the symmetry of the urban layout, however, and looked plainly like the afterthought it was."[86] By 1928, the Legislative Assembly consisted of numerous Indian officials from diverse backgrounds presiding over critical decisions. Symbolically it was the Council House through which Baker's ideals of liberal imperialism were eventually realized when India gained its independence. "For this monument embodied as none other could the fact of India's progress toward constitutional maturity."[87]
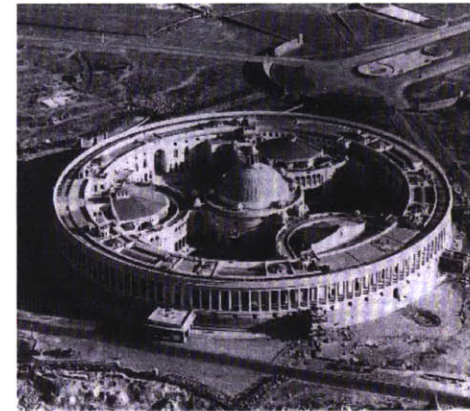
Fig.79 *Council House*

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unifying the ensemble as a single administrative entity. Although Lutyens agreed, he overlooked an incline of 22.5° needed to approach the complex. As a result, this incline masked the entire frontage and part of the dome of the Lodge for a brief period during the assent. Lutyens made several attempts to change the plans in vain, blaming Baker for deceiving him through the design process.

[86] Ibid., 295.

[87] Ibid., 311. "The building's massive grandeur proclaimed the dignity and importance of the Houses it embraced......Later in the same room, now sanctified by history, Indians would draft the constitution of a republic."

The duplicitous nature of imperial intention as it played out in Delhi, often worked to justify the imposition of imperial design on existing Indian realities. It caused irreparable damage to the physical, socio-economic and cultural fabric of the native city.

3.3.5.3   A realized Master Plan in a confused circumstance

In February of 1931, the imperial capital had been finally completed at an inflated cost of more than £10,000,000. The opening festivities seemed bleak in the shadows of the Round Table Conference, which had convened in London to chart the course towards Indian self-rule. The British media had already begun to regard Raisina as representing the government's 'altered spirit'. The British Empire was in a steady state of decline. It seemed almost ironical that, 'history would now associate New Delhi with the beginning of real self government; its geometry or buildings would not be seen as vainglorious gestures of dominion and the trappings of imperial power.'[88] The irony was that independence had challenged the imperialist notion of dominion that was being monumentalized in planning. The capital, its identity, geometry, architecture and symbolism would be given away or left behind as a parting gift by the British. The inherent symbolism of scale, power and rule would be reinterpreted to house the democracy of a new era. Reminiscent of the Canberra case, it remains a paradox that large gestures in architecture or urban design could possibly

[88] Irving (1981): 340.

represent two meanings entirely contradictory to each other. While the British were committed to mask the content of dominion with Indian styles in all their political correctness, the built reality of European Classicism was soon to become the facade of the Indian democracy. For the British, it was perhaps an unreal moment where one can aptly recall Georges Clemenceau's words, when he first gazed upon the half built city in 1920: "This will be the finest ruin of them all."[89]

Urban confusion did not end only with the (now inevitable) symbolic change of identity; it became widely apparent in the misgivings of disconnected and elitist civic structures that the plan propagated. The population of old and New Delhi together rose from 348,000 persons in 1931 to 522,000 in 1941.[90] The plan that had seen many additions and changes since its original conception continued to change unabated with the same separationist planned agenda together with a native unplanned urban sprawl partly as a consequence of it and largely due to the lack of a comprehensive master plan. These changes included a major decision to use the North East quadrant of Delhi (originally reserved for the extension of the old city) for housing non-gazetted officers in 1933, forcing the old city to sprawl westward to Shahdara and eventually across the river.

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[89] Ibid., 355.

[90] Breese (1974): 16.

The issue of demolishing the old city wall had come up several times but rejected in order to protect the pristine new capital from the unsanitary conditions of Shahjahanabad. "The President of the Delhi Municipal wrote to the Deputy Commissioner of Delhi:

> *If ever the Government decided to demolish the wall, the New Delhi Municipal Committee would insist on an absolute unclimbable fence being erected in its place, and erected before the wall was demolished.* (In File B4 (187) Education, Office at the Chief Commissioner, Delhi, 1934, D.A.)"[91]

In 1935, at the agitation by Asaf Ali (a prominent freedom fighter), the wall between the new capital and Ajmeri Gate was demolished. By 1936, the imperial government had appointed A.P. Hume as the officer on special duty to prepare a report on 'Relief of congestion in Delhi.' Hume observed a two fold problem in Shahjahanabad - congestion of people in a single dwelling and the congestion of dwellings on land, estimating about 100,000 more people in the city than its capacity.[92] The demolition of the wall (accompanied by the land disputes that broke out as a result) and Hume's idea of 'slum clearance' as a response to

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[91] Goodfriend, Douglas E. *'The Tyranny of the Right Angle: Colonial and Post Colonial Urban Development in Delhi (1857-1957).'* in Singh, Patwant and Dhamija, Ram (eds.) *Delhi the Deepening Urban Crisis.* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1989): 28.

[92] Jain (1990): 74.

congestion led to the clearing and landscape of a large swath of land between the two cities where the wall had been demolished. The *cordon sanitaire* of *Ram Lila* ground or the landscaped swath persists till today marking yet again a clear intention of elitist imperialism through urban planning.

In 1937 the Delhi Improvement Trust was formed with A.P. Hume as its chairman, to solve the city's problems of blight, congestion and unplanned expansion. The Improvement Trust published its first report in 1939 which bluntly described the problems of the city and its poor planning administration thus far. With the prevailing urban mess at hand, the British were ready to wash their hands off the situation and transfer a slippery baton to the Indians – one which would be difficult to get a grip on. Policy changes prompted by the DIT were simultaneously taking shape. "In 1943 the Delhi Rent Control Ordinance was passed and the Delhi Planning & Siting Committee was established."[93] A new stage was being set with new patrons who would chart the future course of the imperial plan in the era of democracy.

Fig.80 *Cordon sanitaire*
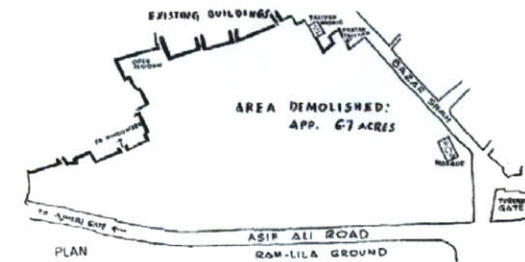
Fig.81 *Ram Lila Ground*

[93] Ibid.

Fig.82 *Head of the Imperial axis*

3.6   **CONCLUSION**

Most colonial and postcolonial literature begins with the idea of extension of, expansion into and domination on native cultures. While the bulk of the text focuses on what happens in the dominion, little is discussed about events at 'home'. In the context of this thesis and construction of the 'Imperial' in New Delhi, the discourse on imperialism begins at 'home' in London. It is perhaps the western construction of the Orient and its reified meaning that first allowed the empire to place itself superior relative to its dominions. Established superiority and using the rhetoric of modernization to uplift the native, soon gave way to Conservative Imperialism, if that was not already the intention to begin with. "Colonial powers marked their political intentions using the rhetoric of modernization and maintained control through rituals of authority that reinforced patterns of superiority and subordination."[94]

However, imperialism may be understood as "a hybrid though still uneven experience, shaping the identity of the colonizers as much as that of the colonized."[95] This is evident from the spatial organization of expositions like the Imperial Exhibition (1911) in London
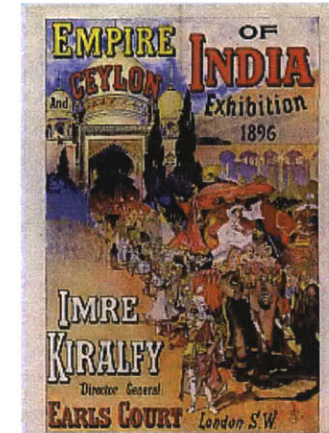
Fig.83 *Orientalism*
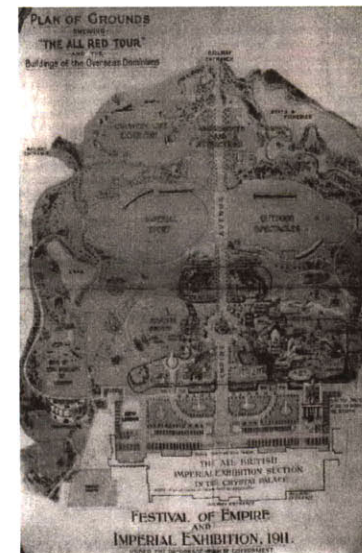
Fig.84 *Imperial Exhibition, London, 1911*

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[94] Jyoti, Hosagrahar. *"City as a Durbar: Theater and Power in Imperial Delhi."* in Alsayyad, Nezar (ed.). *Forms of Dominance.* (Brookfield: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1992): 83.

[95] Driver et al. (1999): 7.
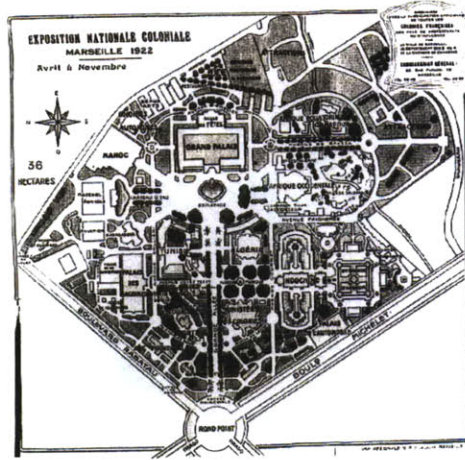
Fig.85 *Exposition Nationale Coloniale Marseilles, 1922*
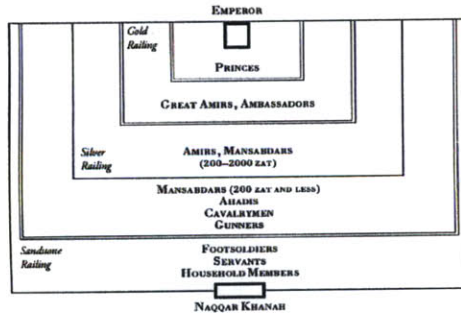
Fig.86 *Mughal Durbar, spatial organization*

Fig.87 *Coronation Durbar layout, 1911*

and Exposition Nationale Coloniale (1922) in Marseilles. While negotiating ones own imperial identity vis-à-vis its dominions, a hierarchical spatial structure (of inclusion and exclusion) was evolved demonstrating the empire's superiority and power over its oriental subjects. The spatial organization itself glorified the need to exhibit superiority to the world, almost in theatrical pageantry of power and control.

To the advantage of the British, such a power structure already existed in Delhi in the form of the Mughal Imperial Durbar. Here the native was accustomed to hierarchical stratification and separation while maintaining loyalty to the imperial crown. A successful mimicry of the Durbar seamlessly displaced the Mughal crown charting Delhi's destiny as Britain's own imperial swansong. Interestingly, the spatial structure of these Assemblages shared three common characteristics (hierarchical setting, display and identity formation attributed to hierarchy in setting) with the exhibitions and preceding Mughal Durbars. These characteristics were eventually translated into the plan for the capital as seen in previous sections.

An erstwhile critic once remarked that the plan for New Delhi "was a setting for a perpetual Durbar."[96] In his article *City as a Durbar: Theater and Power in Imperial Delhi*, Jyoti uses the analogy of theater to animate the imperial intentions behind the Durbar. He too teases out

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[96] Irving (1981): 89.

three components of the imperial theater as the *set*, *performance* and *role* akin to the three common characteristics seen in the spatial structure of imperial designs. New Delhi's axial arrangement, processional avenues, imposing plazas, classical buildings and ordered landscape provided the ideal set for the performance of British Imperial pageantry. Furthermore, the embodied hierarchy in the plan also defined distinct roles for the actors in the play. In other words, the imperial government's administrative hierarchy and centralization of power was directly represented in the physical plan. It translated British India's home policy verbatim in sandstone, hence constructing the 'Imperial' in New Delhi.

Post Colonial *Period*

4.1   PARTITION, INDEPENDENCE & DEMOCRACY

Ethnic and communal violence (between the Hindus and Muslims) followed shortly after the British announcement to leave India on February 20, 1947. The seeds of Britain's 'divide and rule' policy to govern India and its ethnic diversity finally gave way to the actual division of the country. The Viceroy's decision on a referendum for partition based on Hindu-Muslim separation of territories was agreed upon by the Congress and the Muslim League as a precondition for the India independence Act passed on July 1, 1947. Independence for Pakistan[97] and India came with the price of Partition. On August 15, 1947 the constituent assembly in New Delhi declared India an independent dominion within the British Commonwealth. Although not within the scope of this thesis, it may be argued that the 'divide and rule' policy was yet another form of conservative imperialism that eventually resulted in the permanent division of the country. By the time the British left India, the imperial sights of the empire had been mapped on the sites of not only the capital but also the entire country.

Fig.88 *Independence*

Fig.89 *Partition*

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[97] Pakistan declared its independence on August 14, 1947 with Karachi as its capital. The capital was later shifted to the newly built (post independence) city of Islamabad. *See* Ahmed, Imran. *"The Journey from New Delhi to Islamabad: Dependence and Subversion in the Ambivalent Expression of Nationhood."* Unpublished, SMArchS. Thesis, MIT. (1992). Imran uses New Delhi (colonial) and Islamabad (post-colonial) to understand cultural miscegenation showing the persistence of colonial institutions in the post colonial city of Islamabad seen as a continuity of the colonial legacy from New Delhi.

Fig.90 *Influx of refugees*

The aftermath of the Second World War and the ongoing war with Pakistan (1947-48) had thrown most civic administrative machinery out of gear. Architecture and Planning regulations were last priority. As a consequence of Partition and Independence, New Delhi received one of the largest groups of migrants in history from across the border and within the country. The capital's population rose from 522,000 in 1941 to 1,437,134 in 1951.[98] Government agencies and activities had to be enlarged to make provisions for the incoming population. Short of available resources, most of these activities were accommodated in barracks that had been constructed for the American GI's during WWII on the vacant land in the estates of the Indian princes. Some of these have been retained till today by the army. "A great deal of prime land is occupied by ugly barracks for no apparent reason."[99] Squatter settlements and shack colonies sprang up wherever open land was available along roads, railway lines and canals. Emergency action called for setting up refugee colonies, additional government housing, relocation programs and new townships on urban fringes of the capital to accommodate the sudden population explosion. "Housing, feeding and employing such

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[98] Dupont, V. *"Urban Development and Population Redistribution in Delhi: Implications for Categorizing Population."* in Champion, T. and Hugo, G. (eds.) *New Forms of Urbanization: Beyond the urban-rural dichotomy.* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2003): 173.

[99] Singh, Khushwant in Chatterjee, Malay. (ed.) *Seminars on Architecture, School of Planning and Architecture.* (New Delhi: Times Press, 1999): 114. Barracks at Jodhpur House, Princes' Park, Dalhousie Road, Copernicus Road, Mansingh Road and estates of Jamnagar, Kota, Kapurthala, Darbhanga, Travancore and Faridkot are till today a shocking waste of prime land.

gigantic numbers were sometimes chaotic and involved compromises on standards and intelligent urban planning."[100]

With little time to plan and assess for long term urban impacts, the Government succumbed to the immediacy of short term demands at hand, often as a piecemeal approach rather than under the guidance of a comprehensive vision plan. As a result, the spatial expansion (sprawl) of the capital continued in all directions making it concurrent to the population growth partly as a consequence of maintaining low densities at its center. Furthermore, the lack of comprehensive planning, standards, zoning and control allowed private interests to speculate on land transactions and cause further impediments for comprehensive planning. Industrial and commercial enterprises mushroomed with no zoning controls as Delhi rapidly assumed yet another role of a distribution center for goods to the north and the northeast.

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[100] Breese (1974): 20.

4.2   TRANSFER OF CAPITAL

The story at the center of the capital was quite different in contrast to the ongoing chaos in the entire city. Just as the British had almost seamlessly displaced the elitist structures of the Mughal Durbar with their own, the Indian elite were as easily transplanted within the geometry of the imperial capital after independence. "There was never an open consensus on where the new government should be housed, but most were happy to move into the English Sahib's bungalows." [101] Consequently the function of the capitol complex remained the same. It now accommodated ranks of Indian bureaucrats and officers who correspondingly replaced the ranks of their departing British counterparts within the hierarchy of the physical plan. The Viceregal Lodge or the Government House was rechristened Rashtrapati Bhavan where the new president of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad (figure head of the constitution) took residence. Baker's Secretariats retained their original function as offices for ministers and other officials. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India occupied the Commander in Chief's house. Perhaps a notable change from dominion to democracy was reflected in the fact that real power now rested in Baker's Parliament House (as opposed to the Viceregal Lodge, the original intention of the plan) which was an after thought in the imperial plan. In conclusion however, the exchange of the power at the center merely served as a change of the elitist guard still continuing to conform

Fig.91 *Change of elite guard*

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[101] Khushwant Singh in Chatterjee (1999): 114.
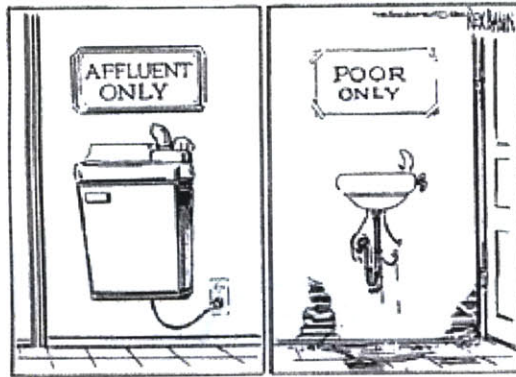
Fig.92 *Lutyens' Delhi and Shahjahanabad*

Separation and Segregation

to the imperialist ideals of the physical plan and its propagated built ideology.

It may be fair to say that the continuance of imperial spatial structures at the center (low densities, hierarchical separation etc.) together with the lack of overall vision for a city dealing with severe population explosion created the impetus for sprawl in New Delhi. Anthony King points out that "the initial structuring of inequalities, whether in terms of housing, services or spatial standards; new comers to the city reinforce the old structural pattern."[102] He asserts that while lower income migrants tend to filter into the old (indigenous) city, the elite flowed into the colonial settlement or its expansion areas. For King, the basic unit of the imperial fabric, the bungalow, continued to retain it's symbolic reference of status and superiority. King's point reinforces the divide between the old and the new, inextricably linking the persistence of the imperial at the center to the sprawl on the outside as a consequence of it. King goes on to posit that the persistence of physical spatial form which characterizes imperial urban space can place immense strains on the economic resources of the post-colonial city. " Because colonial administrators wanted 'views', status, privacy and a particular cultural environment, water pipes, sewers, telephone lines…..transportation routes have to be perhaps five times as long as they need be…"[103] Also, as previously discussed, the distribution of employment vis-à-vis the spatial civic

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[102] King (1976): 283.

[103] Ibid., 284.

structure of the city had profound impacts on its productivity and economy as lower income workers had to travel further to work under extreme climatic conditions and in the absence of a robust public transportation system.

The transfer to a democratic capital from an imperial one seemed more apparent in the chaos of the peripheral city rather than the continuing imperial order of the center. During this time there was never a notion of re-densifying the Capitol District. As the postcolonial era unfolded and the immediacy of urban pressures subsided, (after partition and independence) it would emerge that the imperial structures at the center would continue to persist and this persistence would in fact be largely responsible for many of New Delhi's problems today; in effect isolating itself (Capitol District) as "a kind of an overgrown capitol complex, resolutely detached from the rest of the city."[104]

Fig.93 *Lack of Public Transportation*

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[104] Vale (1992): 96.

4.3 SETTING THE STAGE

4.3.1 The Patrons

Given their newly independent democratic status, the Indian intelligentsia voiced their concerns about the capital, its cultural symbolism, infrastructural problems, deteriorating living conditions, expansion plans and an overall lack of vision. Politically, the ideologies of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru best represented the two camps contesting to chart the future course of democracy in India and consequently it's capital. Although united in their drive to achieve independence, Gandhi and Nehru represented two different faces of the same coin. In Gandhi's view, the village[105] provided for the basic needs of the nation and therefore only a rural based agrarian society could represent democracy in India. Nehru on the other hand "was a great admirer of the achievements of modern civilization and saw India as a democratic, modern industrial nation rather than a rural democracy based on agricultural production."[106] Perhaps the difference between the philosophies of Gandhi and

Fig.94 *Difference in Opinion*
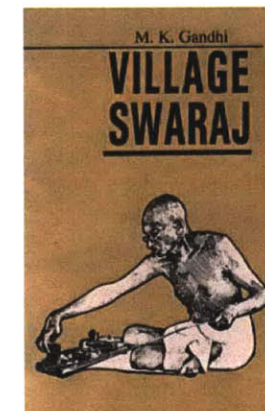
Fig.95 *Gandhi's democracy*

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[105] From: http://www.censusindia.net/results/eci14_page2.html Date Accessed: April 11, 2005.

According to the 1951 Census, only 17.3% of India's total population was urbanized. The 2001 Census shows that the majority of India's population still lives in rural settlements across the country with an urbanized population of only 27.8%.

[106] Lang et al. (1997): 181.

Nehru can be best summed by the following observation made by Gandhi himself:

"Jawahar (Nehru) wants Englishmen to go but *Angreziat* (English ways and culture) to stay. I want *Angreziat* to go but Englishmen to stay as our friends."[107]

Fig.96 *Attenborough's Gandhi*

Ideologically, this debate also manifested the fate of the capital. Gandhi had realized that the imperial power invested in the lavish symbolism of New Delhi did not represent India's poverty stricken masses. This realization is best represented in Sir Richard Attenborough's epic film 'Gandhi' in a scene where the 'half naked' Mahatma clad in a torn woolen shawl and *dhoti* approaches the imperial scale and monumentality of the Viceregal Lodge to negotiate India's future independence with the Viceroy. Symbolically, while the contrast between Gandhi (representing the masses of India) and the daunting Viceregal Lodge (representing British Imperialism) is clear, it is also equally important to understand that Gandhi as a symbol of the Indian masses had challenged the power of British imperialism causing the colonialists to finally leave the country. It is for this reason that Gandhi wanted to convert the Viceregal Lodge into a Hospital[108] after independence, envisioning a symbolic

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[107] Ibid., 182.

[108] Gupta, Narayani. *"Kingsway to Rajpath: The Democratization of Lutyens' Central Vista."* in Asher, Catherine and Metcalf, Thomas R. (eds.) *Perceptions of South Asia's Visual Past.* (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1994): 260. "After Gandhi's death, his disciple Sushila Nayar reminded Nehru that people had hoped

return of power to the people who would represent the Indian democracy. On January 30th 1948, Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated. Also gone with him were his ideas of democratization of the capital and its built imperial structure.

Nehru's perception of India as a modern industrialized nation could only be realized through a self-conscious centralized design in contrast to the largely unselfconscious and piecemeal evolution of modern society in Europe. It is for this reason, that Nehru was less concerned with political symbolism while he focused on visions for modernizing India. His reason for retaining governing power (against Gandhi's views) in the imperial buildings was purely based on a pragmatic rationale - "We do not want any pomp and splendor, but a state has to keep up a certain dignity as a state. Apart from this the kind of intensive work that one has to do requires certain facilities. It is all very well to say that we should live in simple huts, but those simple huts are most complicated places for work and require a tremendous deal of organization."[109] Put in the context of the Conservative – Liberal Imperialism discussion, Nehru subscribed to the liberal view where power and organization was necessary to bring about social change. Some view Nehru's occupancy of the Commander in Chief's palatial

Fig.97 *Nehruvian modernization*

that Congress leaders would set a standard of simplicity and live as the leaders of India's poverty stricken masses should live. She added that the Viceregal House and other similar buildings should be used as hospitals." Nayar reiterated Gandhi's suggestion cautioning Nehru against the adverse implication of retaining governing power in the imperial artifacts of British colonialism.

[109] Ibid., 261.

Fig.98 *Independence Day, 1947*

Fig.99 *Parody of Republic Day*

Fig.100 *Republic Day Parade*

house as setting a corrupting precedent for democratic India.[110]

Politically, Nehru found a novel way of legitimizing power (through imperial structures) under democratic rule, while keeping the memory of India's independence struggle intact in the minds of its citizens. This is reflected in the distinction between the symbolic use of New Delhi on Independence Day (celebrated on 15th of August) and Republic Day (celebrated on the 26th of January) when India gained its Republic status in 1950. "Prime Minister Nehru, Home Minister Vallabhbhai Patel, and Commander-in-Chief K.M. Carriappa gave a lot of thought to the suitable formal dress and to the ceremonies that should commemorate the occasions."[111] While Independence day was marked by the Prime Minister's speech from Shahjahan's Red Fort (the symbolic focus of the nationalist revolt of 1857 and the emotive trials of the Indian National Army in 1945), Republic Day was celebrated by a formal procession headed by the President along Kingsway. On Independence Day children sang patriotic songs around the fort while in contrast, on Republic Day, contingents of soldiers marched down Kingsway to celebrate India's might and arrival as a stable sovereign state in the world. Although, not as Gandhi had desired (in fact still retaining its governing function and emphasizing it), Lutyens' Delhi had been appropriated symbolically to house the power of Indian democracy.

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[110] Prof. Suhash Chakraborty from Delhi University in Chatterjee (1999): 114.

[111] Ibid.

Furthermore, the members of the Congress Party who were convinced of Nehru's ideals had "foreseen a full scale application of science and technology to bring about an economic and social revolution in India."[112] Even before independence, batches of young Indians were sent overseas for technical training which would be used in the service of their country upon their return. Nehru's progressive approach however, was not without its regressive side effects. As Lang et al. note "The danger in striving to attain a modern infrastructure for society is that political imperialism can give way to economic imperialism, reinforcing the very disparities that according to the Indian constitution are to be eliminated from the country."[113] In any case, Nehru remains the patron of not only modernism but also modern architecture in India. He championed under his patronage the architecture of modernist greats like Le Corbusier and Otto Koenigsberger in India.

Fig.101 *Nehru's interest in modern architecture*

4.3.2 Committees, Agencies and Master plans

Based on the influx of over 500,000 refugees, deteriorating living conditions in the capital and Nehru's call for modernization, the Government of India appointed the Delhi Improvement Trust Enquiry Committee in 1950. The objective of the committee was to review the past work of the Trust in key sectors of housing, finance and administration of

Fig.102 *Nehru with Corbusier*

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[112] Lang et al. (1999): 182.

[113] Ibid., 183 from Morse, Chandler. (ed.). *Modernization by Design.* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1969).

the capital. Named after its chairman, the committee published the Birla Report in 1951 assessing the state of the capital vis-à-vis the DIT role in its development (which in its view was a failure[114]) over thirteen years of its existence. Among its major recommendations, the committee called for the following:

- Preparation of a civic survey and Master Plan
- Preparation of a traffic survey
- Creation of a centralized autonomous planning body to deal with conflicting and overlapping jurisdictions
- Reshuffling and replacement of pre-existing committees

Following the recommendation of the Birla Report, the Government of India set up a centralized planning body in 1955 by constituting the Delhi Ordinance (Control of Building Operations Act) hence creating the Delhi Development (Provisional) Authority. By 1956 the Town Planning Organization (set up by the ministry of Health to advise the Delhi Development Authority) had published its *Interim General Plan (IGP)* under the guidance of

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[114] Breese (1974): 21. "The story of the Trust is the story of a failure." However, the report was fair as it acknowledged that Trust had been called upon to deal with unprecedented problems which were a joint responsibility of the Trust and other agencies like the Land Development Department, Central Public Works Department and the Ministry of Rehabilitation and the Trust alone could not be held liable for the prevalent chaos in the capital.

G. Mukerji the chairman of the Delhi Improvement Trust. The IGP took as 'given' the capitol district of the city focusing more on macro level planning guidelines and increasing the importance of Delhi as a commercial – financial- distribution center. For this reason, it stressed the necessity of planning on a regional scale to diffuse population and created a balanced distribution of land use. Apart from advocating a comprehensive master plan, the IGP proposed the formation of a National Capital Area Planning Commission to guide planning at the regional level around the capital. Also in the same year Prime Minister Nehru and other politicians called for slum clearance which led to the 'Slum Improvement and Clearance Act' of 1956. This was followed by the enactment of the Delhi Development Act in 1957 which transferred all responsibilities of slum clearance and improvement work to the Delhi Municipal Corporation. Meanwhile, DDA's mandate remained broad ensuring to "promote and secure the development of Delhi according to Plan."[115]

At the national level, a series of Five Year Plans were devised by the government to guide India's vision of modernization. Based on the Birla Report and as a development of the IGP, a comprehensive Master Plan for Delhi was finally given statutory shape on September 1, 1962 anticipating the evolution of the capital till the year 1981. The Plan was set up with the help of foreign consultants that were a part of the Ford Foundation team called in to advise the Town Planning Committee and DDA. By this time Delhi's population was roughly 2.4 million inhabiting an area of 326.55 sq. km. The primary mandate of the Master Plan was
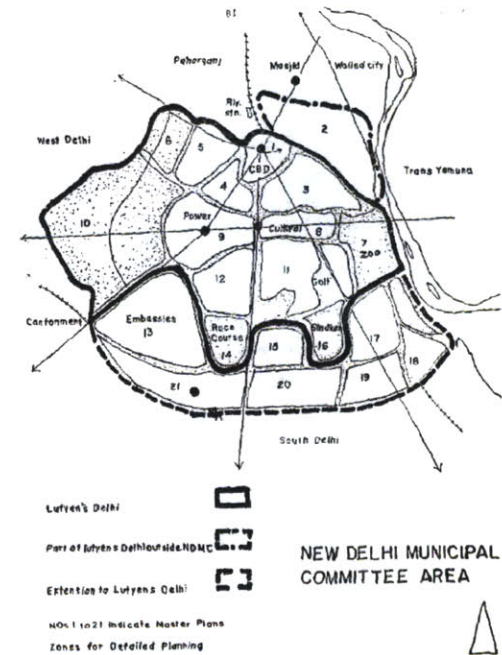
Fig.103 *Interim planning*

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[115] Jain (1990): 77.
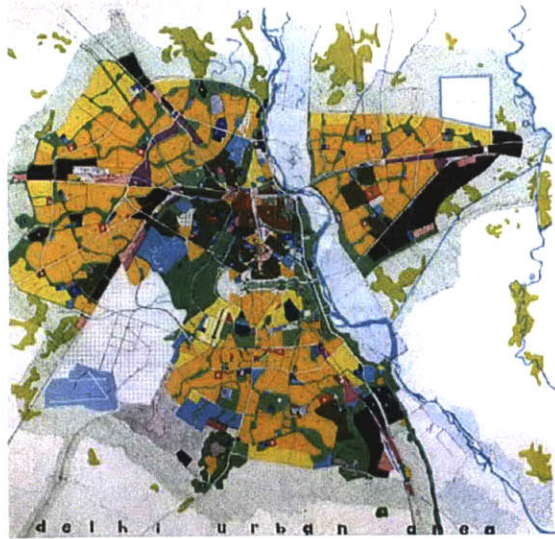
Fig.104 *Delhi Master Plan, 1962*
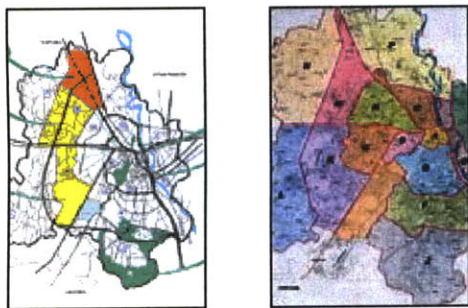
Fig.105 *Regional zoning plans*

the 'prevention of bad layout of land and haphazard erection of buildings.' Although 'bad layout' was not specifically defined, it most likely referred to the mushrooming of private colonies and irregular settlements without adequate provision for services and facilities. Some of the basic tenets of the Plan are as follows:

- Regularization of existing irregular colonies and future prevention of such settlements

- Zoning - Division of Delhi in 136 urban zones and 3 rural zones following a concept of zonal development plans to coordinate development

- Regional division of Delhi by delineating the Metropolitan Area, the Compact Urban Area, the National Capital Region, the Central Jamuna valley and the Delhi Resource Region – each progressively larger than its preceding area

- Large scale acquisition of land to expedite economic development as well as maintain control of the land

- Reduction of congestion and improved accessibility to citizens

- Designation of Lutyens' Delhi as 'imperial zone'

- Renewed connection between the old city and Lutyens' Delhi

- Increase compactness and social cohesion in the capitol district

- Expansion of Connaught Place

- Decentralization - Creation of 15 shopping & district centers throughout the city
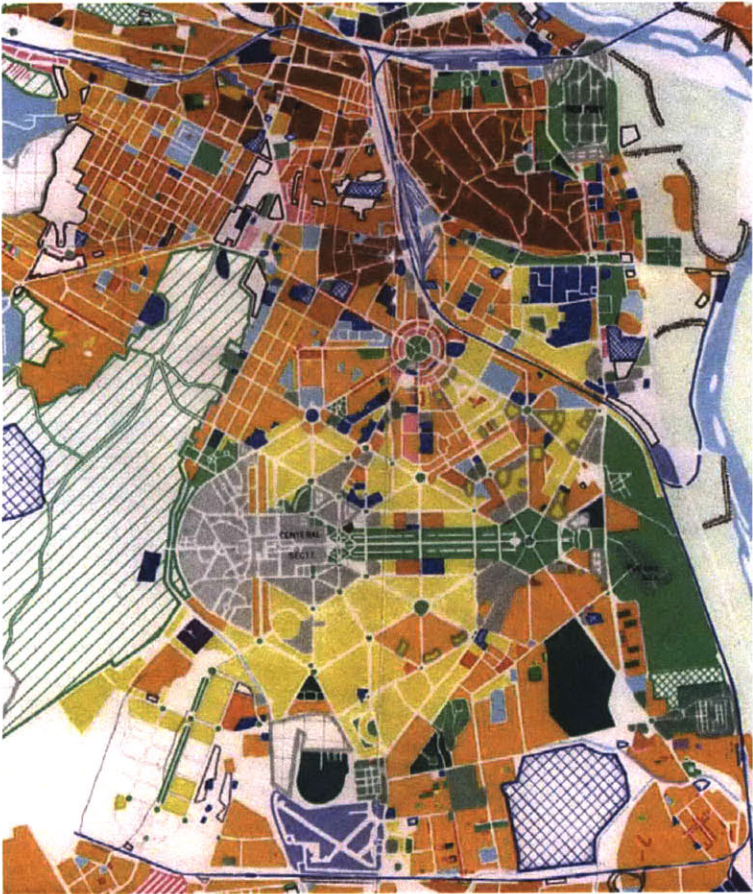
Fig.106 *Existing Land use, 1961*
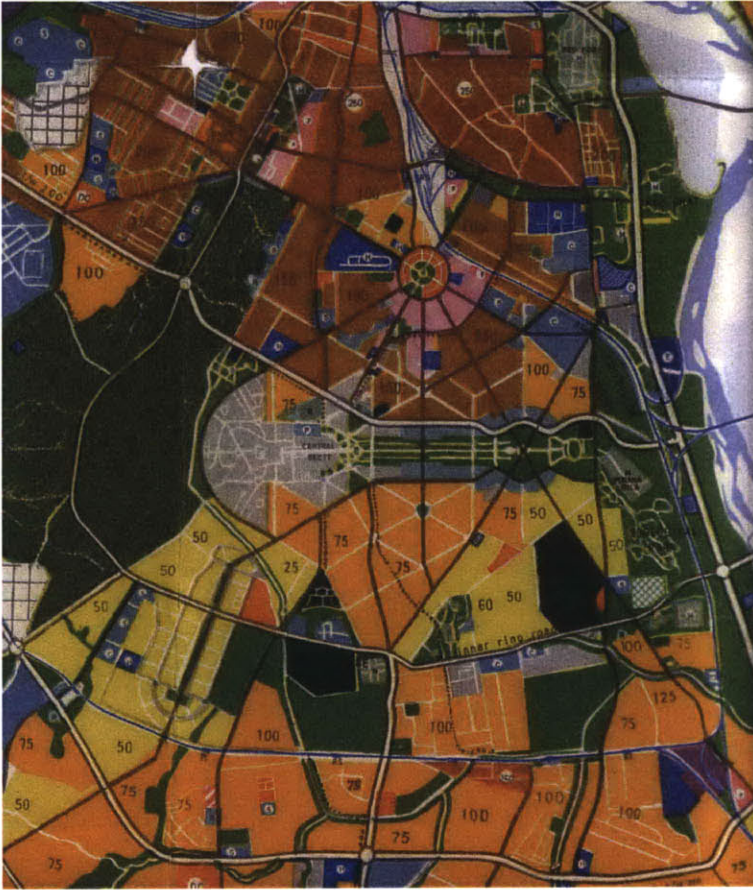
Fig.107 *Proposed Land use, MPD, 1962 – Not much changed in the Capitol District. The change from the yellow to orange only reflects a change in density from 60 persons/ac. to 75 persons/ac.*

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4.4   **INDIAN PLANNING PROCESS**

4.4.1   **Democratization: Democracy superimposed on Imperialism**

As seen in the previous section, the exhibition of imperial power in the New Delhi plan was symbolically appropriated to a display of patriotic pageantry announcing India's arrival as a stable democratic republic on the international map. True to the plan's function, the Republic Day parade used the Central Vista for the processional purpose it was designed for, although, the meaning conveyed was entirely different. Also seen in the Canberra example, this reiterates the fact that urban design devices used to signify power can remain fairly malleable until they are rendered with meaning (both symbolic and ideological). In New Delhi's case, this imperial meaning had already been propagated through its physical structure (in its iconography, segregation, hierarchy, land use etc. as previously discussed) and by merely changing its symbolic expression, it had only scratched the surface of the problem.

The Democratization of New Delhi's plan continued only in symbolic spirit after Independence. In 1955, Delhi's toponymic street nomenclature was reinscripted or 'nationalized'. Queensway became Janpath (people's path), Kingsway became Rajpath (Royal path), other roads took on the names of prominent Indian national leaders from the realms of politics, culture and history and finally the Hindi word '*marg*' replaced the English word

Fig.108 *King George V Memorial Canopy*

Fig.109 *King George V, Coronation Park*

'*road*'.[116] By the 1960's, this taxonomy had moved beyond national boundaries where streets were now being named after prominent nationalist leaders of other British colonial territories (Gamul Abdul Nasser and Archbishop Makarios). King writes "Yet while erasing the memories of the names that were excised, linking India in this way with Egypt, South Africa and Cyprus, ironically evokes, in the postcolonial present, memories of a collective colonial past."[117] King also notes that while the names of the streets were changed, their physical character (section, length, width, trees, buildings, verges, colonial practice of white-washed curbs) continued to persist. For him this reinscription "had the opposite effect – conferring on the Indian national hero [or colonial national hero] whose name it carried an anglisized and postcolonial identity. It was as if Aurungzeb [mughal king] took on the mantle and portly proportions of Edward VII."[118]

King's point is well illustrated by yet another attempt at symbolic democratization where imperial statues and busts all over the city were removed in order to eradicate the imperial memory of the past. A case in point was the removal of the statue of George V from the Memorial Canopy east of India Gate in 1968. As an interesting side note, Narayani Gupta points out that 'in due appropriateness' the statue was moved to Coronation Park (along

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[116] King (2004): 146; King (1976): Appendix 2, 296-299.

[117] King (2004): 146.

[118] Ibid.

with others), the site of the Coronation Durbar of 1911 where the monarch had first announced the shift of British India's capital to New Delhi. Proposals to replace the King's statue with one of Gandhi, is a persisting debate till today representing the 'opposite effect' that King describes in his book, *Spaces of Global Culture*. On one hand is a camp which recognizes the successful democratization of the plan and views the appropriateness of Gandhi's statue as reinforcing its legitimacy as a democratic capitol space for India. On the other hand are those who believe that the Central Vista is imperial and hence unsuitable as a setting for the Father of the Nation. An extension of the same camp believes that the display of military might on Republic Day (apparent symbolic democratization of the plan as argued by the first camp) does not 'harmonize' with Gandhi's philosophy. Despite numerous creative ideas[119] to inhabit the canopy, it remains empty till today representing in essence India's realization of King's 'opposite effect.' Narayani Gupta appropriately ends her essay, *Kingsway to Rajpath*, with a quote from Gandhi's grandson, Ramachandra Gandhi – "Do we honor Gandhi by putting him in an imperial cage? The canopy of George V should be allowed to remain unoccupied forever, dramatizing the exit of the British Empire from India and symbolizing the resolve of free India not to set up an imperial successor-state to the British Raj."[120]

Fig.110 *Statue of Gandhi*

Fig.111 *Empty Canopy*

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[119] Gupta (1994): 265-268.

[120] Ibid., 268. Quote by Ramachandra Gandhi in the *Indian Express*, August 6, 1989.
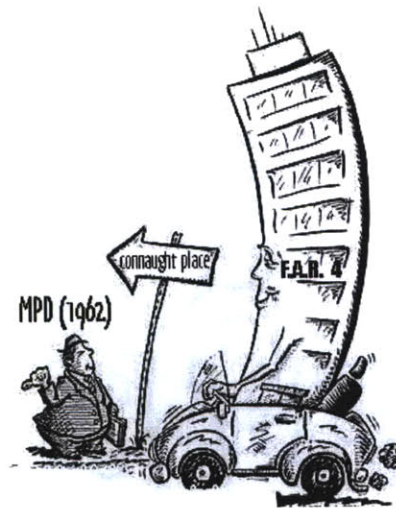
Fig.112 *MPD (1962), F.A.R. of 4*

Fig.113 *Highrise development, Connaught Place*

4.4.2   Master Plans and Development

Symbolic change and the construction of a new democratic identity for New Delhi were both external to the world and internal to India's citizens. "After the patriotism drive whipped up for the Pakistan [1947-48, 1965, 1971] and China [1962] wars, New Delhi and the Central Vista were installed as national identity."[121] Internally, while committees and master plans were being set up to deal with the capital's problems, the symbolic democratization of the capitol district only reinforced the functional acceptance of its imperial architecture and planning as pragmatic, progressive and hygienic. Perpetuating imperial attitudes, the first Master Plan of Delhi (MPD) described the walled city as a 'slum.' The new plan designated the capitol district as an 'imperial zone' and assessed it as lacking 'compactness and social cohesion.' To counter this problem, the MPD envisioned an extension of Connaught Place raising the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) in the area to 4. As the premier shopping zone for the city, new businesses, foreign missions, national interest groups and commercial entities began to compete for space in the area. Real Estate values skyrocketed causing further inequity in the already elitist plan. The new FAR permitted multistory development in the area. In time, several single storey bungalows were replaced by tall commercial structures that were not only ugly and inefficient, but also lacked a

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[121] Khushwant Singh in Chatterjee (1999): 120.

composite relationship with the plan at ground level. Closer to the Central Vista in the same zone, Delhi's expanding bureaucracy led to different ministries elbowing each other for office space, after all "it was a prestige issue and [it] showed their standing in the government hierarchy."[122] Given that the zone was occupied and used by those who could afford the automobile, traffic and parking problems soon exceeded the capacity of the rotaries. Much like the buildings, automobiles, rickshaws, cyclists and buses also competed for space as a result of this development.

In his editorial *The Five Star Cult and the Indian Reality*, Patwant Singh exposes yet another short sighted approach of the MPD. "Delhi is a city of leased properties, with government as the main landowner."[123] As also verified by Khushwant Singh, "very often in the days after independence, bungalows were allocated just at the drop of a phone. Spaces were given on lease to top industrialists reducing the land holdings under direct control of the government, thus making this area a private reserve of a few members of the politico-urban elite."[124] Patwant Singh points out loopholes in the plan where construction of hotels (even in residential zones) was permitted, provided that a community center serving approximately 50,000 people had been planned for. As a result, over 150 hotel sites could be made available in Delhi based on the MPD and its provision for new community centers throughout the

Fig.114 *High rise development, C.P.*
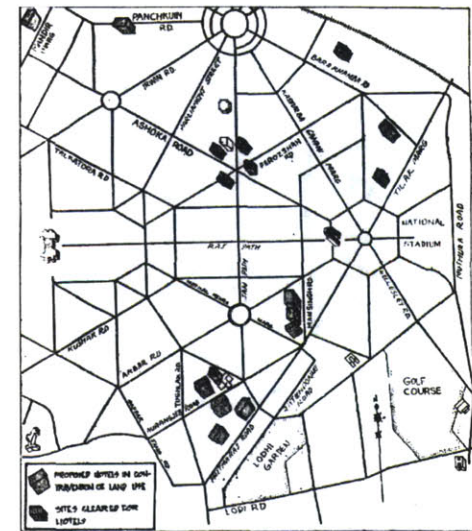
Fig.115 *Five Star Cult, Hotel development*

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[122] Mr. Raghunathan, former Home Secretary in Chatterjee (1999): 114.

[123] Singh et al. (1989): 53.

[124] Khushwant Singh in Chatterjee (1999): 116.

Fig.116 *Hotel Taj Man Singh*
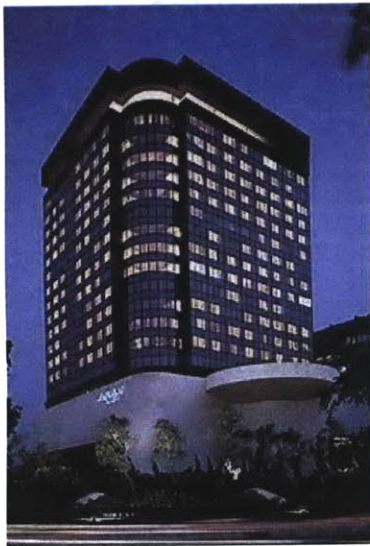
Fig.117 *Hotel Le Meridien*

city. With Connaught Place rapidly developing as the downtown area for the capital, private bungalow homeowners (mostly industrialists as far south of Rajpath) began to convert their homes into luxury hotels. Patwant Singh lists a number of properties in the capitol district that had successfully built hotels or applied for a change in land use under the loopholes in the MPD. Private hotels like Taj Mansingh and Le Meridien were later built with special permissions from the highest government authorities. While Singh alludes to the inappropriateness of hotels based on their increased demand for infrastructure, burden on resources and causing general inequity in the region, the government justified their sanction based on tourism and as important socio-economic drivers for the capital.

The implementation of the MPD also centered on many problems of land acquisition, financing, taxation, policy, resource implications, legislation, administration, community development programs etc. that made its objectives difficult to achieve. As a plan, most critics described the MPD as having a 'two dimensional approach'. While it accurately assessed that the capitol district lacked compactness and social cohesion, it neglected a foresighted approach to deal with the problem comprehensively. Changing political powers, vested interests, corruption, market forces and loopholes in effect "created deep scars on Lutyens' Garden City"[125] while the rest of the city continued to sprawl outwards.

Realizing the inadequacy of the MPD, in December 1971 Indira Gandhi (then the prime

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[125] Jain (1990): 80.

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minister of India) created yet another committee – New Delhi Redevelopment Advisory Committee (NDRAC) to deal with the problem. The FAR in the commercial zone was reduced to 2.5. The NDRAC concentrated on the areas south of Rajpath and developed guidelines, built envelope controls, setback lines etc for the area. By 1973, the Delhi Urban Arts Commission Act was enacted creating a commission (which started functioning in May, 1974) with the primary objective to preserve, maintain and develop the aesthetic and environmental quality in urban Delhi. Unfortunately, before the NDRAC could complete its studies, it was dismantled in 1978, transferring all pending work back to the DDA where "the outmoded approach of zonal planning was perpetuated and even the urban form studies done by the NDRAC were translated back into the zonal development plans."[126]

In 1976, the Urban Land Ceiling Act was enacted which intended to limit the size of urban land holdings to a maximum of 500 sq. meters. As a result, the government froze the redevelopment and construction of private urban properties on land more than 500 sq. meters. By law, the authorities could neither enforce equitable distribution of land nor could they acquire any vacant land under the Act. While the Act prevented redevelopment in the urban areas (and consequently any development under the freeze) the government increased the holdings for farm land on the periphery of the city from 1 acre to 2.47 acres to promote agriculture. The MPD had bounded the urban area of Delhi by an 'inviolable agricultural

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[126] Ibid.

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Fig.118 *Lavish farmhouses, Delhi's elite*
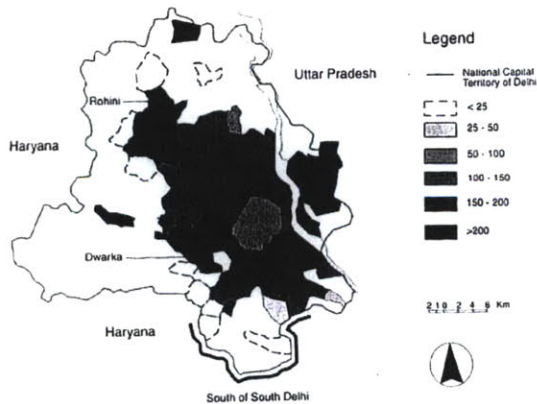
Fig.119 *Density distribution*

green belt' of about 1.6 km in depth. This boundary was already being violated with squatter settlements, unauthorized colonies and small industry. As a consequence of the development freeze at the center and the provision for holding large areas of farm land, more affluent people began to set up 'farm houses' at the periphery. As Jain points out, "in 1962, about 5% of the land in agricultural rural areas of Delhi was owned by the urban population, while today about 75% of the green belt belongs to urban owners, which includes policy makers, businessmen and top bureaucrats, who have built sprawling weekend mansions in farmlands for which the Master Plan stipulates 1 Ha (2.47 acres) as the minimum size."[127] Once again the policies at the center became largely responsible for the undesirable extension of the city.

The MPD was not only short-sighted but most of its objectives were either grossly violated or simply not enforced towards implementation. With respect to the Capitol District, the government itself was often the wrongdoer. Although large private developments were forbidden, the IGNCA was created instead of the Oriental Institute and huge tracts of prime land were awarded to it. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) tried to convert the site for the National Library to it's headquarters. These developments were in contradiction to the MPD directives calling for decentralization of offices from the capitol district to new district centers that would be created throughout the city. Politicians made unsightly additions to their bungalows surrounding them with the highest compound walls and the most ornate

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[127] Ibid., 81.

gates as a symbol of status. With many servants and staff servicing a politician's small family, the service staff quarters behind the bungalows were subdivided to the point that they were reduced to a slum not visible from the city front.[128] So much so, even the imperial acropolis was not spared. K.T. Ravindran, a Delhi based prominent urban designer points out that alterations to the Rashtrapati Bhavan (Viceregal Lodge) were made by successive Presidents according to their whims and fancies. He recalls, "I did not need to ask anyone for any permission which I made two structures for the president within the presidential estate. It is literally his kingdom; he can choose to do what he wishes."[129] In defense of the DUAC that was formed to protect and maintain the aesthetic and environmental quality of the capital, Prof. E.F.N. Rebeiro laments, "The administrator of the New Delhi Municipal Committee (NDMC) who is a bureaucrat and a political appointee, has powers to overrule the chief architect and planners of any civic body and the DUAC. There have already been several men in this position who have altered the street furniture, tree planting and the architectural character by shocking, insensitive, poorly designed interventions in order to please the political masters, finish funds and display work."[130]

As for concessions in the MPD, 'special' permissions from the government could be obtained which allowed deviation from the plan's objectives. The 70's and the 80's witnessed

Fig.120 *Lutyens' bungalows, gated communities*
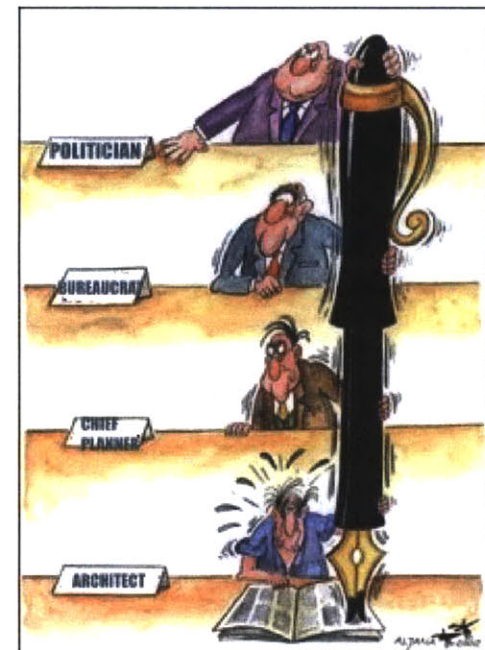
Fig.121 *Top down planning hierarchy*

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[128] Biswas, Suptendu P. *"White Elephant"*, in *Hindustan Times*, Delhi edition, August, 20, 1999.

[129] K.T. Ravindran in Chatterjee (1999): 115.

[130] E.F.N. Rebeiro in Chatterjee (1999): 116.

Fig.122 *De facto extensions of commercial use around Connaught Place*

de facto extensions of commercial land use on Kasturba Gandhi Marg and along Janpath. Market forces, corruption, vested political interests, lack of enforcement and a consequential exhaustion from all these pressures threatened the extinction of the imperial order although not necessarily the end of its ideology of segregation, inequity and exclusivity. It is largely under these circumstances, that the preservationist movement was mobilized in Delhi. Furthermore, since the MPD serviced its objectives only till 1981, in October, 1977, the government asked the DDA to undertake the preparation of a new MPD sanctioned with a budget of Rs. 9.8 million.

4.4.3 Preservation

"By the 1980's the stigma of colonialism and the intellectual necessity to erase memories and symbols of the colonial past were beginning to be eroded."[131] The writings of Robert Irving, Gavin Stamp, Anthony King, Thomas Metcalfe, Sten Nilsson etc. had reintroduced in their texts (to the British and the English reading minority in India) the liberal ideas behind imperial planning in Delhi. Also in 1980, the British Council in New Delhi organized an extensive photographic exhibition[132] marking the 50th anniversary of the inauguration of the capital to educate its citizens of the ingenuity of Lutyens' planning and architecture. Narayani

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[131] Lang et al. (1997): 252.

[132] Ghosh, Bijit. (project, leader, School of Planning and Architecture) *"The Making of New Delhi"*, pamphlet issued on the 50th anniversary of the inauguration of New Delhi. (1980).

Gupta points out the emergence of an 'unexpected bond' between the planners and architects of the 50's, and, today's young graduates where "the former worked with the associates of Lutyens and the latter are not self consciously nationalist to the point of dismantling everything British as tarred with the colonial brush." [133] She charges the generation in between (that dismisses Lutyens' work as imperial or second rate) saying "[It] is their own preoccupation with constructing those monuments of independent India's capital – the five star hotels – many of them built in Lutyens' New Delhi with total disregard to the overall civic design." [134] Gupta's point refers to the misgivings of the MPD (1962) as discussed in the previous section, suggesting a primary need to limit (from haphazard development) and protect (from operating market forces) before considering any sustainable development of the Capitol District. Although significantly alert to the imperial implications of the plan as laid out in this thesis, Delhi's new generation of planners and architects do not carry much colonial baggage and hence view the situation with pragmatic neutrality rather than expressing it as an emotive dismissal. While on one hand, there is a growing appreciation for Lutyens' designs it only seems to be magnified by the contrast generated through the misgivings of the MPD hence calling out for its preservation. Ideologically, the new generation accepts Delhi's colonial past in the same spirit as it endorses the deterministic role of Mughal and older monuments in giving the capital its rich identity.
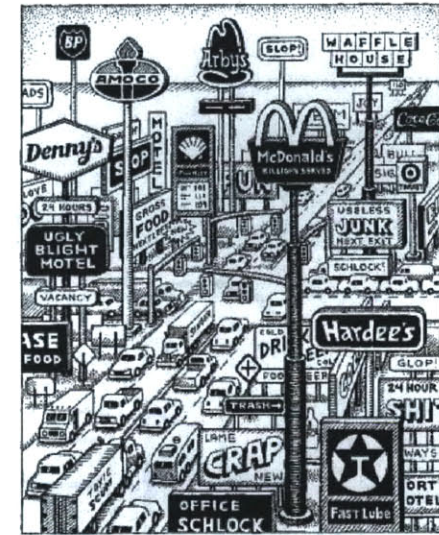
Fig.123 *Market Forces, Traffic*

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[133] Gupta (1994): 264.

[134] Ibid.

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Fig.124 *Lungs of the city*

Fig.125 *Lutyens' Delhi – a large park*

It is equally important to understand the logical rationale behind the preservationist movement concerned with Lutyens' Delhi.

Apart from a perceived threat from operating market forces, political interests etc., there is a growing realization from an ecological stand-point of the role of the Capitol District vis-à-vis today's polluted, sprawling metropolis. The low densities and the greens of the Capitol District are like the lungs of the city. According to the advocates of this view - given that the city has already expanded extensively, it is unlikely that redensifying the capitol district would yield miraculous results solving the city's problems today. After all Lutyens' Delhi only constitutes a meager 3% of total land in New Delhi.[135] As expressed by Prof. Shaheer of the School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi, "New Delhi is like a large park. It would be impossible to create such a thing today."[136] According to Syed Shafi, a former government chief planner, "It is the only city centre anywhere in the world which is several degrees cooler than its periphery."[137] Consequently, there are fears that redensification would actually destroy Delhi's natural ecosystem and endanger the city's health. Implicit in the logical rationale of the preservationists is also the protection of the imperial built ideology of the plan. While proponents of redensification argue that the preservationists have been put to

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[135] Chatterjee (1999): 128.

[136] Ibid., 120.

[137] Rahman, Masseh. *"Lutyens' Delhi under threat from Developers."* in *The Guardian*, October 7, 2003. From: http://www.guardian.co.uk/india/story/0,12559,1057303,00.html Date Accessed: April 11, 2005.

the task by the elite to protect their enclaves, it becomes compelling to lend a listening ear to their argument as few preservationists talk about making the protected area available to the public. Based on the intellectual strength of its non-discriminatory historical purview and the functional/sustainable rationale of (eco) logical protection, the preservationist lobby has gained considerable support in its activities.

Responding at first to the need of protecting older monuments from neglect and further desecration the Indian National Trust for Architectural and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) was founded in 1984. Realizing the damage to the capitol district as a result of the MPD (1962) and need for an ecological consideration, the 'monuments' (buildings and their settings) of the colonial era were immediately incorporated under the protection charter of the INTACH. Controversies and violations however, continued to persist. The construction of the Life Insurance Corporation of India (1986) in Connaught Circus as designed by architect Charles became the center of debate (and also one of the last straws in the hat) in it's contextual inappropriateness to the pre-existing imperial setting. By 1988, the DUAC and the INTACH together imposed a complete freeze on any development in Lutyens' Bungalow Zone which had been designated as a special area. Although much of the damage had already been carried out in the commercial area and its unwarranted expansion, the idea of the freeze was to give a protected monument status to all colonial buildings in the Capitol District eliminating any scope of future development or planned re-densification. New guidelines were drafted to stop commercial expansion and inform both architectural and

Fig.126 *Oberoi Hotel and Delhi Golf Club – Parts of the Green space*

Fig.127 *Indian National Trust for Architectural and Cultural Heritage*

Fig.128 *Life Insurance Building, Charles Correa*

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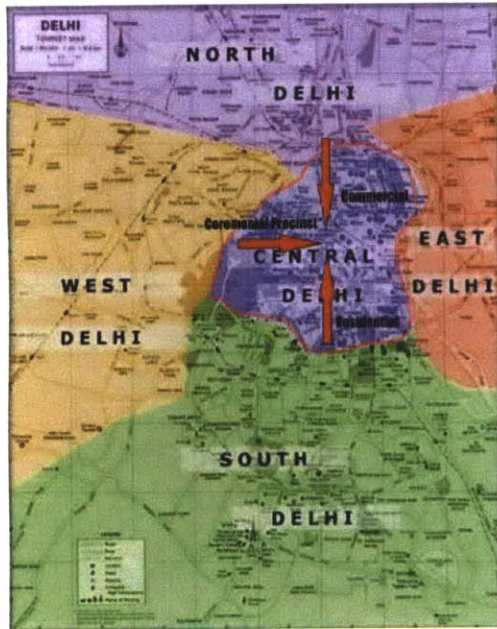
Fig.129 *Contesting Tri-polarities in Central Delhi*

urban design implications of development in the commercial zone recognizing it as the downtown area of the capital. A bounded, protected and segregated tri-polarity (seat of power, downtown district and residential enclave) incomplete in any of its singular polar forms was thus invented. With an overall density of 60 persons per acre as compared to 136 persons per acre for the rest of Delhi, more than 3/4th of the city's inhabitants do not live or work in the capitol district. More than half who work in the imperial zone do not live there. The Capitol complex remains a strange imperialist contradiction where preservation is advocated (on behalf of the city and its citizens) with little intention of the protected area's return to the public; functionally segregated within itself and from the rest of the city.

The debates between those who advocate preservation and those who suggest redensification continue on the basis of what constitutes sustainable development of the capital. Recent media attention to the CPWD's proposals for replacing the bungalows in Lutyens' Delhi with multistory apartments has aroused considerable debate. "… the World Monuments Fund in New York had named Lutyens' Delhi on its list of world's 100 most endangered heritage sites because of unauthorized alterations made to the bungalows."[138] While the CPWD calls for demolition saying the bungalows have exceeded their lifespan, INTACH on the other hand is "proposing that Lutyens' Delhi be named as a UNESCO World Heritage Site…."[139]

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[138]Huggler, Justin. *"Edwin Lutyens' Designs in New Delhi RE-Evaluated."* in *The Independent* (London), November 2, 2004. From: http://hnn.us/roundup/entries/8375.html Date Accessed: April 11, 2005.

[139] Ibid.

4.5   INDIAN DESIGNS: IMPERIAL REALITIES

4.5.1   Separation, Land use, Zoning, Symbolism

In his book, *The Making of a Metropolis*, Jain writes "today two of these cities – Shahjahanabad and New Delhi are the living cities and constitute the urban core, combining an introvert Old City and an expansive New City."[140] Jain's statement reveals an interesting contradiction in what constitutes the urban core of a city. Strictly, from a density standpoint in activity and inhabitation, Shahjahanabad qualifies as an urban core over the British imperial city (in which it can be compared to the post MPD (1962) high densities of Connaught Place), however as seen through this thesis, the old city had little to do with the evolution of Delhi apart from being a shock absorber for imperial policies at the center. Perhaps it due to this lack of role in the city's postcolonial evolution, that Jain refers to Shahjahanabad as an 'introvert' city.

For the context of this thesis, it is important to understand, that the construction and persistence of the Imperial in New Delhi is in fact largely responsible for Shahjahanabad's 'introvert' character today. Perpetuating imperial ideology of separation and sanitation, the MPD (1962) labeled the old city a slum. While the new MPD (2001) has only recently designated the old city as a 'special zone' (without any further articulation), campaigns to
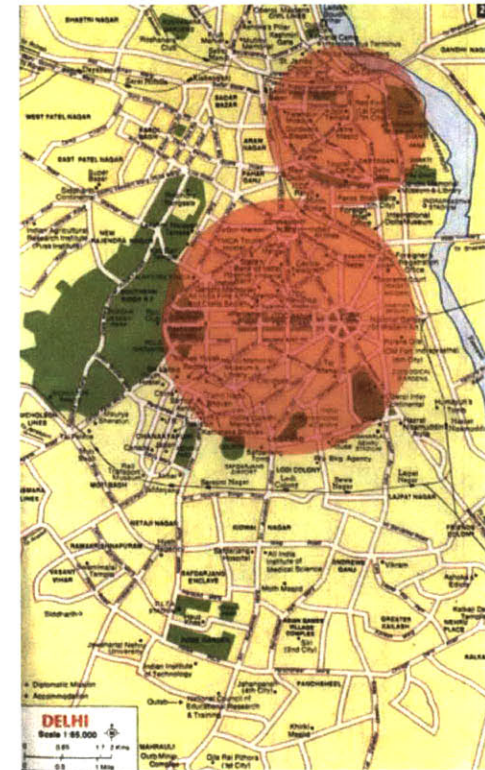
Fig.130 *Two cores of Delhi*

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[140] Jain (1990): 150.

Fig.131 *Shahjahanabad, 1891*

Fig.132 *Shahjahanabad, 1991*

preserve the Capitol District (British imperial city) precede in importance and continue to dominate the agenda of Delhi's elitist administration. The newly found ecological justification to preserve Lutyens' Delhi offers a convincing argument to legitimize this precedence in planning for the city as a whole. Furthermore, the old city's organic character, chaos, multiple ownership issues, land tenure problems, infrastructural inadequacies, racial issues (majority of Shahjahanabad is Muslim) etc. make it very difficult to articulate it in planning, design and policy, beyond a superficial label of 'special zone'.

The persistence of such imperial policies by design (in the formative years of Indian planning after independence) and now by default (as a result of irreparable damage caused by the persistence of imperial policies) continue to emphasize the physical separation between the old and the new city. As a result, Shahjahanabad remains a densely packed appendage on the urban form of the city rather than constitute an active urban core of the capital. Its physical separation today is evident in:

- Visibly different organic fabric from the rest of the city
- Containment (in most parts) within the limits of the city wall which is now mostly demolished
- Swaths of landscape (Ram Lila ground) used to separate (sanitize) and negotiate the contrasting geometries of the British imperial city and old settlement grid
- Replacement of the city wall (in some places) by a barrier of taller development at

the junction of the old and the new city

- Forced expansion of the old city across the river Jamuna

- Socio-economic, cultural and ethnic makeup of the old city

- Congestion, chaos, lack of infrastructure and planning guidelines

By the same logic of separation or isolation, one may question the validity of the British imperial city as Delhi's urban core. Its own separation with the rest of the city is evident in its low densities, urban fabric, geometry, character, socio-economic & cultural makeup and stratified hierarchy etc. By no means can one describe Lutyens' Delhi as an 'extrovert' city based on Jain's implied contention in contrast to the 'introvert' old city. The Capitol District remains largely insular due to the persistence of imperial ideologies within its own physical and socio-economic structure. Apart from its brief desecration as a consequence of short-sighted planning, the preservationist movement (mobilized largely as a result) has made the persistence and (now) permanence of the imperial structures a tangible reality. Interestingly, the very attributes that legitimize the capitol district as Delhi's urban core are in fact responsible for its estrangement with the old city and the postcolonial expansion of the new city. Furthermore, it is the propagation of these imperial attributes in the absence of comprehensive planning that has led to irreparable damage in the urban fabric of the city as a whole. "The basic pattern of segregation, created and encouraged by the British, however was never broken. The city became cluttered with highly segregated colonies for the rich and
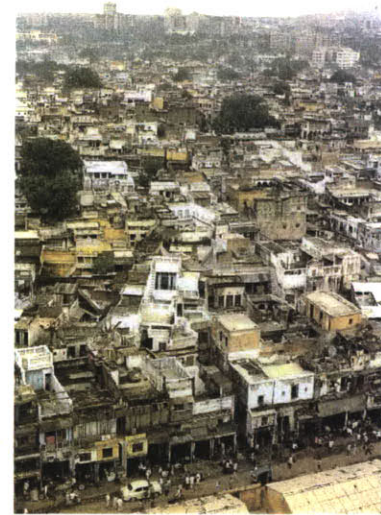
Fig.133 *Fabric of the old city*

Fig.134 *Elitist and insular core*
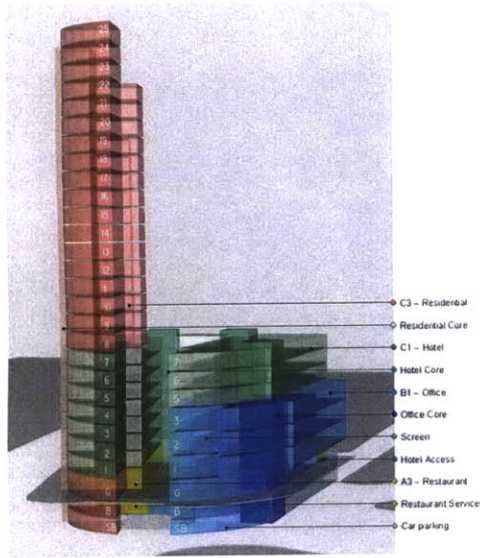
Fig.135 *No incentives for sustainable Mixed-use development*

Fig.136 *Typical politician bungalow*

poor. Even today a mere location or name of the colony reflects the economic status of the individual."[141]

Till very recently, 'blanket' zoning and segregated land use was the norm in practice for planning the city. Mixed use developments only occurred owing to market forces and were consequently seen as violations of the MPD or as illegal unplanned extensions in need of control. Within the Capitol complex itself, blanket zoning and segregated land use persists in its tri-polar format (ceremonial precinct, bungalow zone & commercial zone) waiting to be permanently fossilized under the auspices of (eco)logical preservation. Apart from the commercial center, government properties and land in the Capitol District do not raise a fraction of the money that is spent on their upkeep. Moreover, politicians occupying the bungalow zone rarely pay their heavily subsidized rental, electricity, water and phone bills and thus this part of the city is a great burden on the exchequer.[142] As described by King, the persistence of the physical spatial form of the imperial continues to place an immense strain on the city's resources. Functional hardships also continue to inhabit the inefficiencies that are produced as a result of imperial persistence in form and ideology. Adverse live work

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[141] Kambo, D.P. and Chanda, R.N. *"Beyond Connaught Circus"* in Singh et al. (1989): 66.

[142] Bakth, Sikandar. *"Green Bungalows of New Delhi – Should they stay?"* in *Indian Architect,* Delhi. (July-August, 1989).

relationships[143] compounded by a poor public transport system have added to traffic, congestion and pollution problems in the capitol district. The success of Connaught place as a Central Business District and shopping center has only added to these problems. True to Gordon Cullen's contention that New Delhi is a city which was planned to the scale of the private automobile, Narayani Gupta points out other functional hardships associated with the spatial structure of the Central Vista. "For tourists, the image of the Vista is a broken one, and the distance between the various elements of visual or cultural interest, too great to be traversed pleasurably."[144] She explains that the Rashtrapati Bhavan and the Secretariat complex is at a distance from the Museum which is too far to walk and too short to hire public transport. The passage of heavy traffic through the vista in turn makes it a hostile pedestrian environment limiting any possibilities of walking from one destination to another.

However, despite the fractures in the Vista, all is not grim. Sporadic pockets of vibrant public activity hint at the possibilities of returning the Vista to public realm. "When Nehru lamented [upon] New Delhi's lack of soul, he, like all sophisticated Indians, showed his ignorance of the amazing ability of middle class Indians to create playgrounds and restaurants where neither had previously existed."[145] While the northern water channel along the Vista has evolved into a Boat Club, the eastern end of the Vista comes alive as a vibrant

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143 Majority of the workers in the capitol district do not live nearby as a result of high land values.

144 Gupta (1994): 262.

145 Ibid., 263.
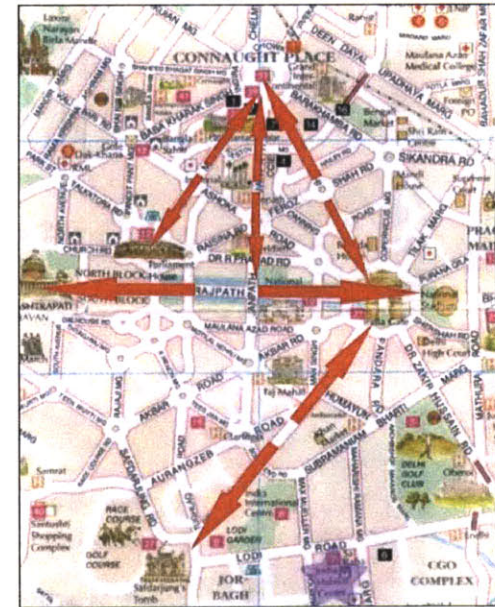
Fig.137 *Broken Vista – large distances between destinations of interest*

Fig.138 *Public activity near the eastern end of the Vista at dusk*

Fig.139 *Boat club on a summer afternoon*

Fig.140 *Public rally near the Boat Club*

Fig.141 *Security on the Vista*

public space after dusk. Interestingly, the Boat Club serves two purposes – providing respite to the citizen on a dry summer afternoon and as the staging ground for protests and processions as it is the nearest assembly point to the Parliament House where decisions are made. The eastern end of the Vista is mostly patronized by people from homes without gardens or neighborhood parks. Although not entirely legal but allowed to stay (by paying monthly bribes to policemen) are numerous ice-cream vendors, balloon sellers and hawkers that facilitate the public nature of the Vista at night. This part of the Vista is perhaps the only expression of true democracy – one which was not planned, yet circumvented as a result of apparent public need.

Akin to the unwelcome market forces that once threatened to take over the capitol complex (expansion of CP), the welcome forces of democracy today call out for planned interventions in repairing the fractures within the capitol complex envisioning its much needed return to public realm. It then reinforces a justification to preserve some parts of the complex. Although the need for return to public realm is clearly acknowledged by Delhi's planners and citizens, recent terror attacks on the parliament have made it impossible for the government to address this need in view of security concerns. Police barricades, visible security forces and barbed wire are the latest additions to the imagery of the Vista driving away whatever little activity that had circumvented the persistence of the imperial over the years after independence. Symbolically, the imperial order of the capitol complex is once again being engendered with domination and control (though in view of national security)

causing it to isolate itself from its citizens. The persistence of the imperial geometry and ideology has only reinforced this isolation.

4.5.2   Institutional persistence of the Imperial: Plan, Landscape and Buildings

In an ironic twist of fate, the City Beautiful and Garden City ideals which formed the origins of the plan (not its interpretation) seem to fit the valid justification for its preservation today in contrast to the chaotic urban conditions as seen in rest of the city. Time and again, it is the dual nature of imperialism that has accommodated two contrasting expressions and use of power in symbolizing the capital. New Delhi's British imperial legacy was inherited by Indians who subscribed to the tenets of Liberal Imperialism and viewed imperial planning as a device to achieve modernization all over India. This is evidenced from the fact that the imperial organization in Lutyens' plan was not only appreciated in New Delhi but also replicated in various other schemes all over the country. The Darulshafa Scheme (un-built scheme for a new government complex in Lucknow commissioned by the Uttar Pradesh government) was designed by the State PWD in the late 1940's where "the Council House sits at the head of the scheme with secretariats on either side of a Council Avenue in a classical Beaux Arts City Beautiful Manner."[146]

It is perhaps an institutional persistence of the imperial that was largely responsible for the
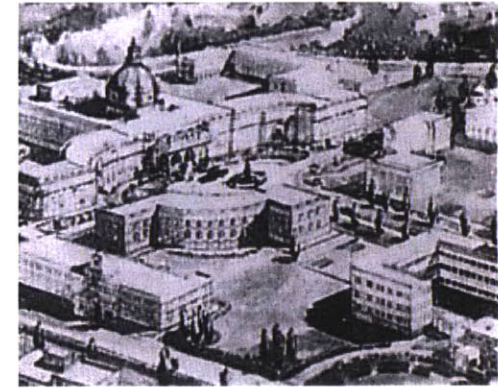
Fig.142 *Darulshafa Scheme, Lucknow*

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[146] Lang et al. (1997): 154.

propagation of imperial philosophy under the rhetoric of modernization and industrialization in Indian cities after independence. Not only was the first MPD (1962) set up with the help of foreign architects and planners from the Ford foundation, most of the Indian planners that took over from the British were either old stalwarts who were educated under British tutelage or newly returned western educated professionals subscribing to Nehru's brand of modernization. Architectural education was dispensed through the All India Council of Technical Education which too was based on the Royal Institute of British Architects' framework.[147] The idea of master planning was in itself a British legacy and not entirely suited to Delhi given its continued hyper immigrant growth. Problems assessed in 1962 (with short sighted projections till 1981) completely changed and compounded exponentially during the implementation phase of the MPD. The subsequent Five Year Plans too suffered the same fate where problems assessed at the commencement of the plan were entirely different by the time it was being implemented rendering the exercise fairly futile to begin with.

Where Lutyens' plan was not directly used as an inspiration, the MPD (which preserved almost all of its ideals in terms of architectural and planning practice) being the first Master Plan in the country, was used as a model for cities all around the country. "The Central and State PWDs and major Anglo-Indian architectural firms working in India continued to

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[147] Gangadhar, Keshav. *"Architectural Education in India: Directions to Build."* Unpublished undergraduate dissertation, School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi. (1991).

practice with little change, apart from personnel, until the 1960s. The building codes and regulations inherited from British practice continued to be used. Indeed they have proved to be remarkably resilient to changing political conditions, so much so that fifty years later they are still largely in place."[148] Most public buildings in the Capitol complex were designed by the PWD after independence as the government controlled all the land. "Many of the buildings such as Vayu Bhavan, Krishi Bhavan, Udyog Bhavan, Rail Bhavan, and the Supreme Court use *chujjas* and *chattris*, and are topped by domes to give an Indian character. They are really pastiches of Indian elements, following the forms established by Lutyens rather than capturing the spirit of Indian architectural heritage or of Lutyens' work."[149] This pastiche is also reflected in the design for the Ashoka Hotel (1955-56) in New Delhi by Revivalist architect Sris Chandra Chatterjee who was responding to the Lutyens context with a symbolic revival of Indian traditions almost reminiscent of the design brief of Baker and Lutyens themselves.

While "the aesthetic values of the British endured in the ranks of the PWD employees...."[150], a new generation of architects and planners was emerging (after the 1960s) from the shadows of western modernism and empiricism inspired by the works of Le Corbusier, Louis Kahn, Richard Neutra and Frank Lloyd Wright. Some of the later buildings

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[148] Lang et al. (1997): 190.

[149] Ibid., 206.

[150] Ibid., 194.

Fig.143 *Vayu Bhavan, CPWD designed*

Fig.144 *Supreme Court, CPWD designed*

Fig.145 *Ashoka Hotel, Sris Chatterjee*

Fig.146 *Sri Ram Center, Shivnath Prasad*

Fig.147 *Jawaharlal Nehru Library,*
Mansinh, M. Rana

in the Capitol complex like the Rabindra Bhavan (1959-61) by architect Habib Rahman, Sri Ram Center (1966-69) by Shivnath Prasad and Jawaharlal Nehru Library (1968-1969) by Mansinh M. Rana are clear inspirations from the listed modernist masters. Following the FAR changes proposed by the MPD (1962), multi-storey development sprung up around Connaught Place without any architectural or urban design guidelines. As seen from previous sections, the mobilization of the preservationist movement saved the day against undesirable development that was desecrating Lutyens' Delhi.

Almost in every way, Indian designs in New Delhi were dictated or shaped by built imperial realities of its colonial past. Just as for its British predecessors, the duplicitous nature of imperialism provided convincing justification for symbolic changes in meaning and propagation of imperial philosophies by Indian administrators. Finally, with the preservationist movement, the construction and persistence of the imperial hence has come full circle legitimizing the preservation of the imperial under the following justifications:

- **Plan** – Where preservation justified the basis of City Beautiful ideals to offer respite from the rest of the chaotic congested city
- **Landscape** – Where preservation justified the basis of the Garden City ideals to offer an ecological resource for the entire city
- **Buildings** – Where preservation justified the basis of protection from non responsive or non conforming contextual response to the imperial

4.6   CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the persistence of the imperial after independence may be better understood in the following phases:

- Intentional appropriation of Lutyens' Delhi was only limited to symbolic reinterpretation where democracy was superimposed on imperialism. Security concerns today threaten to peel off the symbolic decal of democracy, once again exposing an authoritarian imperial order of distance and control from citizens.

- Persistence of the imperial plan and its ideologies continued to persist through elitist socio-political power structures, under the rhetoric of modernization, institutional structures (based on the British system) and as a general rule of thumb from previous administrators. Some of these are true even today.

- Operating imperial ideologies at the center coupled with the lack of comprehensive planning (in a continuous hyper immigrant circumstance) caused irreparable damage and visible fractures in the urban fabric of the city. This is clear from the role that Lutyens' Delhi played in the steady degradation of Shahjahanabad and also (in part) the sprawl of the postcolonial city. As a result, the Capitol District today remains insular from the old city and the rest of the postcolonial development.

- Consequences of poor planning threaten the Capitol District and the city as a whole. Today urban development control is far greater at the center than the rest of the city.

- Re-assessment of the Capitol District vis-à-vis rest of the city provides the impetus for preservation. The persistence of the Imperial, largely responsible for creating the contrast between the Capitol District and the rest of the city is being preserved based on the contrast it created – one of a beautiful 'garden city' suburb and a congested, polluted and sprawling metropolis.

- Permanence of the Imperial - Intellectual argument justifying the origins of the plan and its corrected interpretation today coupled with the eco(logical) rationale of preservation comes full circle.

It may be fair to say all's well that ends well given the ironic twist in fate where the reformist ideals behind the plan's origins will finally be represented in its built form (owing to the preservationist movement). However, it remains a looming question that had the imperial not persisted, would there have been a better, equitable, livable and sustainable expression of democracy in New Delhi.

afterword *Thesis*

5.1   Final Remarks

True to it's time and place, the New Delhi plan was able to achieve the imperial order that the British intended to impress upon the people of India. Also true to the dual nature of imperialism, a unique dominion geometry was created by the British where power could be manipulated through **symbolism, policy and design** to represent two contrasting paradigms of imperialism and democracy. This was physically achieved through the reinterpretation of reformist urban design models (prevalent at the time) used to represent the idea of Imperial Rome in New Delhi. Hence, I strongly believe that the New Delhi plan was an appropriate urban design exercise given the inevitability of Indian independence. By accident or by design, the flexibility of the urban design plan in potentially being able to embrace two contrasting paradigms of imperialism and democracy (by careful manipulation of symbolism, policy and planning) remains a novel characteristic of the plan. True to its brief (using its power for 'evil'), in the colonial period, the plan aggressively propagated ideals of Conservative Imperialism and erased contextual identities by imposing a new geometric order over the city. Also potentially true, for the postcolonial period, careful manipulation of symbolism, policy and planning could have transformed the newly formed contextual identities and the power in the plan for the 'good' of democracy. Unfortunately, beyond symbolic change (after independence), this potential was left unexplored. Whether it was the practical implications of hyper immigrancy, elitist control over territory, vested political interests, institutional resistance or simply poor planning, the tenets of Conservative

Fig.148 *New Delhi*

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Existing and proposed patterns.
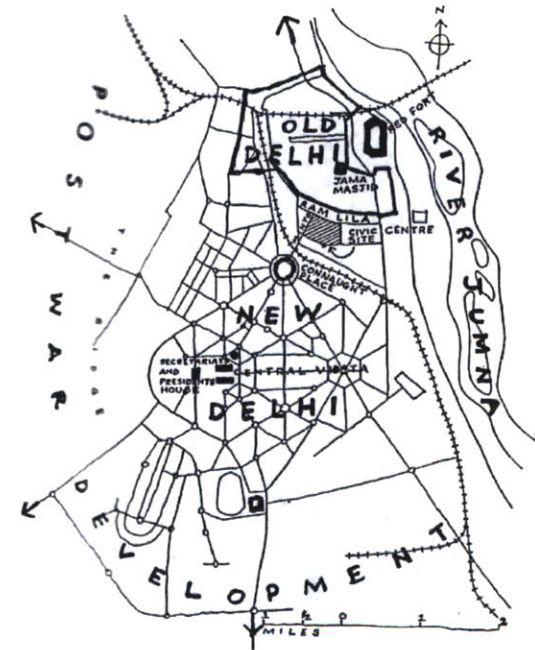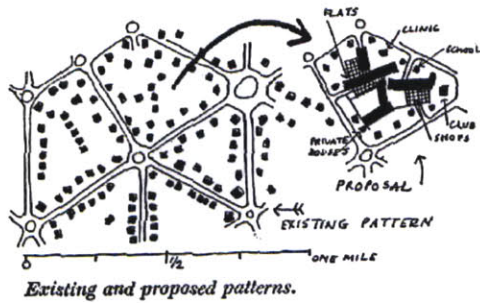
Fig.149 *Redensification proposals, Cullen*
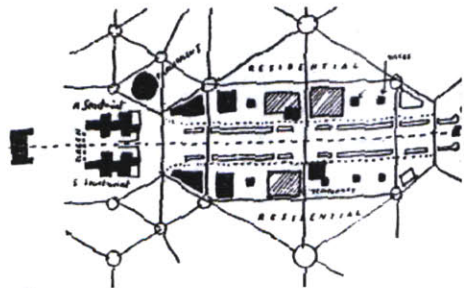
Fig.150 *Existing Central Vista*
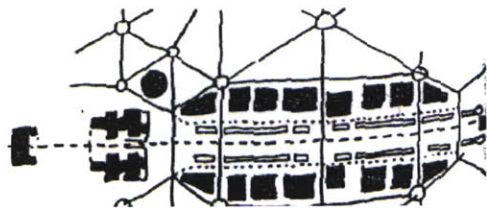
Fig.151 *Redensified Central Vista*

Imperialism have persisted and continue to operate in the heart of world's largest democracy. Perhaps in the derogatory sense (and not as Nehru meant) the Englishmen have left India but *Angreziat* (English ways) has persisted in the capital. Although the idea of preservation returns the plan to its original reformist roots (only in contrast to the chaos of the rest of the city – generated in part by the persistence of the imperial in the plan), it seems like a default solution lacking creativity and urban vision. On the other hand, neither Lutyens nor Baker would have imagined that the bungalows, as great architecture, would be preserved forever. Prof. Malay Chatterjee from the School of Planning and Architecture is a leading advocate of redensification of Lutyens' Delhi. His research at the Nehru Museum's oral history section reveals evidence that Lutyens himself told Soba Singh (contractor building Delhi) that he eventually envisaged a city of six stories high and hence his reasons for proposing such wide rights of way and magnificent tree planting.[151] Perhaps Lutyens saw the eventual development of his Indian Champs Elysees (Kingsway/Rajpath) in parallel to its French inspiration. However, Chatterjee's evidence remains challenged and the speculation that Delhi was conceived as a city that could increase in density once the Indians took over is a looming question. Therefore, those who understand Delhi's story are in a moral dilemma today – caught between preservation and the possibilities offered by exploring a calculated change in policy, planning and design of the capitol complex vis-à-vis

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[151] Chatterjee (1999): 118.

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In my own view, both ideas need to be studied carefully and the result should not be relegated to "either"/"or" solution but rather one that involves a combination of both (preservation and redensification) in defining a truly democratic urban environment fit for Delhi's diverse citizenry.

5.2 New Developments, Future research, Recommendations

There are numerous new developments that promise reform of the capital in recent years. Primary amongst them is the proposed Metro system[152] (partly operational) which can ensure not only equitable distribution of density and strategic development of economic zones but also promise easy movement between the Capitol complex and the rest of the city. The success of the metro greatly depends in its intermodel connectivity (buses and other forms of para transit) and a conscious effort to limit the use of the private automobile. Although the former is an intended goal, the latter is completely ignored with the ongoing additions of 'flyovers'[153] and widening of roads often seen as a symbol of development. Furthermore, some of these flyovers are poorly planned and executed by traffic engineers.[154] The subsequent Master Plans have been marginally successful in decentralizing activity through

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[152] For further information refer to Bagley, Saurabh. *"Delhi – One City Multiple Destinies: Impact of the Metro Rail on the Urban Form."* Unpublished, SMArchS. Thesis, MIT, 2003.

[153] Times News Network. *"Flyover above Flyover'."* in *Times of India*, New Delhi, Friday, January 7, 2005.; Sharma, Nidhi. *"Freeways, tube roads to decongest traffic."* in *Times of India*, New Delhi, Friday, January 7, 2005.

[154] Kala, Anant Vijay. *"Follow these signs and crash."* in *Hindustan Times*, Thursday, January 6, 2005.

Fig.152 *Delhi Metro map*
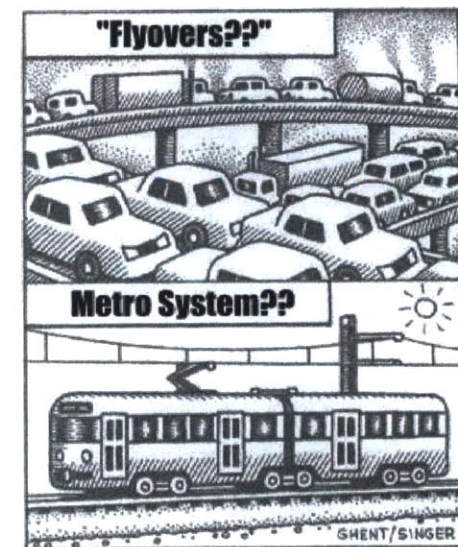
Fig.153 *Contradiction of Flyovers and the Metro*

Fig.154 *Commonwealth Games 2010, Delhi*

Fig.155 *Proposed venues for the games*

large district centers (in their bid for regional equity) but the decentralization of government functions remains a distant dream. With New Delhi's winning bid for the 2010 Commonwealth Games[155], the allocation of generous resources underwritten by the government (over $40 million[156]) shows a glimmer of hope in the possible regereration of Lutyens' Delhi. Unfortunately most of the development is centered on creating the city's waterfront on the banks of river Jamuna. The newly reconstituted Delhi Urban Arts Commission with Charles Correa (Chairman), Jasbir Sawhney, Mohammad Shaheer, Narayani Gupta and P.K. Pradhan (joint secretary, ministry of urban development)[157] offers a hopeful re-assessment of Lutyens' Delhi and its sustainable evolution in the future. With dilapidated conditions where most bungalows have outlived their economic life,[158] even preservation would require a substantial amount of rebuilding. Connaught Place is still listed as the Metropolitan City center in the draft MPD (2021).[159] It seems that some goals of the

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[155] For further information refer to Cherian, Danny. *"Pairing mega events and hydrological systems for urban sustainability: Strategy framework for Delhi beyond the Commonwealth Games 2010.* Unpublished, MCP Thesis, MIT, 2004.

[156] From: http://www.cwgdelhi2010.com/story/2004/8/23/12022/0523 Date Accessed: April 11, 2005.

[157] From: http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2005/04/01/stories/2005040101701700.htm Date Accessed: April 11, 2005.

[158] HT Correspondent. *"CPWD Buildings falling apart."* in *Hindustan Times*, December 29, 2004.

[159] Mukherjee, Anuradha. *"New Delhi needs more space in MPD 2021: NDMC Chief."* in *Hindustan Times*, Monday 3, 2005.

MPD (2021) are almost forty years old dating back to the MPD (1962).[160] The resources needed to upkeep the Capitol District's lavish greens still remains a question mark.[161] "While Shahjahanabad contains 44 protected buildings, its heritage value as an *urban* entity is elided."[162] Apart from its precedence for preservation over Shahjahanabad, Lutyens' Delhi's relationship with the old city remains estranged.

Ashok Kumar from the Department of Physical Planning, School of Architecture and Planning, has called New Delhi 'an inverted compact city' with low gross residential densities in the inner areas and high gross densities in the outer areas.[163] In conclusion from this thesis, it is largely the persistence of the imperial as a result of which Lutyens' Delhi violates the primary objectives put forth by Indian Urban Policy:[164]

- To achieve optimum social use of land
- To promote flexibility of land use to respond to changes in a growing city

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[160] Sharma, Nidhi. *"Some MPD-2021 goals are 40-yr-old."* in *Times of India*, Tuesday, January 4, 2005.

[161] Sinha, Saurabh. *"Debate over CP's Central Park."* in *Hindustan Times*, January 6, 2005.

[162] From: http://www.india-seminar.com/2003/530/530%20a.g.%20krishna%20menon.htm Date Accessed: April 11, 2005.

[163] Kumar, Ashok. *"The Inverted Compact City of Delhi"* in Jenks, Mike and Burgess, Rod. *Compact Cities: Sustainable Urban Forms for Developing Countries.* (London, U.K.: SPON Press, Tailor and Francis Group, 2000): 153-166.

[164] Chatterjee (1999): 119.
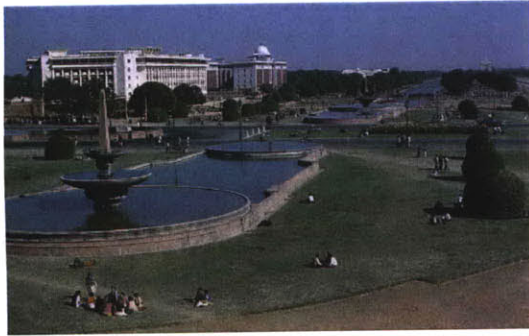
Fig.156 *Return of Lutyens' Delhi to the common man*

Fig.157 *Assimilating the two cores*

- To widen the base of land ownership and thus safeguard the interests of weaker sections of society

The issue of true democracy returns one to question the preservation of elitism, impermeability and territoriality within the heart of the city. Whether it is the return of the Acropolis and its imperial framework to the common man, or the empowerment of the Agora to coexist with the acropolis, a new vision of reform is immediately required for Lutyens' Delhi. Below are some recommendations (towards future research) to planners, architects, preservationists, politicians and the patient citizens of New Delhi:

- Improved public transit access and pedestrianization in the Capitol District
- Limiting private automobile use within the district through strict parking policy, congestion pricing and other innovative means
- Decentralization of ancillary government functions away from the Capitol complex
- Careful redensification of the bungalow zone by vertical consolidation of built up areas – preserving green space and its return to the public
- Conduct studies to explore possibilities in redensifying strategic corridors corresponding to the metro line within the capitol district
- Development of mixed land use projects to ensure regional equity and access
- Return of Lutyens' Delhi to the common man – programming of public space, mixed land use, cultural and commercial development and improved public access

- Assimilating the two cores - improved and explicit relationship (functional and symbolic) with the old city of Shahjahanabad
- Sustainable preservation of the old city of Shahjahanabad
- Strict development guidelines with adequate enforcement to maintain a unified character of the Capitol District
- Public private partnerships to generate resources and development
- Public education and awareness programs aimed at enshrining civic pride

These are just a few of the directions that future research in policy, planning and design can be considered based on my thesis of *Colonial construction and Postcolonial persistence of the Imperial in the New Delhi plan*. I can only hope that the administrators of the city realize the urgent need of a comprehensive vision plan to regenerate and reintegrate the 'resolutely detached' capitol district with the rest of the city.

Thank You

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49	Volwahsen (2002): 203.
50	Volwahsen (2002): 46.
51	Volwahsen (2002): 38.
52	Volwahsen (2002): 48.
53	Volwahsen (2002): 66-67.
54	Volwahsen (2002): 71.

FIGURE	SOURCE
55	Volwahsen (2002): 37.
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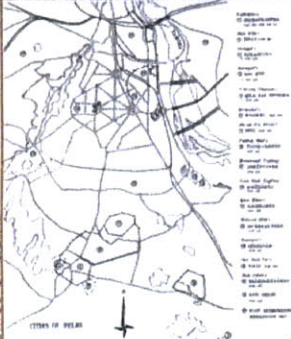| FIGURE	SOURCE
111	http://www.taleblazing.com/1998/trip_to_agra/india_gate_sunrise.jpg
112	By Author
113	Singh et al. (2001): 86.
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152	http://www.urbanrail.net/as/delh/delhi-map.gif
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DOMINION GEOMETRIES

PERSISTENCE OF THE "IMPERIAL" IN THE POST-COLONIAL DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE PLAN FOR NEW DELHI
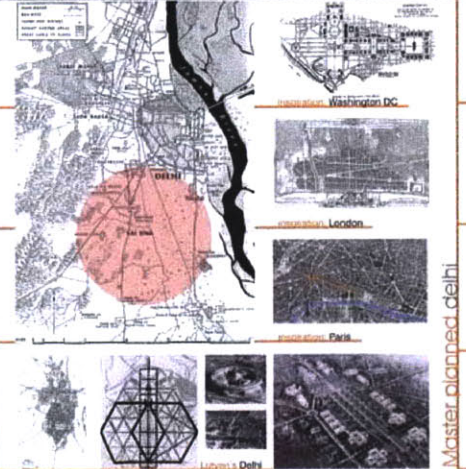
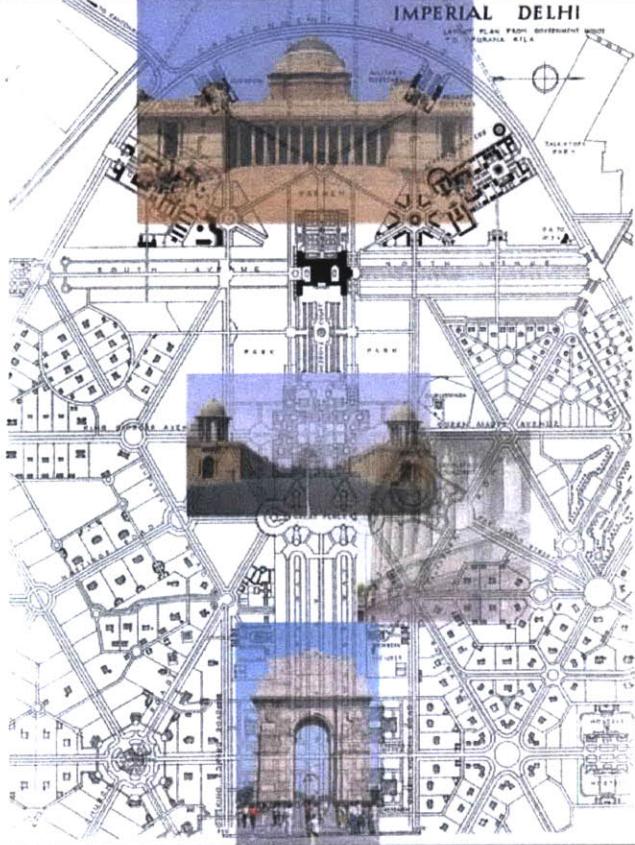**1024 – 1947**   **1911 – 1931**   **1947 – PRESENT**

IMPERIAL DELHI

DELHI PALIMPSEST

New Delhi, the capital of India, is often referred to as India's super metro. Covering an area of 1486 sq. km. today, the union territory of Delhi presents a palimpsest of 3500 years of history and splendor in the remains of many cities built, abandoned, plundered, renovated and rebuilt by succeeding waves of time. Delhi has a history of nearly four centuries of urban planning since Shahjahan's old Delhi (1638) through Lutyens' New Delhi (1912) and the continuing master planned Delhi (1957 onwards). In the past, this strong tradition of planning has often been informed or perpetuated by events of political upheaval. These include the Mughal occupation of India (pre-nineteenth century), East India Company defeating the Mughals in 1803 and taking over Delhi, shifting the British capital of India from Calcutta to New Delhi (1911) and finally the partition & independence of the country in 1947.

MOTIVATION FOR RESEARCH

This research is contextualized in British colonial Delhi; tracing all criticalities in the purpose, evolution and realization of Lutyens' master plan for the city. Perpetuated by the unique political circumstance of India's independence from the British shortly after the capital's completion, the study proceeds to discuss the adaptation/democratization of the plan to the physical, political and socio-cultural landscapes of postcolonial New Delhi to the present day

Many believe that the Lutyens' scheme disregarded traditional housing prototypes and promoted social segregation and imperial philosophies. However, New Delhi was not created out of a vacuum. Although it erased identities or some of its original constituent elements, its inorganic geometry can still be attributed to the defined land boundaries of the villages acquired by the British administration. The Anglo Indian vocabulary of its architecture framed within Garden City (England) and City Beautiful (America) ideals came to symbolize British rule and also the freedom from it. By accident or by design, certain contextual relationships, clues of evolution as seen from inspirations (Washington D.C., Paris and London) used for the plan and other critical design values were left behind irrespective of the imperial postage of its departed creators.

A post-colonial rationalization of the plan had already started with the hope of independence. Whether it was Mahatma Gandhi's intention (prior to independence) to convert the Vice regal Lodge into a public hospital for symbolic reasons, the transfer of formal building functions at the time of independence or the guidelines instituted by the planning authority after independence a systematic adaptation/democratization took place resulting in "a kind of an overgrown capitol complex, resolutely detached from the rest of the city." This study dismisses the populist notion that the imperial plan being a dominion geometry was singly responsible for the present state of the capitol complex. It proceeds to clarify the merits/limitations of the plan and its possible evolution vs. the land use policies, planning directives and urban design guidelines instituted for adaptation/democratization through successive master plans by the city administration after independence.

HOW AND WHY HAS THE "IMPERIAL" PERSISTED IN THE SPATIAL ORGANIZATION/PLANNING OF POST-COLONIAL NEW DELHI?

ANUBHAV GUPTA MCP/SMARCHS/UDC | ADVISORS: PROF. LAWRENCE J. VALE, PROF. JUILAN BEINART | READERS: TBD

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DOMINION GEOMETRIES
COLONIAL CONSTRUCTION AND POSTCOLONIAL PERSISTENCE OF THE IMPERIAL IN THE NEW DELHI PLAN

New Delhi is not only the capital of India but the capital of the world's largest democracy. Conceived and built by the British, the New Delhi plan translated British India's home policy verbatim in sandstone. The government's administrative hierarchy and centralization of power was directly represented in the physical plan that impressed its magnificence and power over a country awakening to freedom. A realized grand vision, imperial plan in an ideologically contradictory circumstance of independence and democracy is the unique departure point for this work. Divided in two parts corresponding to the colonial and postcolonial timeframes, this thesis attempts to answer the central questions of:

- *How was the Imperial constructed in colonial Delhi?*
- *How and why has it persisted in the postcolonial evolution of New Delhi?*

At the macro level, this research engages intersecting themes of political ideology, physical planning, policy, culture and evolution in contemporary city form. The motivation for this research emerges from my own subscription to the fact that "[New Delhi today is] a kind of an overgrown capitol complex, resolutely detached from the rest of the city." In my view, it is the persistence or resistance of the "Imperial" in the post colonial democratization of New Delhi that is largely responsible for the fractures in the city's identity, urban form, sustenance and evolution.

Anubhav Gupta

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