

Designing Democratic India's Cities: Public Space for *Whom?*

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Abstract

Cities agglomerate power, capital and people. They become the arena where issues that may be pan region or even pan nation play out.

India still struggles to see its ideal of democracy percolate into its society or translate into the morphology of its cities. India's democratic electoral politics are volatile, built on the creations of factions and identities which are multiple and interchangeable. This is often played out spatially in capital cities and at times, space-making becomes the instrument for such confrontations; which is what the paper would attempt to discern and illustrate.

Lucknow, (U.P.) is a peculiar example. Uttar Pradesh is India's most populous state and also among the most feudal states socially where elections are predominantly fought along caste and communal lines. The previous chief minister, Ms. Mayawati received much publicity for constructing monumental parks across the city by reclaiming land from the river, demolishing housing colonies and demarcating territory through iconography. Using a blend of colonial grandeur and Buddhist iconography, the built environment projected and glorified the 'Ambedkarite' idea of Buddhism as a means for the Dalits to counter upper caste suppression.

The study attempts to- firstly, appropriately place the examples being looked at in the study within their own socio-political contexts, and understand earlier theoretical work on social change and architecture. Secondly, situate and understand the transformations to the built in the immediacy of their physical and social and political contexts, as well as the larger socio-political backgrounds. Thirdly, elucidate the processes of the manifestation of the built form - constructions and demolitions both. Fourthly, conduct a spatial analysis of the built and the processes leading up to it with a view to relate them to social processes. And finally, elucidate the relationship between the socio-political processes and the transforming built environment.

The processes of the social and spatial transformations are concurrent as the city remains in a constant state of flux where the social and political confrontations play out in the spatial realm of what is proclaimed to be 'public space'.

Keywords: India, Public Space, Socio-Political, Transformation, Urbanscape, Democracy, Mayawati, Lucknow, Dalits, Ambedkarite

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Introduction

To most, contemporary India would seem riddled with tremendous inequalities. Despite democracy, the method of wielding authority remains feudal, as do the social structures. This often becomes the basis for electoral politics- the creation of new factions and identities, multiple and interchangeable to accommodate various groups; all with an intent to gain authority or power under the 'democratic' framework. Processes of spatial transformation of the city are experienced as concurrent to these dynamic social and political processes.

Theoretical Construct of the Argument

The Notion of Power

Foucault looks at power not as a single situational condition of advantage versus disadvantage. He sees it as a process of continuous flux. He sees it as a 'multiplicity of force relations' which are constantly in a state of confrontation and struggle. The transformations and linkages of these forces through negotiations may form a system or a structure. Depending on the stability of such a structure, they may continue further in time. The time that such a structure may last depends on the strength of its organisation. However, change is inevitable. (Foucault, 1990)

When stable systems are created, 'disjunctions' and 'contradictions' are inherent in them, causing these force relations to diverge. This process of stability and conflict continues where change is constant and it's only a question of 'When'?

Foucault stresses that power is not this structure but a continuous process. He suggests that power emanates from everywhere and is not something that can be possessed.

This is in contrast to the Weberian notion of power which looks at singular confrontations of these force relations at a particular point in time rather than as a continuing phenomenon.

'Power' in the Weberian sense is perceived only when it creates an effect; either through the force relations that crystallise into a sense of institutionalisation, the state, law, social structure or through the extreme condition of authority at work that Foucault considers and terms 'terminal forms of power'.

Society can be seen to be in such a constant state of flux. Dominance of one over another, when apparent in action, becomes an event. It is only such 'terminal forms of power' (Foucault) that are able to influence the behaviour of another. In order to achieve such a position, individuals or entities may come together in a way that puts them in a more favourable position.

Social Processes and the Built Environment

Society is structured through the various processes mentioned earlier. At any given point in time, it is these societal negotiations that are interpreted and crystallised through the built form or as Lefebvre puts it, 'going from 'abstract space' to 'absolute space''.

According to Lefebvre (1991), the social hierarchies are always represented in the built form, with little deviation. This is because it is the social space, abstract in nature, which is first, constructed in the mind, before it develops into a built form. A decision to arrive at a particular condition of such a social negotiation is by itself already moving towards the freezing of its abstract space. The act of building constitutes making real space that would have to be a crystallisation of that which has already been frozen as abstract space. He continues that

societies end up subconsciously following those existing social ideas just because they inhabit spaces embodying these ideas. *They live those abstract notions spatially*. Thus the built form serves as a medium of continuity and is not just a crystallisation of a certain interpretation of societal negotiations. (Lefebvre, 1991)

Lefebvre's statement also emphasises the attribute of the space as being 'Concurrent' to the social order. He also raises the idea of 'continuity', an idea that is supported by many other writings.

Although Diamond and Wang, seem to agree with the idea of continuity, they make a strong claim, that "Architecture cannot precede revolution". They illustrate this through the examples in their book as to how 'architectural style' and the diagram of 'structure of space' serve to those ends. They reject the counterclaim by saying that the moment such a change reaches architecture, it means that it has already arrived in society and thus the architecture ceases to be 'revolutionary'.(Diamond, 1995)

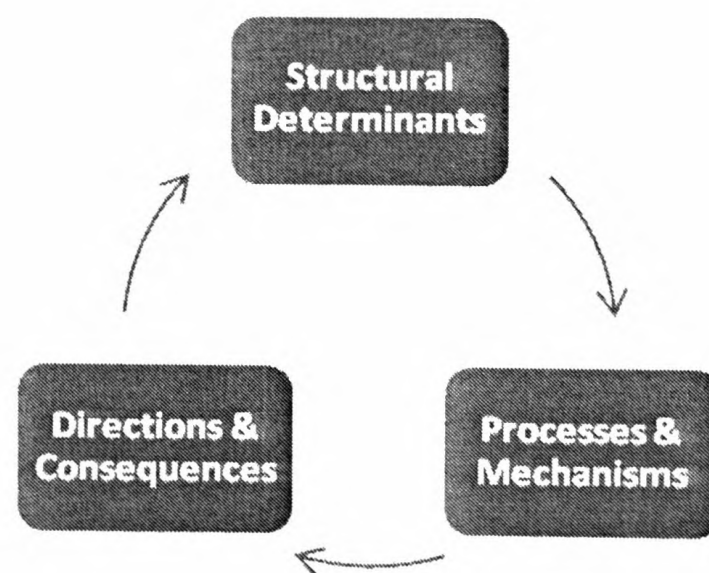
Bernard Tschumi argues otherwise, how architects could avoid seeing Architecture and Planning as the faithful product of dominant society, viewing their craft, on the contrary as a catalyst for change. (Tschumi, 1994)

It is echoed in the ambitions of Haussmann in Paris, Colonists in India and more recently *Mayawati* in *Lucknow*, but not quite in the same vein as the former examples.

It is this continual and mutually influential tête-à-tête between the abstract space and absolute space i.e. society and built environment that becomes a point of inquiry in this study.

The Cycle of Conflict

Society can be said to consist of several entities- individuals or groups, 'actors' or 'structures' and each entity can be seen as pursuing its own intention. As extended from Foucault's ideas on power earlier in the text, contrasting entities in society will create a constant flux. There are phases to the process, seen as conflict origins, conflict dynamics and conflict resolutions. (Galtung, 2009). Conflict can be said to be constant – a never-ending cycle with phases.



Source: Haferkamp,(1992)

The consequences could become determinants and the cycle continues through the mechanisms of conflict.

The built environment, by virtue of its relative permanence, freezing of social relations such as institutionalisation, physical assertion through visibility, symbolism and associated meaning, often finds itself connected to this cycle of conflict- as consequence, as a mechanism (instrument) and also as a determinant.

“Architecture is the will of an epoch translated into space” – Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe

The above quote is a commonly accepted historical phenomenon. As architecture finds itself involved in the cycle of conflict, Tschumi’s counter question becomes relevant as could space be made a peaceful instrument of social transformation, also a means of changing the relationship between the individual and society by generating a new lifestyle. (Tschumi, 1994)

The Contemporary Indian Condition and its Complexities

India surges ahead, prompting frenzy where larger proportions of our population would start occupying ‘Built Urbanscapes’ rather than ‘Rural landscapes’. Be it metropolitan cities or even district headquarters of agrarian hinterlands, in effect power ends up being geographically concentrated. They become the playing ground for several issues that maybe pan region or even pan nation. The built form that transforms in concurrence with these processes is heavily loaded with a multitude of complexities.

Caste is one of the most dominant of those factors. Hindu society was divided into ‘*varnas*’ (castes) from the highest to the lowest that dictated social position. Irrespective of versions about earlier eras, as of history of the past two millennia, no one can change the caste they are born into. The *Brahmins* (priests) and *Kshatriyas* (warriors) are considered the higher castes, while the *Vaishyas* (traders) are considered beneath them. The *Shudhras* occupy the lowest rung and below them are a people deemed ‘untouchables’ who are not even accepted in the system. Collectively the lowest castes are termed ‘Dalits’. As famously pointed out by Dr. B.R.Ambedkar, what is dangerous about our caste system is that, it is not as simple as upper and lower, but is a graded caste system where transcending across is not possible through wealth or status or anything but birth. Yet, revolution is equally difficult since each of the castes believe so strongly in the system that won’t collaborate with a caste lower than theirs. (Jaffrelot, 2003)

Throughout Indian history, there have been several attempts to break this stalemate. Buddhism and Jainism emerged as a reprisal to the Brahminical repression of society and advocated a non-hierarchical, equal society. The revival of Hinduism prevented the widespread impact of that renaissance. The Bhakti movements during the past few centuries were based on devotion to a *Guru* (Teacher) rather than fall under the ambit of the caste system. Under British colonialism, some sought Christianity because of the economic and educational benefits offered, while some tried to seek out allusions in Indian history.

There was an effort to revive the Buddhist identity in the 1920s. It was also cited as moving away from an Aryan identity. It was something that could be equally strong, valid and ancient in the Indian context and also was the first anti-Brahminical movement in India. Ambedkar was a huge advocate of this ‘Neo- Buddhism’.

In addition to this movement, the British policies of affirmative action and reservations in politics set the wheels in motion. In that period, "these communities tried to gain social mobility through an access to power" (Jaffrelot, 2003)

Despite an opportunity surrounding the 1937 provincial election in India, the caste movement didn't make headway due to severe opposition and manipulation by leaders of the Indian National Congress, many of whom including Gandhi believed that further dividing Indian society, which already had a Muslim League would severely hamper the freedom struggle. Ambedkar sought to fulfill those ideas in a democratic, socialist, Independent India.

The idea of democracy is that it moves beyond the simplistic equation of a monarchy. It provides political power based on the strength of numbers irrespective of the quality of those numbers. In order to gather these numbers, people may bunch together under an identity. In India, these identities are multiple and interchangeable. Each citizen carries an ethnic, religious, geographical, linguistic, caste and professional identity among others. It may be any one or a combination of these with which he may find himself located in various identity groups. This has shaped Indian politics continually. In the case of the lower castes, it has been increasingly so since Kanshiram took up the movement in the 80's that was left dormant since Ambedkar's death in 1956.

Ambedkar renounced Hinduism by taking part in a ceremony of mass conversion to Buddhism, in his last days. It set the direction for symbolic usurping of Buddhism identity as a means for social dignity. However, the softer socio-economic attempts also didn't make much headway through the 80's.

"I started with the idea of social transformation and economic emancipation. I still want my people to advance socially and economically. But I have realised that unless we are having political clout, we cannot advance much on those sides." – Kanshiram (Jaffrelot, 2003, 393)

That architecture is a social art and embodies social conditions is a well-established fact through a vast body of academic work. The actions of large groups and factions or entire social hierarchies with all its contradictions and aberrations could be seen manifested in cities and their Urbanscapes. As Ali Madanipour puts it, "The city is a socio-spatial context to which we can enter as individuals or groups and interact with it to use or change it."

The widely publicised parks in Lucknow and drastic transformations to its Urbanscape by alternative parties from 1995 to 2013 become the point of interest for this study. How did they attempt to achieve this 'social mobility through political power?' Here, architecture comes into the picture. How does the act of building serve this intent? Does Architecture become an instrument for this revolt? How does the Neo-Buddhist Identity come to the fore? To demonstrate these questions, this paper describes a single place called the 'Ambedkar Park' that later became the Ambedkar Smarak (Memorial) and finally the Ambedkar Samajik Parivartan Sthal (Place for social change) over three different terms of the alternating rise to power of a single political party – the BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party).

The paper will explore the theoretical ideas discussed earlier, especially that of counter design and revolution through Architecture. It will also question its validity in the current Indian socio-political context and the course of future action by designers.

There hasn't yet been a published study on the Urban transformations in Lucknow in relation to the caste movements and the mapping of the transformations and theoretical connections made

here are based on primary research by the author for his undergraduate research thesis at CEPT University, Ahmedabad, India

Ambedkar Park/Smarak

The shift in ideology of the BSP from fighting for the actual cause to now attempting to gain political power at any cost becomes a turning point for the chain of events to follow.

As per the seat sharing agreement in 1995, Kanshiram's protégé, Mayawati was to become chief minister for one year. This is the first incident ever in the history of Independent India that a *Dalit* (one of the lowest castes) becomes the Chief Minister of a state. It is also of significance since Uttar Pradesh (UP) was and is to this day, the most populous state of India, would be the world's fifth most populous, had it been a country by itself. It holds 80 of the 552 seats in the Parliament, the next highest being 42. It was byword in political circles of India that 'He, who held Uttar Pradesh, held India.' This is apparent from the fact that 8 of the 14 prime ministers of India were from UP.

One of the first acts that Mayawati undertook after assuming this coveted post was to initiate the 'Ambedkar Park'. The only other memorial to Ambedkar of a substantial scale in the country at that time was the Ambedkar memorial at Nagpur that was still awaiting completion. The memorial in Lucknow was completed in 2002 during her third stint as Chief Minister, the first being in 1995 for a period of 4 months and the second in 1997 for a period of 6 months.



Fig. No. 1The Ambedkar Park 2002/2003,
Source: Google Technologies

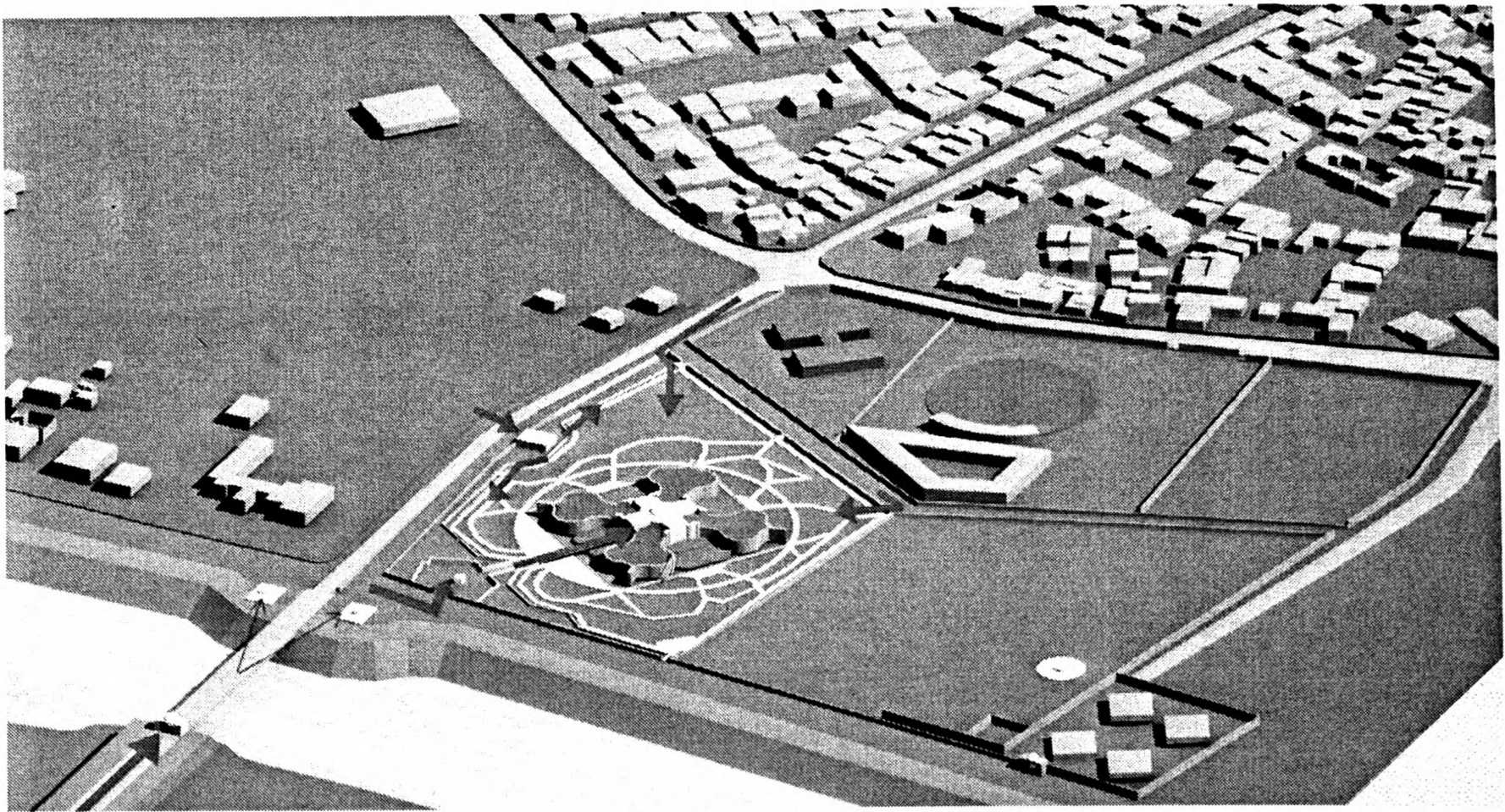


Fig. No. 2 The Ambedkar Park 2002,
Source: Author, Arrows describing visual structure and axes

The Process of Manifestation

The Ambedkar Park occupied land reclaimed from the river by way of a bund. The reasons for choosing this location are multifold; from land being easily available, to historic continuities. Lucknow has had the tradition of important buildings being on the riverfront, right from the *Macchi Bhavan* to the *Nawabi* palaces and *Imambaras* to the British residency. Sources reveal that she wanted to build on the Yamuna in Delhi, the national capital right across Rajghat, where Mahatma Gandhi is buried. Mayawati, through her speeches has constantly asked, if we can make large monuments to Gandhi, Nehru and other 'Upper caste' leaders, why not Dalit leaders. The project was envisaged as a grand park by the river. The design was that of a *Stupa* sitting atop a Lotus. The lotus was in the form of four grand slopes of grass shaped as petals. The park was to be accessed from all sides through several entwining footpaths. It was to be clad in stone. Once her term came to an end, the incomplete project neglected and vandalized.

In 1997 Mayawati regained power with another coalition with the BJP. Once again the government was to be short lived with much to be achieved frenziedly.

Going by the logic of history, the long suppressed Dalit movement had to assert itself in an extreme way. With such a belief, the people at the helm of affairs went about their duties of state. Architecture was to become the medium. The first act was renaming a prominent square of Lucknow as *Parivartan Chowk* (Square of change), where in violation with archaeological norms, Ambedkar's statue along with that of Jyotiba Phule and Shahuji Maharaj were installed.

Interestingly, the Ambedkar Park was to be the 'pet' project that would be the medium to assert the rise to Power of the Dalit identity. This was evident in the fact that, on being re-elected in 1997, within a few hours on the very same day, Mayawati went to inspect the park. This time the memorial was not to be clad in stone but *built* entirely out of solid stone. Also, just a few hours before she was to leave the post of CM in 1997, she ensured that the Ambedkar statue

was installed and held in place by a crane while the concrete of the pedestal was still wet. The desperation to complete construction fast may emerge out of the volatile short stints as chief minister and the permanent statement afforded by the built form.

Here the victory marker and the transformed Urbanscape becomes a consequence of conflict.

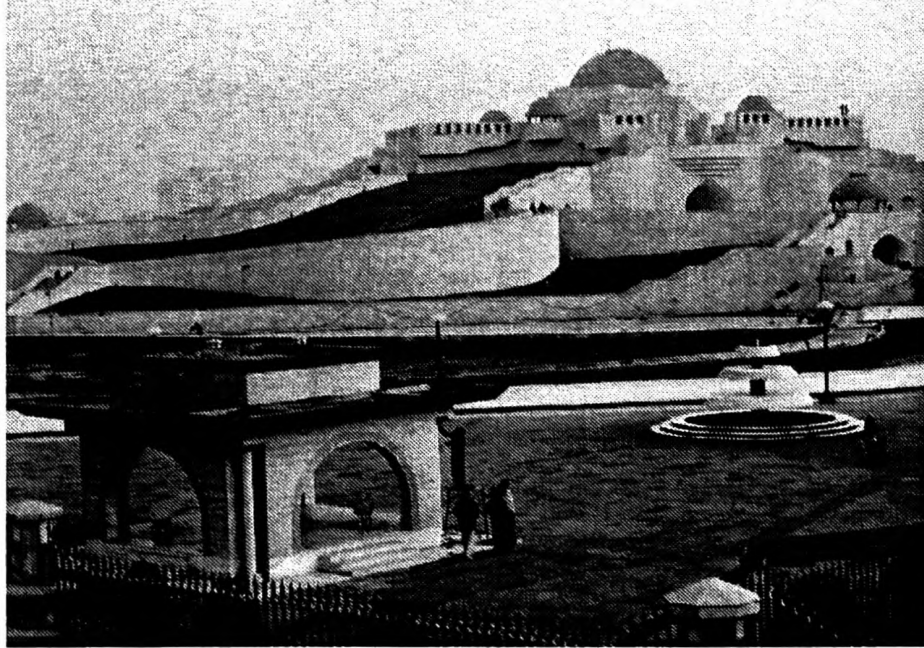


Fig. No. 3 The Ambedkar Park. Source:
<http://www.panoramio.com/photo/11074574?source=wapi&referrer=kh.google.com>

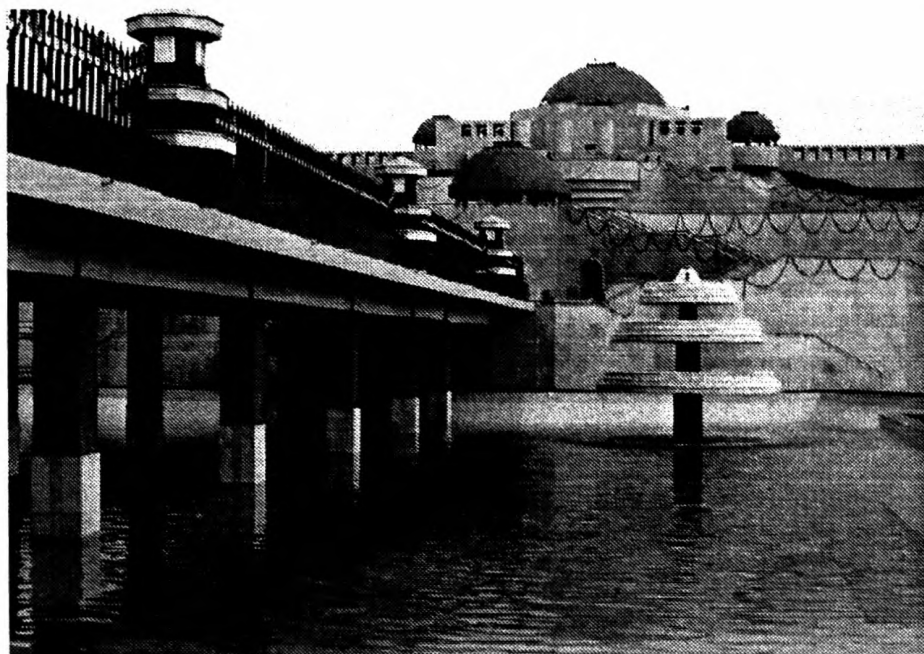


Fig. No. 4 The Ambedkar Park. Source:
<http://www.panoramio.com/photo/11074574?>

Ambedkar Samajik Parivartan Sthal

The UP Vidhaan Sabha elections of 2007 were swept by the BSP with an overwhelming majority. This was the first time that they would be able to form a government without any coalitions - in effect, the first party to come to power on the basis of Dalit identity. Mayawati visited the site of the Ambedkar Park within a few hours of being sworn in. The Ambedkar Park had been subjected to significant neglect during the preceding regime of Mulayam Singh Yadav. Electric supply to this park had been snapped. The Samajwadi Party had constructed a park just across

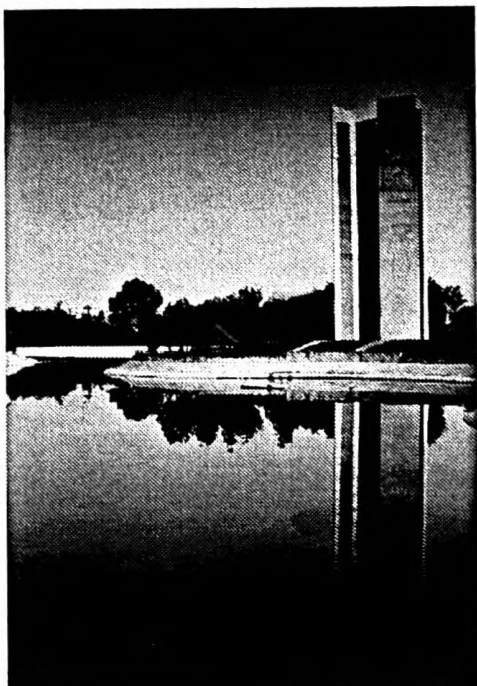


Fig. No. 5

Lohia Park with the Memorial Obelisks

Source:

<http://gophotoindia.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/c.jpg>

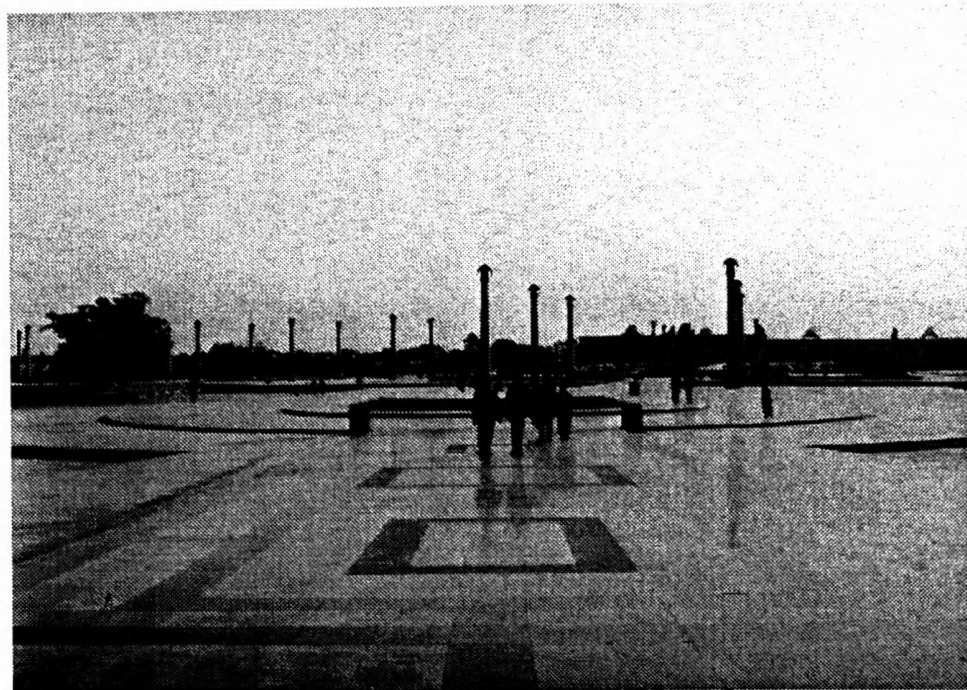


Fig. No. 6 The Ambedkar Samajik Parivartan Sthal in 2012

Source: Author

the road from the Ambedkar Park and it had been named after Ram Manohar Lohia. A towering concrete memorial had been constructed within the park as well (Fig 5). After Mayawati's return to power, in a tit-for-tat scenario she snapped power to the Lohia Park. The plan to expand this park was begun right away.

The Process of Manifestation

As part of the expansion, on 9th July 2007, government officials landed up with bulldozers and asked the people inside the hostel of the sports complex to vacate by 4:00 am. They then began to raze the neighbouring complex consisting of a cricket stadium, sports complex and a swimming pool. The demolition was very quickly brought to a halt by Public Interest Litigation. In an unprecedented move, the court was held beyond midnight right up till 3:00 am, in the house of Judge Pradeep Kant. The court also questioned why the demolition began in the dead of the night, although the heavy machinery had been sitting on the site for more than a month. (Mirror).

However, in due course, permission was cleared to demolish that zone. The sports authorities were promised a larger and better complex and stadium to a better site to which they complied. Moreover Mayawati also razed a VIP guesthouse and another government guesthouse adjoining the Ambedkar Park. Earlier in May, the Ambedkar Park had been rechristened as Ambedkar Smarak(Memorial) in an attempt to dignify it. The subsequent changes to this zone based on the new design proposals were extensive and carried out between 2007 and 2011.

Firstly there was a directive to change the large grass covered petals since it made the Stupa look insignificant. Consequently the grass was replaced with large stone slabs. Also, the thin strip of water surrounding this block was replaced by a grand ceremonial entrance with granite steps. Now the Stupa, along with its petals could look like a single dominant entity built of solid stone. One could enter the Stupa through a gate modeled like the entrance of a *Chaitya* hall, to

converge on a statue of Ambedkar in the centre. To one side, there is a long walkway flanked by ranks of life size stone elephants leading onto a monumental stone plaque bearing a scaled model of the Smarak itself. The Architecture of the place finds a monument to itself. Additionally a structure of twin Stupas was constructed on the axis to the Ambedkar memorial gateway. According to sources, Mayawati initially wanted to install a sculpture of herself on this axis but was finally convinced to put a form denoting the idea of social equity. An obelisk resembling an Ashok Stambh with an Ashok Chakra on top was added to one corner. As a great departure from the Ambedkar Smarak of 2003, that existed in the same location, the new one here restricted the number of entries to only three; each of which began with an entrance fore court. The entire campus with several new buildings was fenced with stone railings.

Outside these fenced entities, symbolic objects were placed. The bridge leading onto the campus was to be entered by a stone gateway which was flanked by two walls that became the backdrop for statues of Mayawati and Kanshiram. A very vital step in the expansion of this park-zone, was the construction of a bund on the river Gomti across the Ambedkar Smarak. This created reclaimed land where the original park could be expanded. Of the two additional park areas created, one housed a large statue of Buddha and the other had a statue of Ambedkar sited under a pavilion. Also the edge of this bund on the east side, was covered with sandstone steps and lined with 72 statues of Mayawati and other Dalit heroes. Another bridge constructed from that junction of the gateway and was marked by a bronze fountain.

The point where the bridge met the other side of the river was called Samta Mulak Chowk (Samta Mulak = Equal society). It was marked by statues along the entire road flanking the park leading up to it, and was resurfaced. Sandstone found its way along the edges.

Nearing completion, the Ambedkar Smarak zone was rechristened The Ambedkar Samajik Parivartan Sthal meaning 'place for social transformation'. Urban transformation as the instrument of conflict is apparent through this case.

It is ratified by the fact that the termination of the elephant flanked axis is a scaled model of the park itself; architecture as an end to itself!



Fig. No. 7 The Ambedkar Samajik Parivartan Sthal in 2012.

Source: Google Technologies

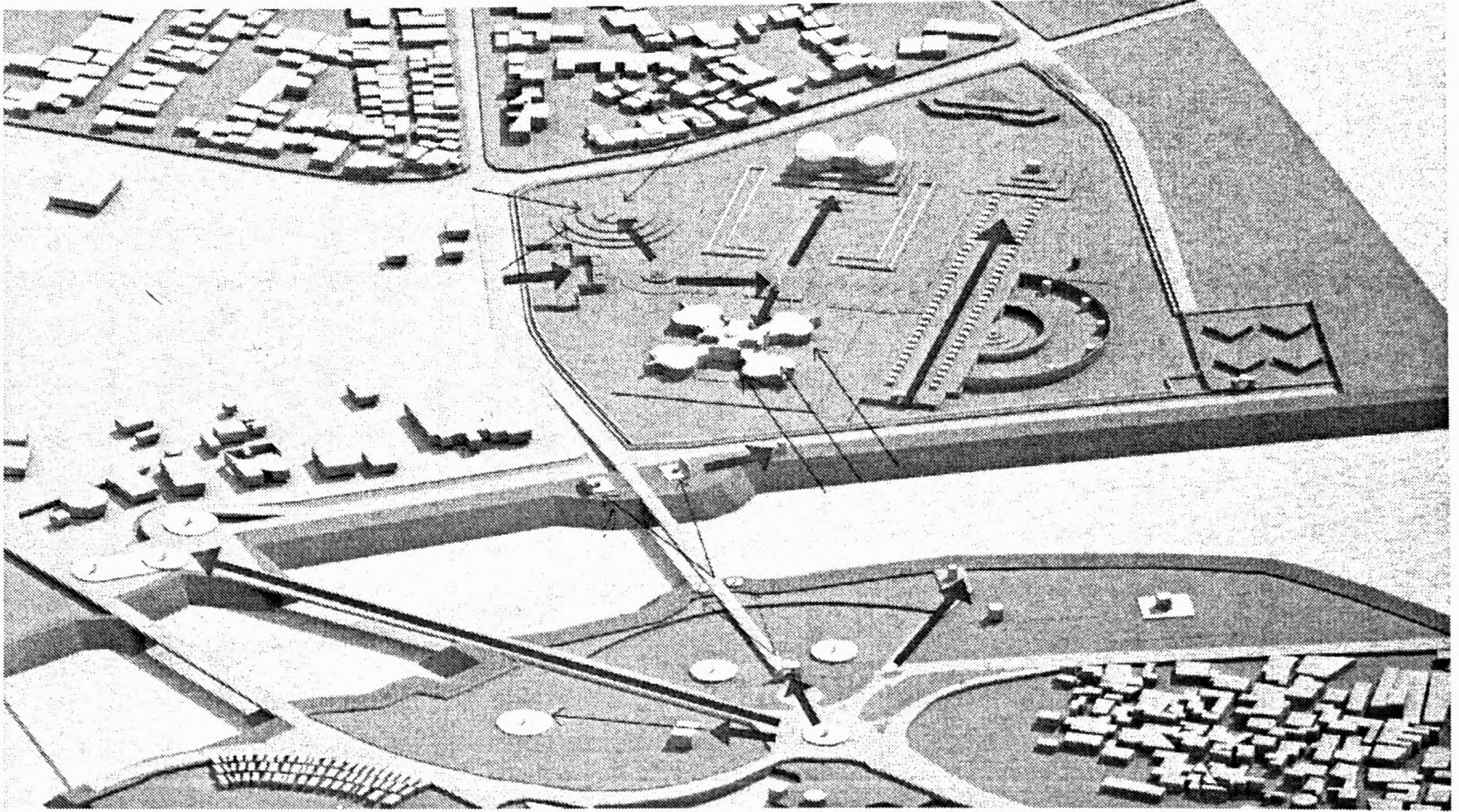


Fig. No. 8 The Ambedkar Samajik Parivartan Sthal in 2012
.Source: Author
Arrows describing visual structure and axes.

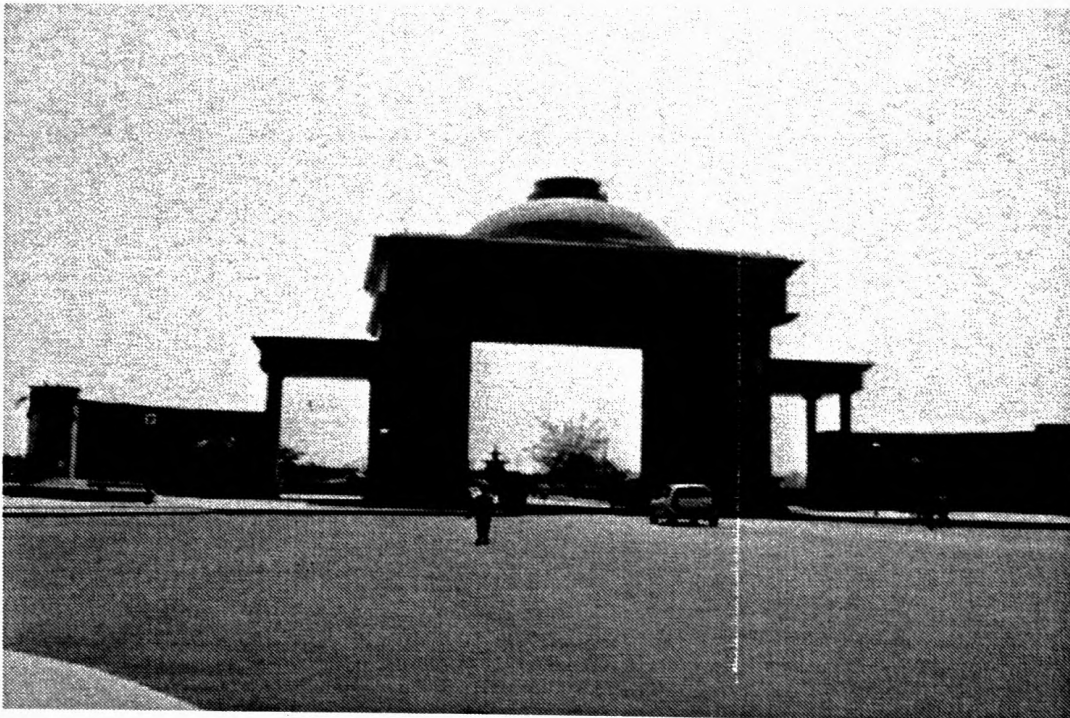


Fig. No. 9
The Ambedkar Samajik Parivartan Sthal
bridge gateway.
Source: Author

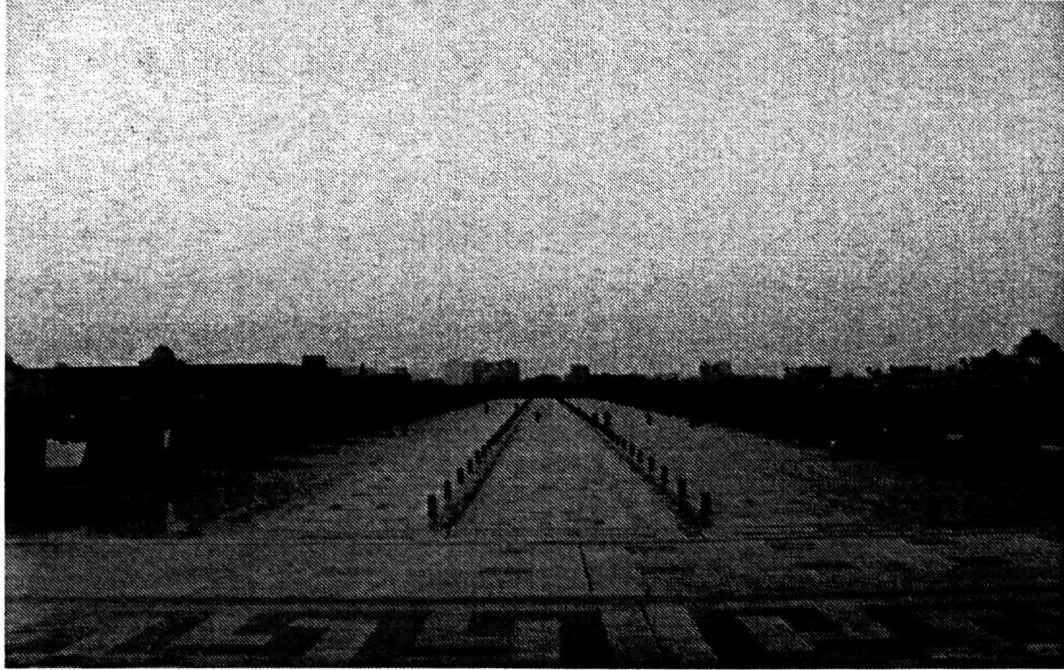


Fig. No. 10
The Ambedkar Samajik Parivartan Sthal
elephant flanked axis.
Source: Author

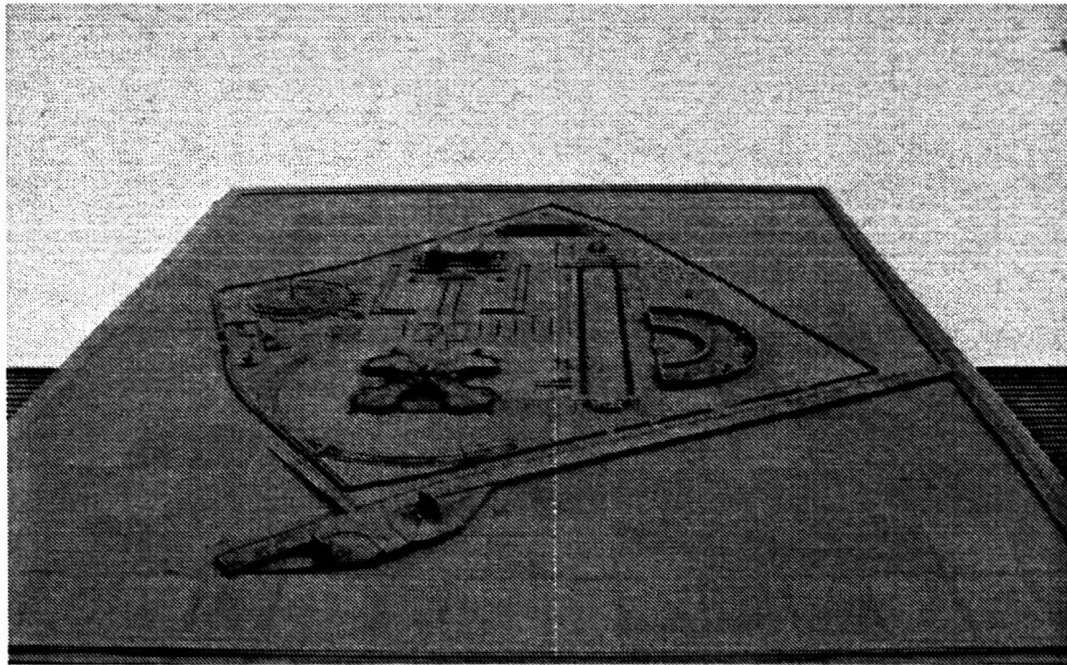


Fig. No. 11
The Ambedkar Samajik Parivartan Sthal
model at the termination of the elephant
flanked axis.
Architecture becomes the end itself!!!
Source: Author

Methodology for Analysis

The research method to analyse the relation between the social processes and spatial processes would need to bring about patterns in transformation/ making of public space and understand how it is particular to the social processes. The phases of conflict help bring about patterns in the social processes. Looking for types that help us understand the social and spatial processes concurrently is the intention of the analysis.

Usually as Architects/ Urban Designers, we would usually look at the built form as technocrats, through abstract tools like plans and sections. These are irreplaceable and important to our understanding of aspect that would otherwise not be discernable. However, they may be limited to the show space as it is rather than as perceived, thereby losing out on the social and symbolic factors. Rather than special mapping based on orthographic projections, maps were evolved based on the users perception of the space rather than its actuality. This is supported Amos Rapoport's idea that 'designers encode and users decode'. Meaning is vital to the perception of these spaces.

The spatial map was recorded by walking to simulate the experience of the user/ pedestrian/ motorist. The methods of analysis used, attempt to bring out how the manipulation of the perception of space is related to notions of power and how it serves the condition of conflict.

Lynch Derived Method

These observations were used for analysis by the method of Kevin Lynch as described in the 'Image of the City'. The Urbanscape could be looked at as a kit of parts. They were adapted for this study to be identified as follows:

Paths- Channels of movement- Roads, Footpaths, Directed movement

Boundaries- Distinguishing linear elements between any two entities- Walls, Moats, Hedges, Fences, Level Differences.

Domains- Region where one may observe Continuities of Building language, of materials, of use, of nature of the space.

Junctions- A point of choice of movement- an intersection of paths.

Markers- Defining objects that stand out as starkly visible- Obelisks, Columns, Fountains, Chhatris, and Gateways.

This enabled the extraction of abstract diagram on the basis of movement & forms in their fields.

Rapoport Method

The built environment can be looked at as a collection of objects, each carrying meaning. "Physical elements of the environment do *encode* information that people *decode*" (Rapoport, 1982, 1990)

On the basis of perceptual and associational meaning designed into the urban transformations, not just limited to symbols but also visual structure, the social and spatial processes can be correlated.

Limitations of the Study

- 1) The paper limits itself to studying one time public gestures in Lucknow in the last 2 decades including the related socio-political processes. Of the many public spaces studied, only one has been considered and its journey over the last 17 years is analysed.

- 2) Although a few factors affecting the urban form significantly are included, the emphasis is on the social and political determinants.
- 3) The study is restricted to studying relatively quickly constructed public gestures.
- 4) Although this phenomenon could be understood in various ways, it is not studied at private / domestic realms. The study also limits itself by spatial scale to adhere more closely to the idea of a public.
- 5) Specific events like sport events, natural disasters etc. are exceptions to the hypothesis.
- 6) Information attributed to people merely mentioned as 'sources' is owing to their request for confidentiality.

Sample of Spatial analysis for domains

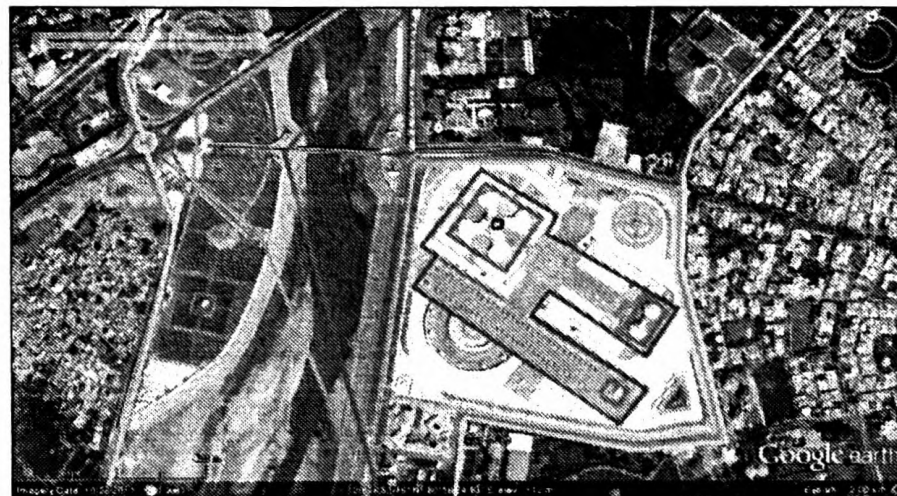

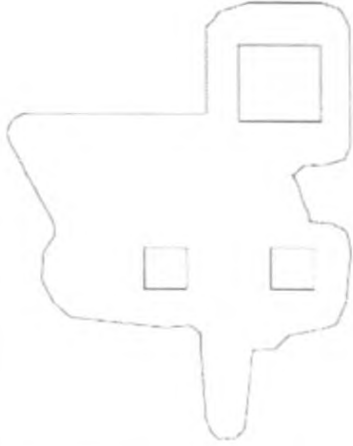


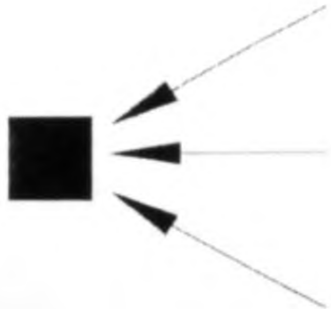
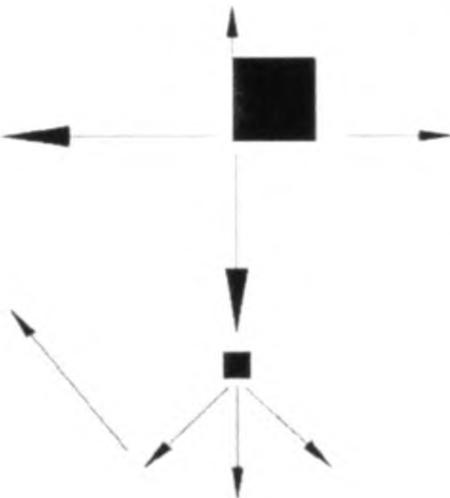

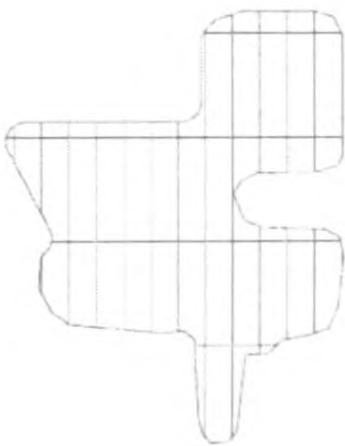


Figure 12 – Concentric domains identified as the user would perceive. Co-relating this diagram with Fig. 8, it is clear how the domains are perceived due to the gateways, obelisk like fountains and walls. The diagrams in Table 1 are an abstraction of such mapping. The markers are placed on the linkages and exactly on the junctions that brings about the heightened notion of the domain. Considering only the smallest and the largest domains brings about a form vs. field diagram. The concentric domains also tell of whether the domains are disjunct or not. Identifying the growth over time gives evidence of the socio-political intent. Source: Author, Google Earth technologies. Table 1 is based on data extracted from such diagrams, not all of which are shown here.

Table 1: Socio-Spatial Analysis

LINKAGE AS DISJUNCT/ CONJUNCT TO OBJECT		EMPOWERMENT THROUGH- (FORM VERSUS ITS FIELD)	
Ambedkar Memorial/ Park 2002	Ambedkar Samajik Parivartan Sthal 2012	Ambedkar Memorial/ Park 2002	Ambedkar Samajik Parivartan Sthal 2012
			
THE OBJECT AND THE LINKAGE		POWER THROUGH TENSION / COMPRESSION (E. Bacon Method)	
Ambedkar Memorial/ Park 2002	Ambedkar Samajik Parivartan Sthal 2012	Ambedkar Memorial/ Park 2002	Ambedkar Samajik Parivartan Sthal 2012
			

Correlation between spatial processes and social processes

Based on the Table 1, overleaf, in all the linkage versus object diagrams, the object becomes the centre point of several linkages. The directionality of the linkages is inverted when the built form is a consequence and when it is an instrument. When it is a consequence, the object has to be accorded the due importance as has been decided by events in the social realm. Meanwhile when it is an instrument, the object expands at a great rate to dignify the identity it symbolizes.

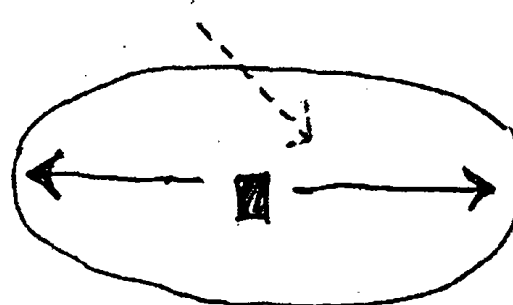
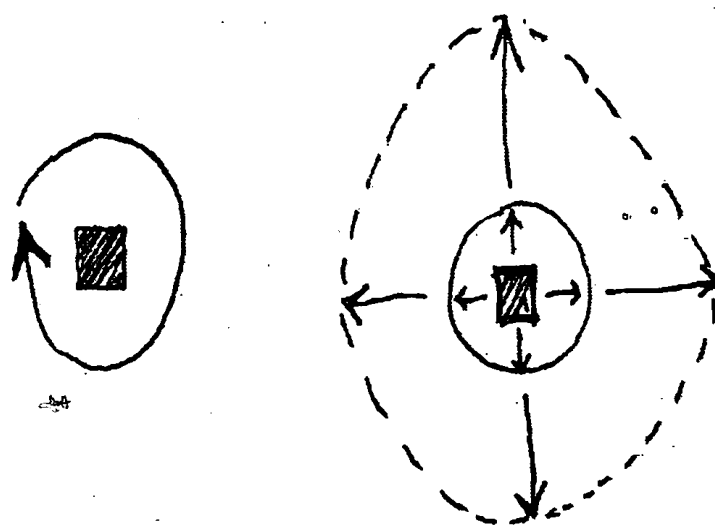
The other phenomenon observed based on the form vs. field analysis is that tension may be used initially as a method of urban connections to span a larger field, though the fields are disjunct and smaller. As the entity begins to wield more influence, power is expressed through an expanded, but consolidated field where the form becomes a mere symbol representing the field that it holds. In the former case, the form is the sole source of power and its vertical extent and visibility are key.

Common to all the phases of conflict the linkage expands the sphere of influence. It does this either by running along the domain periphery or running perpendicular to it. Growth in this manner is by tension between markers rather than agglomerative/ compressive growth.

The latter is a more potent mechanism of expansion of the object's sphere of influence.

The linkages act in two ways:

1. As a means of movement
By directing movement and by the use of an overwhelming form/visual structure, the object gains its importance.
2. As an extension of the object
The linkage through material or building language is perceived to be a part of the object's domain. As a linkage is by default a means of movement, the public at large is overwhelmed by the unavoidable influence of the object perceived throughout a very large area



The demolition of the linkages also becomes a method to consolidate territory. A linkage that may be disrupting a domain could be removed to consolidate its sphere of influence.

Another pattern observed is that of empowerment through form or a symbolic entity is evident when the intention is to assert the already achieved conflict resolution. However, when transforming the urbanscape with a view to achieve a resolution in the social realm, field associated with the symbolic object expands in the example studied, influence over expansive space is perceived as more potent than mere form.

The Phenomenon Continues

In March 2012, the regime changed again in Lucknow. The Samajwadi party (SP) that came to power had long threatened to demolish all of Mayawati's parks but didn't dare attempt it. Gradually, they began to suggest methods to subvert the use such as making it into a hospital. None of the proposals could be implemented owing to the political sensitivity of the issue. Then in July 2012, a small Rajput (upper caste) group beheaded one of her statues along the Ambedkar Sthal. The police called it sacrilege, not surprisingly since the incident immediately led to violent protests. Almost ironically, the SP govt. was forced to hurriedly replace the broken statue with a new one. **Architecture / Urban Transformation, thus becomes the determinant of conflict as well and the cycle continues.**

A few months into the Samajwadi Party's Akhilesh Yadav regime, the manner of space use seems to have dramatically changed. The parks are used to greater intensity by the common citizens, either because people are accustomed to the parks as public places or because of the BSP not being in power anymore. Hawkers line the entrance of the Ambedkar Sthal, something that wasn't encouraged in the previous regime. The path along the river is now called 'The Marine Drive' by the locals; it becomes a hub for late evening gatherings. Kids utilise the ample open sky above the monuments to fly their kites, while some men have taken to fishing in the Sharda canal along the Baudh Vihar.

The parks remain public and open to all at a nominal fee, and free for weaker sections of society. The political sensitivity of these sanctuaries of symbolism dictates that they be well maintained, well lit and manned secure places. Whatever may be the intentions, the people always subvert the use of these spaces in due course of time; one chain of processes ends and another begins and the cycle continues. In a democracy, it is not one powerful entity that can subvert another, but just 'democratising' and opening it to the public is the best way of subversion even if intended as demonstrated in the Ambedkar Sthal.

The latest attempt to subvert the park by the SP govt. is to make it a free of cost, wedding venue for the poor that may be the most subtle subversion that may not kick up a storm while simultaneously trying to lay off maintenance staff.



Fig. No. 13 Mayawati's statue beheaded

Source: http://photo.outlookindia.com/images/gallery/20120802/mayawati_20120813.jpg

In Lucknow, the edge of the river has always been occupied by the ones in power- The Nawabs, the British, The UPIAE and most recently Mayawati's Ambedkar Samajik Parivartan Sthal. The pattern will see continuity as Akhilesh Yadav proposes the 'Janeshwar Mishra Park'. These parks have invariably become the harbinger of identity for each faction. By virtue of the symbolic objects installed in each of them, buffered by large vacant spaces, they become instruments of supposed 'affirmative action'. The urban transport infrastructure also follows these parks and institutions and the urban morphology seems to transform drastically at these whims.



Figure 14, The Janeshwar Mishra Park by the SP gov. that usurped land of the proposed 'Ambedkar Green Park' and renamed it. It also competes with the existing Ambedkar Sthal. He scale on the Google elucidates the extent of these interventions.

Source: Author

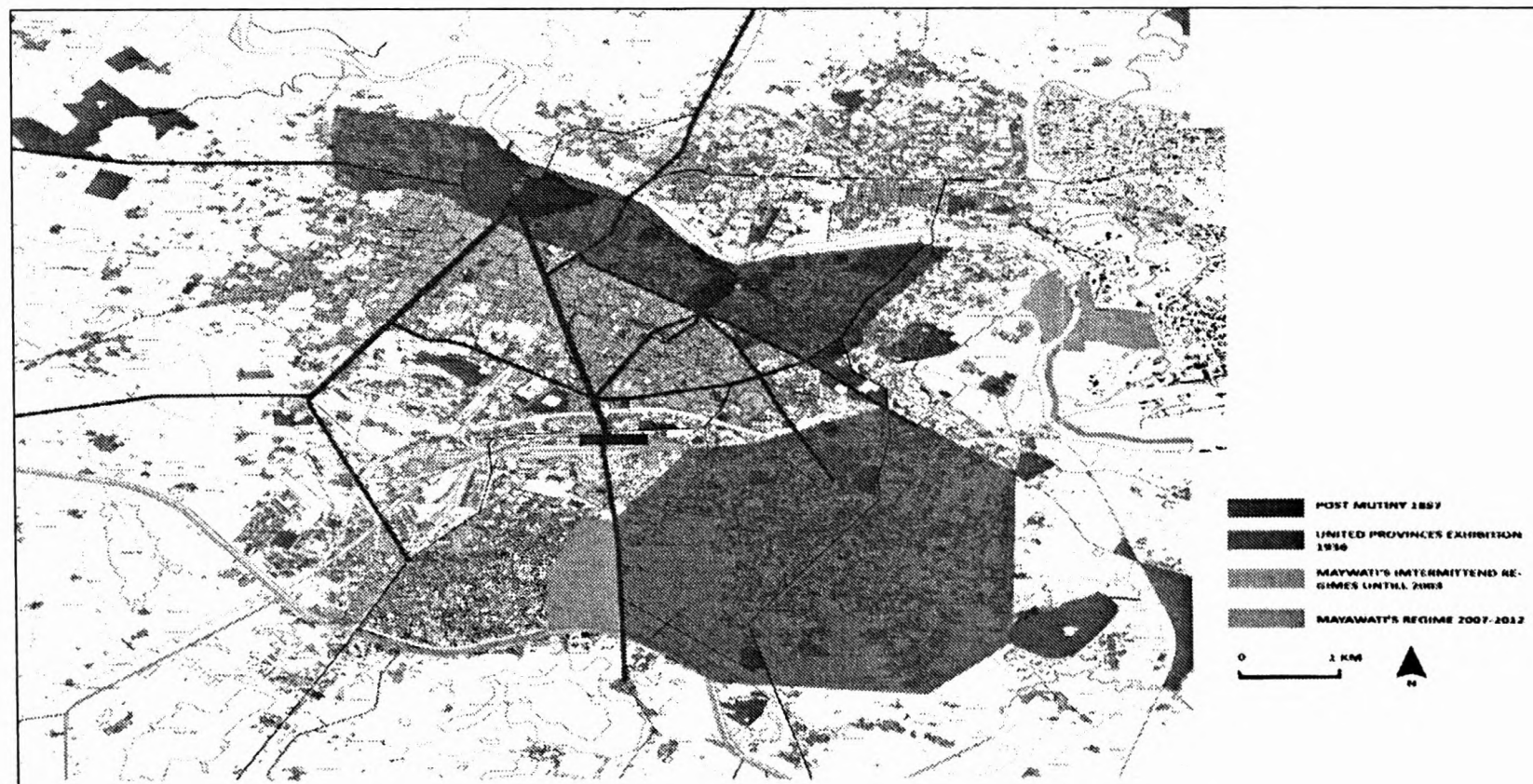


Figure 15, The Intervention concurrent to conflict in the history of Lucknow.

Source: Author

Conclusion

The methods of analysis applied reveal that all the public gestures studied have closed introverted domains. These domains have a fundamental disjunction with the public realm, even if they supposedly belong to it. They become impositions on the urban form as well as the social structure, concurrently. The urban transformations cannot be judged independent of their social intents. It is unquestionable that they are 'drastic' and change our cities and societies in a manner that most citizens would find startling or even upsetting.

It is also evident through the study that there are 'types' to the architecture of power, and the methods of 'empowering' are brought out in the analysis. Different configurations of the linkages and markers achieve the same ends in different ways and to varying degrees. Power is only a subset of the cycle of conflict and there are 'types' even to the phases of conflict.

However, the over-riding idea still remains, that he who occupies the largest and grandest, most ornamental space is the most powerful. These diagrams and gestures are the very same that are repeated through the history of imperialism; the intention being the very same- 'To impress superiority upon the citizens'.

'The idea of immortality and timelessness' is best effected through 'the edifice' is echoed in Deyan Sudjic's 'The Edifice Complex' and has been continually exploited in history. Not only is the making of it of great significance, but equally, so is the destruction of it. Mayawati's actions continue the same cycle. The main difference between electoral politics and the feudal past is that the continuity of political position is not guaranteed and power afforded to the position is not absolute.

The making of Indian cities which has been understood through the medieval and colonial layers has been witnessing the layers of democratic India. The politics of linguistics, religion, development and caste add new complexities which are concurrent to the physical transformation of the city. The various political parties encompass a plethora of societal aspirations. As Indian electoral politics are volatile, temporal and shifting trajectories, so is their relationship with the built environment. Elected governments have five year terms at the centre as well as the state and tend to be succeeded and preceded with parties often propagating contrasting agenda. Within their terms, each government may try to push its agenda to the maximum, only to be contradicted by the succeeding government. This often results in stark and sudden transformations to the built environments which could be termed 'one-time transformations'. The time and scale of these changes upsets social and spatial continuities and brings in the volatility. However we find such a condition increasingly common. What is noteworthy is the alacrity with which this process is polarising the physical and the social space.

What the analysis brings about is how the cycle of conflict is recurring and the principal actors of this conflict seem to have made 'public space' their battleground. The interests of the lay citizen seem to have taken the back seat.

The drastic changes of guard in Lucknow have always been perceived through the public gestures, mainly, the 'parks'. In effect, the urbanscape is suddenly overwhelmed by these 'sanctuaries of symbolism', each of which are termed as 'public spaces' and built by diverting massive amounts of public money. **As these events repeat themselves in a democracy, and a citizen is reduced to a mere victim, one may ask 'Public space for whom?'**

The questions raised, learnings extracted and what it implies for future designers/ researchers?

In an increasingly urbanising India with increasingly volatile coalition and identity politics, an understanding of the role of these processes in shaping our cities is indispensable. The learning from such a study could help designers and policy makers see how one could make the cities more democratic and inclusive.

The upheavals in Istanbul to resist urban transformations show that the phenomenon is not unique to the Indian democracy and there are lessons to be learnt across contexts where this phenomenon plays out.

All public gestures are loaded with social meaning and all spaces are used based on the manner in which they are perceived. Perception changes with changing meanings even if the morphology remains the same. Essentially it is meaning that is vital to public gestures; almost at par with the actual spatiality and form. It was changing social status through meaning in the built form, by invoking imperial grandness that was the primary intention in Mayawati's case. But was this the best way to use public space and public money?

A valid counter question to my above criticism is also valid. The idea of affirmative action to correct what is perceived as past social injustices is being applied in the political and administrative realms in India. The ethical question of whether it can be extended to the realm of 'architecture' needs to be considered with the fact that as the values change, the potency of such affirmative action wanes. The BSP's election loss to the Samajwadi Party has shown that related transformations would ensue. The counter movements tend to alienate factions by giving unduly favours to the previously suppressed. The opposing factions would again launch counter movements. This cycle of trying to correct history where the methods remain the same is endless.

In a democracy, constitutionally, public spaces are meant to serve all equally. However, the strong counter question is also equally valid that when you oppose radical change and choose to maintain the status quo in a condition of inequality, you are also party to the implicit injustice. Striking a balance is walking on a tight rope and the question still remains- 'Public Space for whom?'

This becomes a point of departure for further studies in contexts of developing nations trying to grapple with developmental politics and class/ caste politics side by side. In nations like ours, the immense socio-economic disparity always puts the designer in the dilemma as to whom is he designing for, where one social strata aspires to standards of recreational space found in developed countries, while another is still aspiring for housing and food and better livelihood !

Can the designer exceed the brief of the political masters? What are the spatial diagrams that can be evolved, Is there a diagram that address contexts of disparity and conflict?

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