PLANNING THE CITY OF *DJINNS*: EXORCIZING THE GHOSTS IN DELHI'S POST-COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT MACHINE

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ABSTRACT

My doctoral research investigates the nature of uneven development in India's capital city, Delhi. Despite the best efforts and plans of the post-colonial Indian welfare state to address the city's colonial legacy of spatial segregation and exploitation, Delhi's poor have been systematically marginalized since the regional development exercise of the Delhi Master Plan of 1962. The Master Plan was devised as a "prototype" for Indian development, with the goal of "an integrated and balanced overall programme of development" aimed at delivering spatial equality to Delhi's citizens. However, this spatial fix has since created a metropolitan dystopia of ever increasing unevenness between the urban poor and the metropolitan rich.

This dissertation has three objectives: first, to develop a historical and theoretical framework by which to study the phenomenon of social injustice spatially; second, to apply this framework to study the uneven development of Delhi; and third, to formulate propositions to encounter and even facilitate social justice in the city. Traditional Marxist theories of uneven development, while insightful about production of spatial unevenness, lack critical understanding of the means by which a technological rationality inscribes this pattern. By investigating the conjoined nature of spatial and technological fixes, we can study the means and ends, product and production of uneven development, making explicit the relationship between space, society and technology. This framework examines the colonial apparatus of uneven development specific to Delhi, and reveals the ideology and practices of the *swadeshi* movement as an extremely useful epistemology through which spatial and technological fixes could be countered and resisted.

My second objective is to study Delhi's post-colonial development within this framework. This traces the story of India's struggle with democracy and development and how this larger social, cultural and political context shaped the design and implementation of the Delhi Master Plan. In tracing the spatial and technological dimensions of this regional plan, not only do we uncover the planners' utopian visions of a technological Eden that never came to be, but the consequence of the naïve adoption of 'neotechnic' technological systems that create an autocratic planning authority. These

planners with their immense faith in technology and the region ignored and even outlawed the existing spatial practices of India's lower-income migrant communities. Planning authorities and politicians simply labeled these citizens and their activities "nonconforming," while deeming their habitats "unauthorized."

The dominant view is to conceive technology as an assemblage neutral and purely benign instruments. As per this logic, Indian planners and politicians in the late eighties and nineties inferred that rather than the technological rationality of the Indian State, it was their political welfarist policies that were faulty. This led them to adopt neoliberal market policies and guide development under the same—amended and revised— instrumental Master Plan. The Revisions of the Master Plan while envisaging Delhi as a "world-class city" have adopted policies that heighten the abysmal treatment of Delhi's urban poor.

In uncovering the role of technology and spatial practices in uneven development, my dissertation concludes by undertaking a subversive historiography of the discipline of design to address the imperial nature of Lutyens Delhi. Political ergonomics is the design approach I advocate for and focuses on the traditional urban morphology of Shahjahanabad as a way to redress and reverse Delhi's spatial injustices. The medieval settlement is organized keeping in mind the *geist* and *gestalt* of Delhi's low-income communities; its urban morphology provides the space that supports their socio-economic practices and sense of community. Moving forward, these surviving urban morphologies, and the ways in which they are insubordinate to the authoritarian planning machine of Delhi are worthy of greater respect and inquiry.