

Chapter 6

Sustainable Urban Management of the Mainstream and the Margin: Reflecting on Delhi and Its Peri-Urban Transformation



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Abstract The city of Delhi and its peripheries have undergone profound changes in the last two centuries owing to both a rise in the population and an increase in economic growth, causing tremendous changes in the overall land use pattern. The recent trends in the urban development post-economic liberalisation indicate a sharp turn in transforming Delhi into a global city that highly serves the purpose of the ‘capital’ and therefore the very goal of neoliberalisation. The opening up of the Indian economy to the international markets has essentially changed the politico-administrative arrangements which are strongly getting reflected in the overall context of the development of the large cities. Examples can be drawn from the ambitions expressed by the government to make Delhi a ‘world-class city’ and the hosting of landmark events as prominent steps towards such transformation. This framework of development often counters the concerns of building an inclusive city and intensifies the polarisation process. The chapter reflects upon the transformation of the peri-urban space of NCR Delhi and the redefinition of the urban landscape following the ideology of world-class development. First, it presents a broader picture of the overall development of the peri-urban Delhi by discussing the pattern of change reflected in its physicality as well as the sociality, and second, it initiates a discussion to examine the role of media advertising, especially of the real-estate housing market in reinvigorating the meaning of the urban.

Keywords Urban transformation · Peri-Urban · Growth · Development · Media representation

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Introduction

In the process of locating Delhi in the discourse of urban development, it is imperative to understand both its past and present trends of growth and characterisation of the city space. The city of Delhi and its peripheries have undergone tremendous changes in the last two centuries owing to both a rise in the population and an increase in economic growth, causing enormous changes in the overall land use pattern. However, the recent trends in the urban development post-economic liberalisation of the early 1990s indicate a sharp turn in transforming the capital into a global city that highly serves the purpose of the ‘capital’ and therefore the very goal of neoliberalisation. The opening up of the Indian economy to the international markets essentially changed the politico-administrative arrangements, marked by the state’s partial withdrawal from many age-old sectors as well as increasing private intervention¹ and refashioning the overall context of the development in the large cities. In this place, examples can be drawn from the ambitions expressed in the Master Plan for Delhi as ‘vision 2021’ as the government officially declared its objective to make Delhi a ‘world-class city’ and the 2010 Commonwealth Games preparation as one of the landmark events as a prominent step taken towards such transformation (DDA 2007). The intent is also pronounced in the recurring slogans of the chief ministers of Delhi to materialise the dream of making Delhi a ‘world-class destination’ and to make it the ‘best city in the world’. All these intentions following the neoliberal framework of development also counter the concerns of building an equitable as well as inclusive city as per the stated agendas of the National Urban Renewal Mission and intensify the polarisation process—what can much rather be referred to as the ‘politics of forgetting’², (Fernades 2004).

The chapter focuses on the transformation of the peri-urban space of the NCR³ Delhi and the redefinition of the urban landscape following the ideology of world-class development. It is divided into two sections. The first offers a broader introduction to the tenets of development at the peri-urban Delhi by discussing two key elements, one the pattern of change reflected in the physicality and two the main actors or beneficiaries of such development as its central intellectual motifs. The second section then extends the discussion to examine the mediating role of media advertising, especially in the real-estate housing market in reinvigorating the meaning of the urban, more importantly of the development at the peripheries. This, thereby, is expected to provide an overview of the dichotomous spatial pattern in the peri-urban development of the capital city and complement the strand of existing literature on the growth of Delhi as a city of world-class importance as well as understanding the socio-cultural consequences of the process of urban restructuring.

¹ For example, in Delhi, electricity distribution was privatised as well as the solid-waste management (Vinayak and Ghosh 2006; cited in Dupont 2011).

² ‘Politics of forgetting’ marks the ‘political-discursive process’ through which the marginalised are rendered invisible within the dominant political culture where a particular section of the population has been given the upper hand on monopolising the space.

³ National Capital Region—NCR.

Data and Methodology

The first part of the analysis is mostly based on the existing literature on the growth of Delhi and the physical as well as the social impact of its expansion to the peripheries. In correspondence to that, some quantitative techniques have been applied to construct maps that can substantiate the change with visual interpretations and calculations that can aid in understanding the changes over the period. To find out the degree or level of urbanisation, an urban-rural ratio has been calculated and to trace the pace of urbanisation annual exponential growth has been calculated using census data.

The methodology for constructing the maps is explained in different steps as follows.

Step.1: To analyse changes of urban expansion over time, a set of three Landsat images were acquired for the years 1990 (TM), 2000 (TM) and 2015 (OLI/TIRS). Geometrically and radiometrically corrected images were procured from the online source of the Earth Resources Observation and Science (EROS) Data Centre of the US Geological Survey (USGS) (<http://earthexplorer.usgs.gov>) in GeoTIFF format.

The source of data and their characteristics are given in Table 6.1.

Step.2: Data pre-processing.

Step.3: The satellite data was analysed using remote sensing tools.

Step.4: Digital classification techniques were used to group pixels to represent land cover features through supervised classification.

Step.5: Using the classification techniques created land use and land cover classification of Delhi NCR (1990, 2000, and 2015) divided into six following classes: (1) Water body, (2) Built-up area, (3) Vegetation, (4) Agricultural land, (5) River bed and (6) Arawali ridge.

Step.6: Accuracy assessment: The accuracy of LULC maps produced was evaluated using overall accuracy (OA), producer's accuracy (PA), user's accuracy (UA) and Kappa statistics.

Step.7: Grid analysis prepared through ArcGIS spatial analysis tool in ArcGIS software.

Step.8: With the help of ArcGIS software, all layouts (maps) have been made.

Table 6.1 Details of spatial data used for this study

Data	Data types	Source of data	Details about data	Period
Landsat TM	Spatial	USGS satellite images	(30 m resolution) Path 147, 146 and Raw 40, 41	August 1990, January 2000
Landsat 8 OLI	Spatial	USGS satellite images	(PAN 15 m, 30 m resolution) Path 147, 146 and Raw 40, 41	November 2015

The second part of the analysis is based mostly on the actual images from the field, and printed advertisements in the leading daily newspapers with some banners and hoarding found around the Delhi agglomeration over the period between 2017 and 2019. The newspapers have been selected owing to their highest circulation rate and therefore a better probability of receiving advertisements. In this place, it is also important to state that mostly the single page advertisements have been taken into account assuming they have a larger scope of influencing the masses. While most real-estate advertisements have been taken into account for the analysis, the review of the advertisement includes details such as the location of the property, the title and price range, the byline as well the accompanying text and a description of the images taken into consideration. In addition to the newspapers, the banners and hoardings also appeared to be an ideal lens which can provide a dimension of the changes that are prominently being desired as well as taking shape to serve the locals, aiming the global. The aim of such an analysis, following Fernandes (2000), is not to deconstruct individual images but to weave them together first to identify particular themes within the images and texts and second to gain a perspective on the current pattern of urban development in the neoliberal city, aspiring to fit onto an international imagination. For this purpose, more focus has been given to the thematic interpretation of the visual and the textual descriptions of the properties aiming towards understanding the promotional intent, rather than assessing the effectiveness.

Images portrayed in the print media through advertisements and big hoardings have prominent spatial connotations which have significant relevance for the present study. In this case, it is expected that image-making is a part of the marketing strategies of the real-estate developers and, therefore, is responsible, in a major way, for remaking the meaning of the 'urban' and the (re)construction of urban places both in physical terms and as imaginary spaces. The argument in this place centred around the fact that globalisation in India has created a certain kind of ambitious vision of the urban which led to the restructuring of the urban space keeping in mind a particular category of people and a particular mode of production. The specific questions that are being addressed are: How is the urban being placed in front of the masses through the representations? And what are the dominant modes of development in contemporary cities? This essentially prepares the base for building further arguments on the changing material condition as well as the sense of place of the people in the cities, falling into different socio-economic categories.

Results and Discussion

Understanding the City Spaces, Its Peripheries and Apprehending the Changes in the Process of Urban Growth

Where precolonial Delhi has ‘no suburbs in the sense of people moving out of a crowded city’, the idea of the city expanding to its peripheries has prominently been a nineteenth-century phenomenon as the high-end residential enclaves started appearing dominantly. Therefore, the changes in the metropolitan nature of the city have particularly come to notice since the neoliberal policies of the 1990s. However, the class remained a determining element in the manner in which the peri-urban expands as the spatial processes operate differently for the upper-class population and the working class while the role of private enterprises continues to be critical in restructuring the traditional borders of the capital city. The section, therefore, divides the discussion into two parts: first, identifying the city as purely a physical entity to understand the changes in its marginal territory and second, exploring the social dimension of the growth of the city by treating it as a social entity (Table 6.2).

Table 6.2 Year-Wise variation in the degree of urbanisation and pace of urbanisation in Delhi

Census year	Degree of urbanisation			Pace of urbanisation		
	Percentage of urban population	Percentage of rural population	Urban–rural ratio	Annual Expo. growth rate (in %) of total population	Annual Expo. growth rate (in %) of urban population	Annual Expo. growth rate (in %) of rural population
1901	52.7	47.2	111.7	–	–	–
1911	57.6	42.5	135.3	0.20	1.6	–0.86
1921	62.3	37.7	165.4	1.7	2.5	0.45
1931	70.3	29.7	237.0	2.6	3.9	0.27
1941	75.8	24.2	313.0	3.7	4.4	1.63
1951	82.4	17.6	468.2	6.4	7.5	3.22
1961	88.6	11.3	788.6	4.2	5.0	–0.26
1971	89.7	10.3	871.1	4.3	4.4	3.37
1981	92.7	7.3	1275.6	4.2	4.6	0.77
1991	89.9	10.1	892.7	4.2	3.8	7.41
2001	93.2	6.8	1366.1	3.8	4.2	–0.05
2011	97.5	2.5	3906.3	1.9	2.4	–8.13

Source Computed from Census of India, A-Series, Paper 2, Rural–Urban Distribution of Population

Table 6.3 District-wise growth rate of population in NCT Delhi

Districts	Annual exponential growth rate (in %)			Decadal growth rate (in %)		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
NCT of Delhi	1.92	-8.13	2.38	21.21	-55.65	26.83
North-West	2.45	-2.15	2.82	27.81	-19.37	32.64
North	1.28	-9.65	1.69	13.62	-61.91	18.41
North-East	2.37	-18.83	3.11	26.78	-84.79	36.49
East	1.55	-16.41	1.66	16.79	-80.63	18.02
New Delhi	-2.32	-	-2.32	-20.72	-	-20.72
Central	-1.04	-	-1.04	-9.91	-	-9.91
West	1.78	-26.04	2.17	19.46	-92.60	24.23
South-West	2.67	-4.51	3.40	30.65	-36.27	40.51
South	1.87	-25.79	2.56	20.51	-92.42	29.13

Source Computed from primary census abstract of Delhi, 2001, 2011

(a) Delhi as a Physical entity: Tracing the Transformation of Spatial Morphology of the City in Expansion

Delhi is a fast-growing metropolitan city where the population has grown at a remarkable rate of 21.21 between the year 2001 and 2011 and at a rate of 46.31 in the previous decade⁴ (Tables 6.3 and 6.4). With migration contributing as a major factor in the growth of the urban agglomeration, Delhi has been listed as the most urbanised state in India with a 97.5% urban population⁵ and is tend to reach nearly 40 million by 2030. This extortionate population growth is contributing largely to the spatial expansion of the city outward to the peripheries, which further creates a fuzzy socio-spatial relation at the margins. As shown in Fig. 6.1, the urban sprawl, however, follows a specific direction following the major roads and thereby establishing a connection between the peripheral towns of Gurgaon, Faridabad, Ghaziabad, NOIDA and Greater NOIDA, located in adjoining states of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. This de facto urban relationship made Delhi India's largest metropolis at around 30 million (2020 projected population), also illustrating the complex management system of the expanding megacities beyond any practicable limits.

Nevertheless, with the saturation of the city centre in terms of growth along with its exorbitant real-estate prices, the present-day growth is taking place mostly at the peripheries, often following a certain corridor of development (Table 6.4). Such peri-urban pockets are, therefore, experiencing new forms of urban development aiming at particular cultural as well as social communities. It should be highlighted here that while the city centre is still a mix of both cheaper and high-end options, the newly urbanising suburbs are mostly maintaining a class factor in building their

⁴ Census of India, 2001, 2011.

⁵ Census of India, 2011.

Table 6.4 Directional rate of city expansion (in percentage)

Direction	Directional rate of expansion in percentage		
	15 km buffer	30 km buffer	45 km buffer
East	184	432	289
North	145	892	712
North-East	86	383	393
North-West	23	385	364
South	82	390	373
South-East	121	876	243
South-West	148	438	890
West	84	416	219

Source Calculated by the Researcher

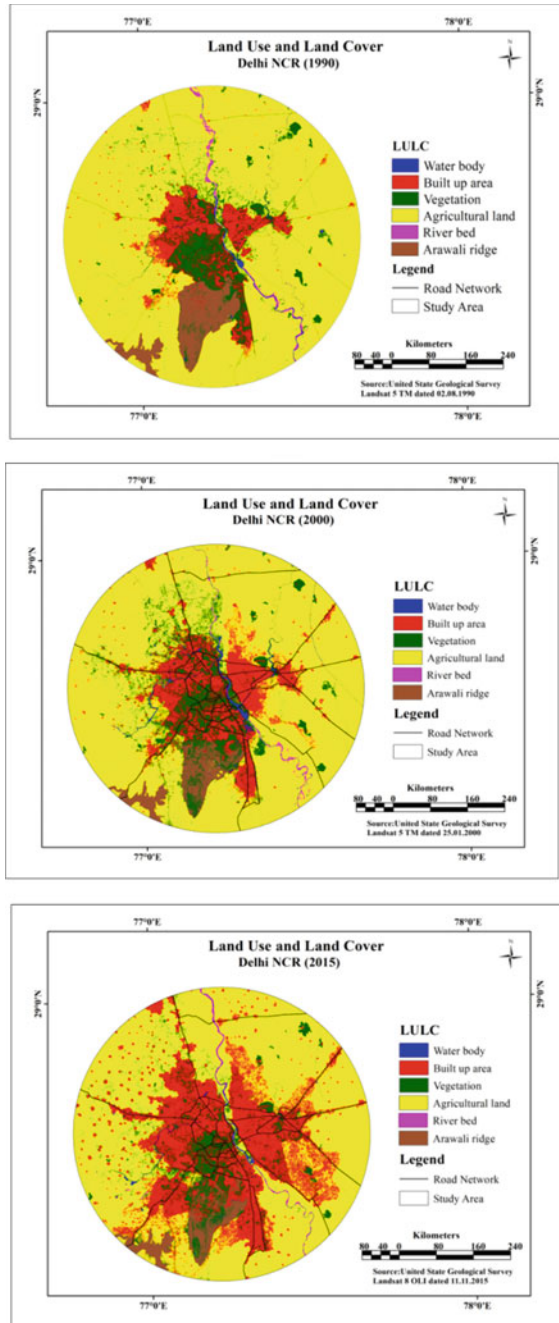
infrastructure. Such restructuring of urban spaces further keeps the people belonging to lower economic strata out from such urban development even when they often are expelled from the core and forced to move to the periphery.

Therefore, with Delhi's sprawl following certain paths (Fig. 6.2, Table 6.2), the most phenomenal changes are visible along with the ring towns, projected as the hub of new economic opportunities and constructed and marketed largely by private entities. These specific pockets within the margin are characterised by mushrooming high-end elevated structures, mostly residential complexes with shopping malls⁶ and commercial centres. Therefore, a two-sided pattern emerges at the peri-urban, where on the one hand, older imprints are continually dissolving, and on the other hand, the newer urban neighbourhood is emerging, bearing a specific class identity. Although historically Delhi has a long-standing practice of image-building as a capital city and a background of urban cleansing⁷ in the name of development, the obsession with elitist urbanism gained acceleration following the neoliberal framework and strengthened with the international frame of reference. Such a model of urban development lead to a 'certain repetition and standardisation' of urban forms, manifested through the proliferation of similar-looking high-rises and gated communities, emergence of gigantic shopping complexes and business centres as well as multiplication of flyovers and infrastructural networks (Dupont 2011). As noted by Dupont (2011), the pervasiveness of the 'global city model' has also become a 'reference point' for various politicians as well as vision makers for 'climbing up a hierarchy' overlooking the issue of its problematic implementation and socio-political as well as economic contexts.

⁶ With the first mall opened in 2001 in South Delhi and Gurgaon, there are nearly 100 shopping malls in Delhi metropolitan area today, making it the 'default mall capital of India' (The Economic Times, May 18, 2015).

⁷ Examples can be taken from massive slum clearance operations during the period of emergency (1975–1977) and demolitions marked by the beautification drive during the Asian games, 1982 (Dupont 2011).

Fig. 6.1 Change in the land use land cover of Delhi NCR 1990–2015



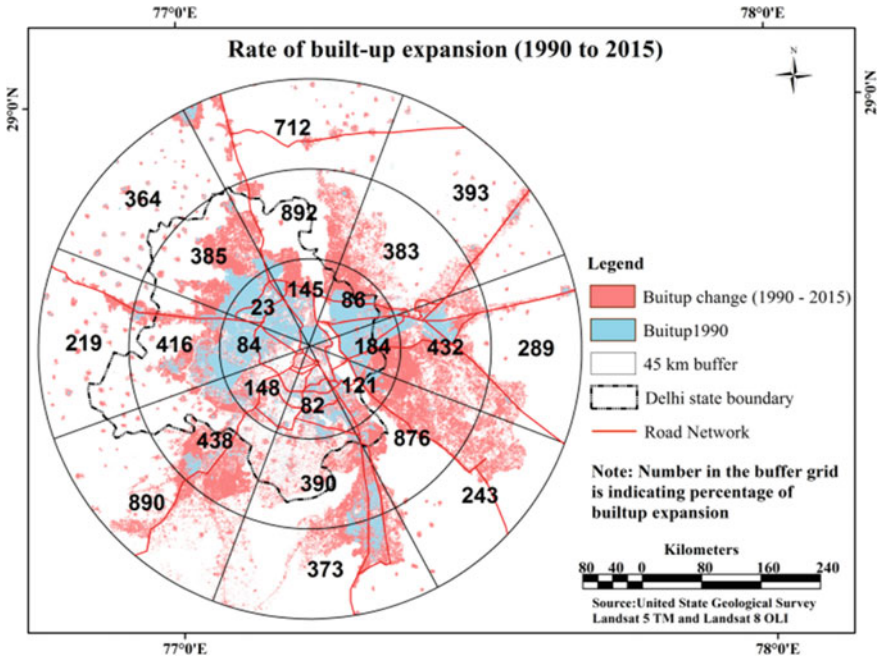


Fig. 6.2 Rate of change in the build-up expansion (1990–2015). *Source* Constructed by the researcher

On that account, one of the fundamental forces that are shaping the contemporary peri-urban is the rapid escalation of the land values which further leads the state actors tapping into the real-estate markets to ensure large-scale financial gains and greater control over the spatial change of the urban. This politics of land management focusing on the political economy of land monetisation has a substantial impact on the emerging spatial pattern of peri-urban development, where Goldman termed such phenomena as ‘speculative urbanism’ as the state continues to facilitate corporate land speculation towards building world-class infrastructure. This ‘real-estate turn’ is also in conformity with the seminal work of Harvey on the tendencies of over-accumulation of capital resulting in increased investment in the ‘secondary circuit’ that essentially encompasses investment in the built environment.

As constructions are taking place at a rapid rate to ensure profit maximisation from the land appropriation along with the promise of a world-class future, many of the residential units are said to be bought as investments rather than for living purposes. However, placing Delhi in such a framework of world-class city development also reveals the existence of a vast pool of unsold residential properties along with stalled real-estate projects owing to the financial crisis. Examples of over-accumulation can be taken from the ghost societies of Greater NOIDA, the Faridabad region as well as the areas along the Dwarka expressway, etc., where the construction of properties has not responded well to the market forces. This can be attributed to the fact that the

private builders are mostly catering to the affluent population⁸ where the property prices are largely beyond the reach of the majority marking a significant shortage of housing for the lower-income population.⁹ As noted by Ghertner (2015a, b), the average prices of the newly constructed flats today is often a hundred times the mean annual income of the average Delhi population, making it impossible for a larger share of the citizen to purchase a piece of property in the city. A large amount of this unsold inventory also has been reported creating a vicious cycle discouraging customers from buying flats in those areas even after massive price corrections across the peri-urban Delhi to escalate the demand. The peri-urban in actual ground reality is characterised by the unstable land claims that are contradictory to the urban illusion created by the developers and as portrayed in the mainstream media; to quote Ghertner (2015a, b), the transformation at the margin is shaped by ‘empty income projections’ leading to the production of ‘empty apartment buildings’ while the ‘invisibilised poverty trends’ keep on replacing the low-income areas by high-end properties that a few can afford.

Contemporary Delhi, therefore, is redefining itself with multiple processes superimposing on the other which as explained by Roy (2003) is a ‘deliberated’ and ‘informalised process’ often in violation of the official Master Plans but informally endorsed by the state. With examples from India’s largest shopping mall complex to be built on Delhi’s southern ridge violating the land use provisions of the Delhi Master Plan and an adjacent slum settlement designated as illegal by the DDA for creating nuisance to the middle-class residences being demolished without compensation, the fallacy of the ‘plan-ness’ of the urban space in Delhi has often surfaced prominently. According to the aesthetic mode of governing, therefore, one should be careful between whatever ‘looks planned’ and is defined as legal and something that does not look ‘world-class’ and sanctioned as unplanned and not desirable as being part of the city. This also brings out the grey areas of development and contradicts the categorical characteristics of ‘urban-ness’ by producing ‘layers of differences’.

(b) Delhi as a Social entity: The Dominance of Elite and the Emergence of Middle Class in the Urban Space and the Consequences for the poor

Following the ‘globalisation’ aspects and the influence of an international model of modernisation, as advocated by Sandhu and Sandhu (2007) there is significant social transformation owing to the reshaping of the societies with respect to the various micro- and macro-level social processes that are very specific to the concept of ‘globalising cites’. This urban restructuring with a strong element of socio-spatial inequalities is described as the ‘new spatial order’ by Marcuse and Kampen (2000), while Banerjee-Guha (2002) preferably calls it a ‘socio-spatial disorder’ in explaining the situation in the Indian context. Therefore, on the one hand, the removal of the

⁸ Dupont (2011), Ghertner (2015a, b).

⁹ As pointed out by economic survey, a total 95.6% of housing shortage is within the economically weaker section. Source <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-32644293>.

poor from the visible part of the city marks the emergence of ‘bourgeois environmentalism’,¹⁰ on the other hand, the high consumption capability of the elites and the emergence of the new middle class¹¹ with class aspirations have played a critical role in modifying the urban landscape of the capital city and its peripheries, appeared as the ‘hybridised form of globality’ (Fernandes 2000).

In such a scenario, where the capital has been portrayed as the embodiment of ‘India Shining’, the poor are often considered as the ‘disturbing elements’ and to ‘mar the image’ of the nation (Fig. 6.3). From farming communities being evicted from their traditional dwelling places to the relocation of the families¹² to the city’s far reaches and to the pitiful conditions of the workers at the construction sites, the poor suffered the most in materialising the dream of a clean-beautiful-modernised vision of the world-class Delhi. Building the global city, therefore, is contradicted by the act of marginalisation where the process of eradication, as well as consignment of the working class, are indicative of the state’s attempt to enforce a new urban restructuring that can live up to the vision of the aspiring global city, supported by the consumer attitudes of the upper class. In this place, as highlighted by Broudehoux (2007), it can be said that the image building of a city is highly synonymous with its ‘social beautification’.

In order to maintain the global vision of urban, the state has formulated policies to reclaim the public spaces and manage them that can satisfy the upper-class desires. The example of such a ‘bourgeois dream of remaking the city’ is also prominent in the change in the governance pattern and is visible in the formulation of urban programs. The Bhagidari scheme in Delhi launched in 2000 as a citizen-government partnership reflects one of such transformations as this is highly inspired by the theories of corporate governance (Srivastava 2009). With the introduction of the scheme, unlike the conventional participatory governance that usually targets the urban poor, the middle class, therefore, have given more authority to claim the city as the program provides an opportunity to control the urban spaces which otherwise can be seen as an excellent program to establish participatory democracy and inclusiveness. In this place, Srivastava (2009) questions the outcome of the scheme which strictly defines who ‘belongs’ to the urban spaces and put forth how it is limiting the rights of many ‘unwanted’ while expanding the claims of a few on the basis of class dynamism. Therefore, as underlined by Ramakrishnan (2013), the matter of class often becomes the sole factor in the process of urban restructuring while criminality and illegality are

¹⁰ Baviskar (2003, 2010).

¹¹ The McKinsey report by the NCAER’s data, titled ‘Bird of Gold: The Rise of India’s Consumer Class’ predicted India’s class distribution by 2015 and claimed that over the next two decades, the middle class will grow to more than 40% of the population from the current 5%. In the report, McKinsey also prepared a chart called ‘escaping poverty’ showing people moving up the ‘imagine income ladder’ where the poor has been portrayed as the future rich people. India has thus been showcased as the epitome of future investment opportunity and one of the world’s largest consumer market (Information derived from Ghertner 2015a, b).

¹² From 1990, since Delhi government adopted a new slum policy, until 2007, around 65,000 families had been relocated to the resettlement colonies located at the distant urban peripheries (Dupont 2011).

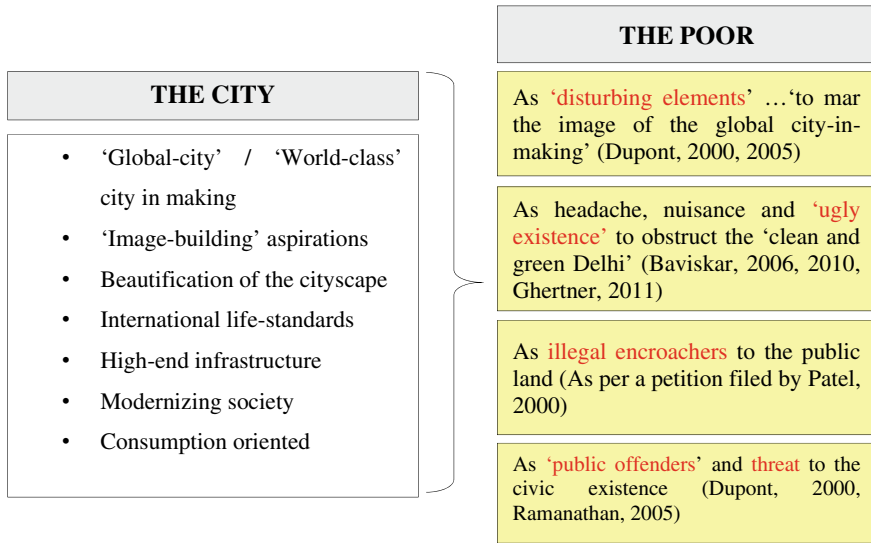


Fig. 6.3 Trend in urban development versus the representation of the poor in the capital city. *Source* Constructed by the author

increasingly being associated with the poor and their practices in the urban spaces. This particular context of the emergence of class identity as the neighbourhood associations called Resident Welfare Associations (RWA) and the changing political nature of the government of Delhi¹³ sets the precondition for analysing the spatial practices at the peri-urban and reflects the current frame of urban development in major cities of India.

As Delhi's recent development confirms the trend envisioned by Harvey (1989), the shift to entrepreneurialism in urban governance involving speculative construction of the idea of a city and therefore 'creation of an attractive urban imagery', the next section tries to explore the reality through visual images from the field in the peri-urban as well as the real-estate advertisements portraying the vision of the aspiring global city.

¹³ The formulation of the Bhagidari (meaning 'collaborative partnership') programme has been seen as an attempt to decentralise the system of urban governance in India. The aim of the scheme was to provide both the government and the citizen a common ground to solve problems and manage public assets; however, the changing role of the RWA drew criticism for not including a larger segment of population, i.e. the poor. Therefore, while the programme strengthened the role of the middle class in the city, their activities, having a strong class interest, in many ways have been directed against the urban poor. RWA's protests against affirmative actions and Master Plans guidelines to regularise illegal commercial establishments operated by the low-income residents are some of the examples (Chakrabarti 2008).

Examining the Trend of Urban Development Through Visual Images

A shift in the urban development, as well as governance away from social redistribution to becoming the sole engine of growth in alliance with the private capital, has largely been deployed by the strategies of city branding and the very construction of the image and narrative of ‘world-class’. Such a discourse found its theoretical base in the literature of urban entrepreneurialism conceived by David Harvey in 1989 and practically draws its reference from the understanding of the politics of visibility in Mumbai city by Fernandes (2004) and the scrutiny of the urban images of the city of Ahmedabad,¹⁴ by Renu Desai (2012).¹⁵ Therefore, whereas Harvey (1989) highlights the aspect of reorienting priorities from urban managerialism to urban entrepreneurialism, Fernandes (2004) and Desai and Sanyal (2012) are found to work towards understanding the strategies of place marketing to shape the entrepreneurial city and the resultant implications of such practices on the people of the city.

With a similar objective, this section, therefore, briefly examines the dominant images and narratives of the capital city of Delhi based on the visual materials from the field and additionally from the newspapers and real-estate banners and expects to explore the dominant interpretations of the city and the differentiating meaning of spaces/places exercised by those interpretations.

(a) Images from the Field that Explains the Nature of Urban Expansion

As Partha Chatterjee writes, the construction of the new post-colonial global metropolis is heavily influenced by the ‘intensified circulation of images of global cities through cinema, television and the Internet as well as through the Indian middle classes’ far greater access to international travel.¹⁶ Such mental images of the world-class city, therefore, are well-reflected in the images taken at the field around the peri-urban Delhi as they display a similar pattern of incessant development of those in the West, visioning a higher value future. This on the one hand with an extortionate emphasis on building high-quality facilities and creating a clean and glamourised model of the urban when creating a sense of placelessness owing to their similarity in the pattern of construction, also makes it difficult for the poor, accounting for nearly fifty percent of the population, to visualise a place for themselves. The peri-urban targeting the superrich; therefore, when bears the imprints of luxury and exclusivity, it also simultaneously carries the narratives of subjugation and marginalisation. Such a scenario complies with the observation made by Saskia Sassen (in Sampath 2017) when she was interviewed by The Hindu on her reflections on the nature of the current urban development, as she goes on saying ‘*One clear trend is a vast and very visible expansion of the luxury zone, for fancy offices and fancy residences, accompanied*

¹⁴ Desai and Sanyal (2012) called this as a ‘promotional coupling of the city and region’ as Ahmedabad has been re-imagined towards the larger agenda of promoting Gujarat as a state.

¹⁵ In Desai and Sanyal (2012).

¹⁶ Chatterjee (2004), as cited in Ghertner (2015a, b), 23–24.

by an almost invisible expulsion of the working classes and modest middle-class families from locations where they may have lived for several generations’.

In the first place, the shift in the very structure of urban land usage is evident from the construction of luxury apartments en-mass which ensures stark differences in the visual as well as spatial forms of the city in expansion. This transition, however, can be hailed as a sign of Delhi becoming increasingly international where an emphasis on lifestyle enhancement (e.g. the concept of clubhouse) and providing state-of-the-art facilities to the residents has been considered the most significant marketing strategy. Projection of international orientation is prominent through naming the complexes where such politics of labelling also reveal the positioning of the urban in the context of the neo-Marxist commodification debates. In this place, the desire of the new middle class though exerts a considerable amount of influence, and the developmental shift towards market-oriented strategies is found to be most significant, especially in the context of liberalisation (Fernandes 2004).

The following photographs, therefore, reflect upon the kind of urban expansion that is taking place in peri-urban Delhi, which might also be a case for the other major urban centre across the nation. The descriptions of each of the photographs explain its significance and draw attention to the spatial as well as socio-psychological morphology of the urban evolution to the peripheries. These have profound implications in preparing a base for understanding the various stakeholders at the margin and the transformation of their living spaces as well as engagement with the urban (Photographs 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4).

The photographs from the field, therefore, well-established the proliferation of the luxury zones facilitated by the private investment and the real-estate functioning as the most dominant factor towards urban development at the peri-urban. The following



Photograph 6.1 Image taken in the peri-urban areas of NOIDA demonstrates the enormity of the construction of high-rise residential buildings that are invariably engulfing the rural fringes. Most of these housing units are empty at the current time owing to the fact that it serves as a store of financial investment, rather than as a home for the people to live in (Fieldwork 2019)



Photograph 6.2 The image was taken at the peri-urban NOIDA and Gurgaon, demonstrating the incessant construction activities at the margin, following a similar pattern of spatial arrangement. High-rise residential complexes often appear grid-like and are supplemented with commercial complexes and patches of green areas within (Fieldwork 2018)

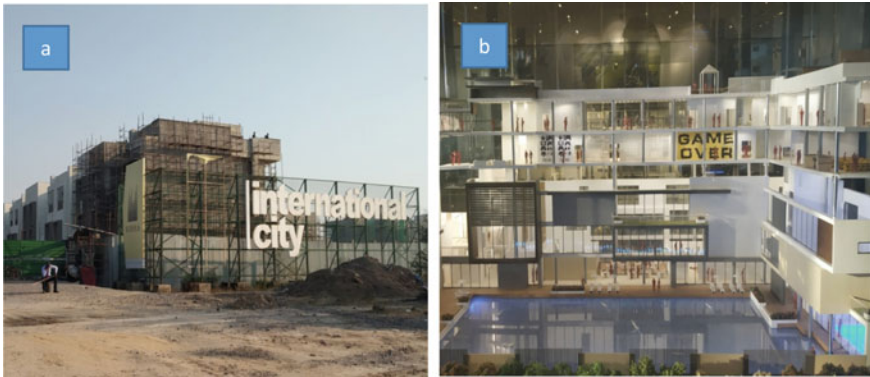


Photograph 6.3 As one of the dominant sights of the peri-urban Delhi, gigantic hoardings along the roads exhibit ongoing residential projects and attractive deals to draw customers. Number **a** showcased the strategy to sell the property as a token of investment in the New Year while number **b** exhibits the exclusivity of the project and its VVIP attributes (Fieldwork 2018–2019)

subsection delves into the specificities of the sector largely to make sense of characteristics that are increasingly becoming the ethos of development. Broadly, they also provide evidence for understanding the global city paradigm currently in fashion.

(b) Analysis of Advertisements to Understand the Current Dynamics of Urban Development

The contribution of media as integral to the city’s marketing strategy is prominently visible where example can be taken from the famous slogan ‘From walled



Photograph 6.4 Taken in the juncture of Delhi and Gurgaon, Number **a** portrays the tendency of projecting the ‘international’ orientation of the real-estate projects at the peri-urban through naming and number **b** displays the model of clubhouse facilities that claim to provide ‘international level’ facilities like spas, salon and yoga guided by international personalities (Fieldwork 2019)

city to world city’ popularised by one of the leading newspapers of the country, the *Times of India*. Therefore, one of the ways, the changing nature of the space can be perceived is through the various projections of the media, through advertisements, and banners and contents of magazines and newspapers. As depicted by Fernandes (2000), the media images are, therefore, a portrayal of the idealised vision of the country (specifically urban in this context) on the dominant depiction of the higher-income population and their newfound pattern of commodity consumption. According to her, the representations demonstrate India’s shifting relation with the global as they rest on the narratives of development. Moreover, the commercials are often designed to cast a persuasive impact and illustrate the political culture of the nation-state in the wake of neoliberalisation (Fernandes 2000; Pollay 1986; cited in Ganahl et al. 2003).

The study has taken up references from the leading newspaper advertisements, particularly those that reflect the kinds of urban development and dominant city infrastructures. In this place, what Lefebvre (1991) has stated as abstract space has found its importance, as this forms the locus of fashion, art as well as advertisements and subsequently shape the ideology. Spaces, therefore, contain representations derived from the established order and found their authority through the places that underpin them. What popularly has been called the ‘world-class city’ is, therefore, manifested through such spatial representations as a symbolic fabric which further essentialised the spatial specificities prominent around the peri-urban Delhi.

Most of the promotional slogans talk about a ‘new experience’ and a ‘dream destination’ while a set of advertisements also highlights the kind of luxury that awaits in the whole new world situated on the periphery of Delhi. Such slogans are created by the developers to reap the benefits of the elite and upper-middle classes of the city in search of a better quality of life that the notion of ‘urban’ envisioned to provide. The languages of promotion, therefore, highlight the factors that shape the idea of

a ‘global city’ which to quote Dupont (2005) is a ‘blend of ecological utopia and modernist projections’ and reveals the fantasies and aspirations behind constructing a particular identity in the city. King (2004)¹⁷ calls this the emergence of ‘spaces of global cultures’, Dupont (2011) outlines this as an attempt to create a ‘distinct Indian Identity’ while Broudehoux (2007) termed them as the ‘new spaces of exclusion’ marked by the dominant choices of the elite class and therefore reconfiguring the existing socio-spatial fragmentation. The section, therefore, sits on an argument by Perkins (1989) that the real-estate developers appropriate and commodify the established meaning of the places and the advertising continues to promote what is urban to satisfy their end. The meaning of a place is closely related to the class structure, where the preferences of the dominant classes represent greater interest and value. This strongly influences the way places are being imagined and further planned and managed.

Advertisements of real-estate consultants are, therefore, not only creating physical space by presenting buildings of a particular kind but also serve as phenomena that have consequences for the social restructuring of the urban experiences.¹⁸ On the one hand, while they reflect the choice and interests of the elite and middle-class purchasers, on the other hand, are found to be neglecting the sense of place of the working class by its very design that is restrictive to their mobility. Interaction with the real-estate developers reveals the provision of a three-tier security system around the housing complexes while the value of such properties often seemed to be threatened by the presence of the settlement of the labouring class and their noisy presence along the road, making an economic means from the large-scale construction activities. Therefore, the promotion of the city having an international affiliation in a way has created a distinct neighbourhood largely segregated by the class of the population.

Most of the advertisements are often seen to highlight the sense of happiness and contentment of the potential homebuyers associated with goods and services, whereas very few have tried using factors such as proximity to nature and the significance of a greener landscape for better living to tap into the customers. Therefore, the idea of urban life is increasingly being portrayed as a place equipped with the provision of modern conveniences and making a status, rather than as an inclusive place for the children to grow with a collective identity. Out of the total 100 advertisements, every image portrayed a similar representation of the urban with the text conveying a similar message of exclusivity. Amidst showcasing the high-end structures, it is also significant to notice that the human imprint is invariably minimal in such photographs which can also be attributed to the greater sense of privacy and a nominal sense of community. The emphasis given to leisure and other high-end service-related facilities indicates a growing focus on the questions of lifestyle. Entertainment enterprises

¹⁷ As cited in Dupont (2011). For detail, see King (2004) *Spaces of global cultures: architecture, urbanism, identity*. Routledge, London and New York.

¹⁸ Parkins et al. have argued the housing advertisements to have both physical and ideological properties, communicated and sustained through visual imagery as well as written text. Where in local scale these assert the contemporary aspects of culture and environment, they can also be positioned in the context of global discourses of construction of urban space (See Parkins et al. 2008).

ranging from restaurants and malls to luxurious sports complexes and clubhouses with facilities like saunas and spas are largely being promoted as a necessary factor in choosing a place to live. While earlier clubs were exclusive and a few in number, the present-day expansion of such social spaces to the housing complexes marks an increasing demand for exclusiveness in society which also serve as a symbol of one's status. Therefore, real-estate advertisements increasingly are seen to be highlighting the materiality of urban life and encouraging the emergence of new social and cultural practices¹⁹ towards a 'new urban aesthetics of class purity' (Fernandes 2004). The increasing significance of leisure and entertainment opportunities should, however, be understood in terms of a broader process of socio-cultural restructuring of 'urban' that prominently serves the interest of the growing middle-class as well as the elites. The new era of consumerism is also characterised by specific market strategies that prominently capitalise on security combining the gated nature of the housings with three- to four-tier boundaries. Often better urban living is conjectured to be attained through a strong sense of security.

Therefore, claims that are prioritised in the advertisement depict what exactly is being privatised and how the urban development/expansion is conceptually carried out. Terms like luxury and exclusive have been featured in more than 80 advertisements while the descriptions specifically highlight the dwellings being 'stylish, "architecturally designed", and providing a 'top of the world experience' (Fig. 6.4). In addition, references to idealised accounts of green spaces as well as locations closer to malls and restaurants have been used as an indicator of quality living. The emphasis thereby took two predominant forms: one referring to the sensory experiences owing to the luxurious nature of the property and the other to the high-end facilities (lifestyle enhancement opportunities) that the site is providing (Table 6.5).

The practices involved in such re-imagining of the urban by strategic manipulation have a significant influence on the residents of the city. Where the dominant discourse highlights the image of the city that is more 'sanitised, commodified and distorted in accordance with the perceived demands of the global marketplace' (Doel and Hubbard 2002, in Desai 2011); such practices also consciously and unconsciously suppress the everyday experiences as well as a sense of place of the marginalised.

Summing Up

The chapter seeks to examine the present trend of urban development in the capital city of Delhi by the pattern of its physical growth as well as through the strategies of representing the city echoing a particular narrative of being urban. Stemming from

¹⁹ On a similar account, while narrating the rapid growth of leisure and other service-related industries in the metropolitan city of Mumbai, Fernandes (2004) has referred such trend as 'bar and restaurant culture'. The contemporary Mumbai therefore is said to be witnessing a proliferation of upmarket bars and restaurants instead of smaller restaurants and Irani shops, catering to the general masses. Fernandes attributed such shift with the rise of new middle class and their increasing concern related to status.



Fig. 6.4 Frequently used adjectives in the real-estate advertisements. *Source* Conceptualised by the researcher

Table 6.5 Textual themes as in the promotional advertisement

Textual themes	As major highlight	As ancillary highlights
Lifestyle	53	15
Features within the site	19	58
Features within the house	0	38
Proximity/accessibility value	3	37
Nature/green space	11	41
Rarity/exclusivity value	14	4
Safety value	0	53
Total	100	100

Source Newspaper Real-Estate Advertisements, 2017–2020

the uneven processes of globalisation, this, therefore, has attempted to develop a base with the popular arguments of urban ‘entrepreneurialism’, ‘place marketing’ and the ‘politics of forgetting’. While the land use data displays how the peri-urban development takes shape along specific corridors, prominent literature in the domain indicates the class biases of the city expansion, in conformity with the vision of a

world-class city, idealised by 'modern, privatised, slum-free city environment', and the advertisements indicate towards the attempt of projecting the urban as an ideal space for development owing to the world-class services and international facilities it possesses which in turn ensures the stronger insertion of the city region in the capitalist space economy. Such a comprehensive portrayal of the image also serves to define the power structure within the city with the prominent rise of Westernised consumer culture. Articulated through the 'politics of erasure and denial', the practice is further deepening the spatial divides and reproducing the class divisions, other than providing possibilities of eliminating them. As one of the prominent components of private sector components of the present-day growth machine, the real-estate expansion also creates segregated urban geography, without an exception.

The process of urban expansion, therefore, has gained momentum with the globalisation and neoliberalisation processes and further intensifies the conversion of rural to urban leading to rampant land acquisition, and regeneration of the city centre, causing relocation and rebuilding of the new giving a push to the process of migration. This might help to closely look into each of the processes and attempts that sketch out a comparative framework for understanding the trend of urban development and its consequences for those who hardly fit into the vision of the 'world-class'. The attempt to explore the exclusionary urban practices seeks to craft the consequent emergence of alternative forms of urban citizenship on an everyday basis with the overarching construct of urban at the background within which the working poor are based and continue to negotiate. This is in lieu of the conclusion drawn by Fernandes (2004) in her analysis of contemporary Mumbai where she asserts the importance of understanding the state practices as well as exclusionary definitions of citizenship to produce a version of the urban that ensures the emergence of an urban model of consumer-citizenship and 'seeks to displace the political claim of marginalised social groups to resources such as jobs and housing'.

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