



Ain Shams University
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Swiping for Urban Safety

Transformation of City's Public through the Delhi Metro

**A Thesis submitted in the Partial Fulfillment for the Requirement of the Degree
of Master of Science in Integrated Urbanism and Sustainable Design**

**by
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August 2020

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Abstract

In 2019, the Delhi government proposed to make the metro and bus travel free for women in an attempt to enhance safety in public transportation. While the bus subsidy was rolled out, the public discourse fervently opposed the metro scheme and thereby denied access for 'all' women to its securitized space. Coincidentally, major political events during the time of this research – the anti-CAA citizens movement, communalised violence in NE Delhi, migrant crisis from Covid-19 lockdown– surfaced systemic disenfranchisement of other marginal groups. The question, which publics are ideal in the imagination of the metro and how do they experience its unprecedented world-class comfort, hence became central to this thesis. The research is based on an ethnography in the Delhi Metro, conversations with metro and bus users, online user surveys, interviews with metro officials and engagements with city politics. An analysis of the conflicting socio-spatial relations reveals that safety in the metro is comprised of contestation in the ubiquitous women's coach, disciplining of Indian subjects and 'othering' of minority and precarious urban residents. I argue that the metro in its very formation is carved out of expulsions and is set up in a way that boundaries to accessing it can be multiplied- leading to re-configuration of the public and an erosion of our democratic engagement with public space. Thus, the innocuous act of swiping the metro card also reflects who has the power to enter its space; making the metro free would give access to all kinds of 'unwanted' bodies thereby rupturing the hegemonizing agendas central to the metro's seemingly undisputable image. As ongoing projects based on the Delhi Metro will rapidly transform Indian cities, this work urges that we imagine safe spaces that do not normalize exclusionary processes and dare to include city's diverse publics.

Keywords: Safety, Publics, World Class, Women, Delhi, Delhi Metro, Public Transportation, Expulsions, Safe Space

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Public and Safety in 2020

1.1 Agitated Background to Everyday Life

The timeline of this research coincides with some of the most important political events in the recent history of India. To begin with, a massive citizens movement challenging new laws and policies of the government deemed unjust was unfolding, a movement cut short by the Covid-19 pandemic. The resistance was against the policies of the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which has been in power in the Centre since 2014 and is currently running a consecutive second term. Over the past six years BJP rule has been instrumental in pursuing a politics of communalisation and the weakening of vital democratic institutions such as the media and the judiciary, turning into a mockery the often repeated term India as the ‘world’s largest democracy’. In 2019 India witnessed the largest number of internet shutdowns in the world¹ and has sunk to position 142 on the freedom of press index². A blanket garb of hyper-nationalism has become a way to mask critical issues such as country’s struggling economy, rising unemployment, violence against minorities, destruction of natural resources such as forests, and the privatisation of public assets. This project of nationalism works through creating an effective rhetoric of “us” vs “them”, by a continuous shifting of targets in order to materialise the long-term agenda of right-wing Hindutva movements of turning India into a Hindu nation.

While complete ‘totalizations’ are never possible (Amin & Thrift, 2002, p. 108), the attempt to reduce the country into a singular-fixed identity over the past six years has normalized exclusionary practices and violence against minority communities. This divisive power works not only from top to bottom but also

in a ‘network of relations’ (Foucault, 1995) creating divides amongst citizens. In a capillary action, it spreads through the media, grassroots organisations³, educational institutes, and judiciary by legitimising and favouring some citizens and publics over others. Even though the voices of dissent over these last six years had been numerous⁴, yet they have remained dispersed and dismissed as the majority of the country supports the current politics of the BJP. The catalyst that amplified, coordinated and brought these diverse and concerned voices together was the momentous turn when the government *called into question the very notion of being an Indian citizen*.

In December 2019, the BJP government passed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) which has been criticised as being unconstitutional⁵ and “fundamentally discriminatory” by the UN Human Rights office⁶ as it makes ‘religion’ a criteria for granting expedited Indian citizenship to non-Muslim religious minorities from the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Critics claim that when the Act will conjointly be enforced with the Central government’s plan of creating a nation-wide National Register of Citizens (NRC), it opens the door to render millions of people stateless, particularly Muslims⁷-the largest minority group in India.

When the NRC was conducted in the North Eastern state of Assam in 2019, it turned out to be a grave failure as over 1.9 million people were excluded⁸ from the list as they couldn’t produce the ‘requisite’ identity documents. Acquiring documents in India is not a straightforward procedure, as we do not have one centralised document issued to all citizens. Through highlighting experiences of women in Delhi’s urban poor spaces who learn to navigate vulnerabilities such as illiteracy, poverty, bureaucratic incompetency, and corruption, Sriraman (2013) shows how they develop what she calls “piecemeal pedagogies” in the process of acquiring identity documents. The government plans on creating an official list of Indian citizens by checking each person’s legal identification papers and marking those who cannot produce them as “doubtful” and further putting the onus on the person to prove that she is not an illegal immigrant in the country⁹.

1.2 Citizens Resistance in Delhi

Following the passing of the CAA, students of Jamia Milia Islamia university in Delhi staged peaceful protests which were countered by the Delhi Police by unleashing brutality and violence on the students. This incident sparked a

sustained nation-wide wave of protests since mid-December 2019. Protestors asserted their multifarious identities that are often put under threat- Muslim, tribal, women, trans, queer, Dalit, liberal, progressive, working class – to challenge the omnipresent oppressive patriarchal and nationalistic discourse. The anti-CAA movement started gaining further political weight as many of the non BJP state governments started passing resolutions against the CAA and NRC¹⁰. Apart from demanding a repeal of the laws, the protestors stood as guardians of the secular Constitution upon which post-colonial India was founded, insisting that it is the *people* that form the nation and not the government. There were group recitals of the Constitution’s Preamble across protest sites in many languages¹¹: “*We, the People of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a ‘sovereign socialist secular democratic republic’ and to secure to all its citizens ‘justice, liberty, equality and fraternity’*”¹².”



Figure 1.2 (a) Left: A map of India evoking the Indian Constitution to reject laws deemed discriminatory by the citizens at the Shaheen Bagh protest site, February 2020, Delhi; Credit: Author

Figure 1.2 (b) Right: Theatre plays, songs and performances were staged at the Jamia University protest site with the Preamble of the Indian Constitution as the backdrop, February 2020, Delhi; Credit: Author

While police brutality, arrests, hate crimes, and institutional apathy continued over the months wherein several people lost their lives, the movement kept growing stronger with echoes reverberating from remote villages of India to cities across the world¹³. *Shaheen Bagh*- an ordinary, dense, Muslim majority, working-class neighbourhood of Delhi- became a site for an indefinite sit-in protest when its residents occupied part of a highway. It was led by a continuously growing group of hijab/burqa wearing women who are stereotyped as ‘backward’ in the

popular imagination. The protest site had a tent where the women sat and a stage in front where speeches and performances were conducted. The bus stop was turned into a public library, shop fronts were taken up by volunteers to conduct activities with the children, a community kitchen was set-up, and resistance art filled the street, the foot-over bridge, and the walls. Calls for ‘*Azadi*’ (Freedom) by thousands of people in unison gained so much resonance¹⁴ that soon many ‘*Shaheen Baghs*’ sprouted all across the country, with several in Delhi itself.

Varun Grover, a prominent Indian stand-up comic and political satirist, wrote a poem titled “*Hum kagaz nahi dikaenge*” (The NRC Papers, We Won’t Show)¹⁵. It captures the atmosphere of people’s solidarity and gained widespread prominence as a symbol of this resistance.

<i>“tum police se lath pada doge,</i>	Raise your batons all you can,
<i>tum metro band karva doge,</i>	Shut down every metro you can
<i>Hum paidal-paidal aayenge,</i>	We will walk, We will flow
<i>Hum kagaz nahi dikhaenge”</i>	The NRC papers, We wont show

The poem (excerpt above) has been penned from the position of a person who possesses the requisite papers and can afford to commute in the metro; while the proposed counter-action for resistance is to walk- together, challenge the police-together, and refuse to show the identification papers- together. However, over the months that followed, ‘power’ found its way to break apart this collectivised front by targeting, maligning and unleashing violence on particular bodies and identities which put their bare survival at risk.

1.3 Threatening Safety of Vulnerable Publics

On February 8th, 2020 Delhi Assembly elections were held. The BJP’s campaign was unabashedly based on maligning *Shaheen Bagh*, its women protestors and to portray it as an eminent threat to the country. They nevertheless lost the elections to the *Aam Aadmi Party* (Common Man’s Party) which has a track record of welfare schemes aimed at improving government run education and health facilities and providing subsidies for public amenities to the urban poor. People across the country celebrated, with rightful scepticism¹⁶, that the majority of Delhiites had voted against BJP’s ‘politics of hate’.

Shortly after the election results, in late February coinciding with the US President Donald Trump's visit to India, a pogrom occurred in the far North-Eastern part of Delhi. Even though most of the national-media channels portrayed it as a Hindu-Muslim riot, but as someone who walked those neighbourhoods after the violence to volunteer with NGOs and Delhi government in their relief efforts, we witnessed a different reality. It was inevitable to spot that particularly Muslim residential, commercial and religious establishments had been targeted, looted, and destroyed resulting in a loss of over 50 lives. The Delhi Police which comes under the Central government's Ministry of Home Affairs has been accused of being complicit in the violence¹⁷.

The post-violence rehabilitation process was suspended abruptly as a nation-wide lockdown was announced to 'fight' corona virus on 24th March by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. An expected chaos ensued afterwards as a notice of only four hours was provided for preparations even to the State governments. At one end, well to do people crowded at the local shopping centres and started panic-buying to store supplies. And on the other, in the coming days the media started flooding with images of low-wage migrant workers walking back from Delhi and other cities to their villages- undertaking journeys of several days on foot as all means of public transportation had been curtailed. Being out of work, they could not afford to live in the city. The government's lack of planning and apathy pushed their lives to the edge amidst a pandemic.



Figure 1.3 (a) Left: People from targeted parts of Shiv Vihar in the N-E Delhi vacated and took shelter at relief camps after the violence. March 2020, Delhi; Credit: Author
Figure 1.3 (b) Right: Migrant workers undertook strenuous journeys on foot from cities back to their villages during Covid-19 lockdown, March 2020; Credit: IPS-Journal

1.4 The Imagined Ideal Public

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the chief architect of India's Constitution, in his last address to the Constituent Assembly in 1949 stressed that they should not be content with

India as a political democracy alone and must strive also for social democracy. He cautioned,

“On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In Politics we will be recognising the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril.” (The Wire 2019)

These contradictions, which have persisted and in many ways worsened over the past 70 years since India became a Republic and the Constitution came into effect, haunted the writing of this thesis under the Covid-19 lockdown from my home at a time when the ‘public’ has all but shrunk to a minimum. Yet, as many lives are deemed dispensable on behalf of the ‘safety’ of the people considered ideal in this political imagination, it has become imperative to re-surface the question: *What constitutes the Indian Public?* What do we make of the expulsions of the walking migrants, the protesting Muslim women, and the targets of the pogrom?

The question is political in its thrust and urban in its exploration. For the imagined ideal public must reside in the cities¹⁸ which are the centres for economic investment and socio-political negotiations. Feminist geographer Doreen Massey (2005, p. 152) deconstructs the public as a product of “conflictual and unequal social relations” by problematising the romanticisation attached with public/open space. An unregulated public (space), according to her (ibid.) reflects the larger social imagination where the heterogenous public with conflicting social identities works out for itself “who really is going to have the right to be there” or in other words, *who belongs*.

1.5 Scope of Investigation

The Delhi Metro is commonly regarded as an urban best-practice, as 21st century’s great Indian social-leveller for bringing a diverse range of people into the fold of its highly securitised, air-conditioned, technologically-advanced, and glittery-

clean modern space. Owing to the centrality of the city of Delhi and its public transportation infrastructure, we can assume that the public taking the Delhi Metro is certainly integral to the current socio-political imagination of the nation, but how is it constituted? This research, through an investigation of (conflicting) socio-spatial relations enabled by the metro explores the relationship between ‘public’ and ‘safety’ embodied by the discourse around the Delhi Metro.

During the first quarter of 2020 when the risks to public safety compounded, apart from the everyday commute, the Delhi Metro was also the space through which protestors ferried across the city’s various sites of resistance, volunteers poured into North-East Delhi, a space which was inhabited by the ‘flying public’ marked as potential Corona-carriers as they too took the metro from the airports to reach the city. Thus, the metro encapsulated and addressed these multiplying safety concerns and risks in particular ways.



Figure 1.5 (a) An overview of the political events that resulted in multiplying safety concerns in Delhi during the timeline of this research in early 2020, Source: Author

This thesis is divided into 8 chapters. After this introduction of Delhi in early 2020, in Chapter 2 I explore what makes the Delhi Metro crucial for the ongoing transformation of Indian cities and the manner in which the question of women’s safety is debated around it. Chapter 3 lays down the research methodology – my positionality as a researcher, mode of ethnographic and online engagements. In chapter 4, I draw upon literature to put forth - how excessive securitising of public space can lead to an erosion of its democratic nature which needs to be countered through an active engagement of the city’s diverse publics. After these first four chapters which situate the premise of this thesis, the remaining four will unravel the findings from different scales and perspectives. In Chapter 5, I

discuss the metro's spatiality as part of Delhi's dreams of attaining a world-class status and in contrast to the safe spaces created through the anti-CAA resistance. In chapter 6, an analysis of the fieldwork reveals in what ways safety inside the metro is experienced through socio-spatial contestations. I argue in chapter 7 that the metro results in a normalisation of expulsions – of certain publics and activities – that are not crucial to its image. I then discuss why unlike the bus, the metro has not been made free for women. Lastly in chapter 8, I conclude by reflecting upon the hope derived from the citizens movement of 2020 as to how safe public spaces can be set up in a manner that they set to include city's marginal and diverse publics.

1 See Subramanian, Nithya (Dec 27, 2019) 'In charts: India shut down the internet more than 100 times in 2019', Scroll.in

2 See 'India ranks 142nd on global press freedom index', Economic Times, April 22, 2020

3 The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is a right-wing, Hindu nationalist, paramilitary volunteer organization which is the parent organisation of the BJP's ideology. See Bhattacharya, Rajeev (2016) 'How the RSS Helped Fill the BJP's Grassroots Vacuum in Assam', The Caravan

4 Rigorously compiled in the 2019 book 'Battling for India' which captures resistance stories of writers, artists, activists, Dalit students, farmers, Muslim workers, Adivasis, academicians, and many more voices from the margins.

5 See <https://www.thequint.com/videos/news-videos/why-caa-is-unconstitutional-article-14-counters-to-government-arguments-supporting>, The Quint, 24 January, 2020

6 See Narrain, Arvind (2020), 'UN human rights chief's CAA plea puts the spotlight on India's international law obligations', Scroll.in

7 See Shahid, R. and Patel, C. (2020), Understanding India's Citizenship Controversy, Atlantic Council

8 See 'Assam NRC: What next for 1.9 million 'stateless' Indians?', BBC, 31 August, 2019

9 See Daniyal, Shoaib (2019), Scroll Investigation: Amit Shah's all-India NRC has already begun – with the NPR, Scroll.in

10 See Kumar, Aman H., 'Delhi Joins 19 State Governments Opposed to CAA/NPR/NRC', The Citizen, 15 March, 2020

11 See Harikrishnan, Charmy (2020), 'Anti-CAA protests: People hold up Constitution as the only document that matters', Economic Times

12 Preamble, The Constitution of India, 1950 (inc. changes from Forty-second Amendment Act, 1976)

13 I followed the information on protests through Instagram, which was a vital source for citizen mobilisation and relaying minute to minute updates. To cite an example, on January 17 there were protests in 35 places including Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Pune and New York. Also see: Acharjee, Sonali (2020) 'England, Germany, Switzerland: Anti-CAA protests break barriers, shake the world', India Today

14 See Farooqi, Farah (2020), 'To better understand the Shaheen Bagh protest, we must understand the locality itself', The Caravan; Also see Datta, PK (2020), 'Shaheen Bagh: A new kind of 'satyagraha' with a fresh grammar of protest', Business Standard

15 For the full poem recital in Hindi with English translation, refer here: "Ham Kagaz Nahin Dikhaenge" Varun Grover's Viral Cry Against The CAA-NRC", The Wire, 22 December 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQIvf2xycKo>

16 See Sharma, Supriya (2020). 'A victory for AAP won't mean a defeat of the BJP's hate campaign in Delhi. Here's why', Scroll.in

17 See: Ellis-Peterson H. & Rahman, S. A. (2020), 'Delhi's Muslims despair of justice after police implicated in riots', The Guardian, 16 March, 2020

18 India's increased investment in its urban areas over the years is part of what Gyan Prakash calls the 'The Urban turn'. Smart Cities Mission by Government of India is aimed at 100 cities across the country with a total cost of Rs.20,501 million. <http://smartcities.gov.in/content/>

Delhi Metro: The Indian Urban Question

2.1 Behind the Metro's 'Indisputable' Success

The Delhi Metro celebrated its 25th anniversary marking the formation of its operating body, Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) in 2019. Emulating the complicated governance structure of the host Capital city itselfⁱ, DMRC is shared in equal parts by the Central and State governments. With a total of 271 stations and a network of 373kms, the metro map is currently a shade card of over ten colours extending beyond the borders of Delhi. The Gurgaon Rapid Metro and Noida Metro Aqua line are extensions built in the cities of the neighbouring States and are part of the agglomeration forming the National Capital Region (NCR). Thus, the Delhi Metro is becoming a cohesive identity marker for this wider region.

Unlike most subway systems across the world, the metro in Delhi runs both over and under the ground. It passes through all five administrative boundaries² of the city which vary drastically in financial resources, population densities and urban morphology. The stations are underground in the central parts of the city to preserve the low-height and low-density landscape of Lutyen's Delhi covering politically important structures such as the Parliament of India and India Gate designed during the early 20th century British colonial rule. The next few stops are considered engineering marvels as they are situated underneath the highly-dense, heritage-laden, culturally rich, structurally fragile, and disputed property terrains built during the 17th century Mughal era. It is here in Old Delhi, at Chandni Chowk and Chawri Bazaar stations, that the metro's subterranean modern space and the layered and bustling city of Delhi meet most starkly. As

we move away from this nucleus, the metro lines emerge out and start dotting the skyline, enabling a renewed visual interaction with the city from within the train as it zooms at an elevated vantage point. For the people on the surface, their everyday sensory experience now includes and gets redrawn around the conspicuous metro infrastructure.



Figure 2.1 (a) The Delhi Metro map until 2019, including construction timeline of various metro lines over the years since DMRC's formation in 1995; Source: DMRC, adapted by the author

DMRC's customer-service driven model puts the experience of taking the metro in sharp contrast to other public transportation modes in Delhi such as the public bus. DMRC expresses 'efficiency, transparency in decision-making, and responsiveness to customers' as some of its fundamental values³. Apart from large number of metro personnel available at the stations, the complaint cell of DMRC is also active on twitter⁴, where train delays of even a few minutes are updated arduously and the customers that tag DMRC in their complaints receive immediate responses. The metro's modernity is shaped through incorporation of the latest technology and improvement with each new phase of construction to keep-up with the times. DMRC as an operating body comes across as the personification of a 'woke' millennial who checks the boxes for being environmentally conscious, socially considerate and technologically updated.

The sheer expanse of the metro network in Delhi is awe-inspiring. There is an overwhelming consensus around the project, behind which lies a home-grown tale narrating the metro's on-time and within-budget completion under the mystically-disciplined leadership of the 'Metro Man', DMRC's former director Mr. E. Sreedharan. "Those involved in the construction work, both in Japan and India, know that Delhi Metro would not have been a success if it weren't for him" (JICA, 2019). Delhi Metro is an Indianized adaptation of unifying Japanese work ethics, South Korean technology and early Swiss-German partnerships, living up to the city's desirable 'world-class' status. Emphasising the pride attached to attaining international standards, Mr. Sreedharan (2008) considers that the biggest achievement of DMRC is giving Indians the confidence to believe in themselves to be able to execute such technologically complex projects. He is highly influential in the mega-infrastructure and engineering discourse of India's future and has been advocating for all Indian cities with population over 3 million to 'immediately' get a metro.⁵



Figure 2.1 (b) A glimpse of the subterranean world of Rajiv Chowk station, a massive underground interchange station in the British-era Lutyen's Delhi, February 2020, Credit: Author



Figure 2.1 (c) An over ground metro station whose naming rights have been bought by the IndiGo airlines as part of attempts towards financial self-sustenance of the DMRC, Guru Dronacharya Metro station, February 2020, Credit: Author

2.2 Opportunity for ‘Planning’ Indian Cities

Historically speaking, Delhi like most other Indian cities cannot be considered a planned city despite its vociferous attempts to become one, primarily due to the failure to implement the ‘non-profitable’ parts of its Master Plan (Verma, 2002). Although Delhi’s first Master Plan was formulated in 1962 which neatly divided the land-use zoning based on modernist city planning principles, an overwhelming majority of the inhabitants occupy the unplanned parts of the city where the urban space has been organised through ‘post-facto regularisation’ (Bhan, 2009). Critiquing the Master Plan for wilful exclusions of the poor which resulted in proliferation of bastis⁶, sociologist Amita Baviskar (2003, p. 91) emphasizes:

“Delhi’s Master Plan envisaged a model city, prosperous, hygienic, and orderly, but failed to recognise that this construction could only be realised by the labours of large numbers of the working poor, for whom no provision had been made in the plans. Thus the building of planned

Delhi was mirrored in the simultaneous mushrooming of unplanned Delhi.”

In sharp contrast to this hotchpotch urban growth of the city, the metro is a designed space that cuts across Delhi's incoherent patchwork. The metro's physicality has been made possible through simultaneous processes of efficiency in bureaucratic management, production of techno-managerial imaginaries (Sadana, 2018), and immense socio-spatial restructuring (Dupont, 2008). Suggesting the metro as a form of city's master plan, scholar Rashmi Sadana (2010, p. 81) asserts, “in some cases, the city is being built up and around the metro lines”. Its network has steered new forms of transit-oriented development⁷ through altering land values, steering evictions and relocations, enabling property development around the stations, and altering mobility patterns in the city.

The ‘too good to be true’ aura of the Delhi Metro provides an opportunity for ‘planning’ other Indian cities through the introduction of similar high-investment metro infrastructure projects. DMRC is an acting consultant in different capacities for most of the upcoming metro projects in cities such as Mumbai, Bangalore and Hyderabad, and internationally for Jakarta (Indonesia). Any criticism by urbanists regarding the social and environmental costs, and by transportation experts regarding the economic feasibility of these projects are brushed under an ‘overall positive image’ (Siemiatycki, 2006) of the Delhi Metro which acts as a revered national benchmark.

These metro projects are rapidly changing the face of Indian cities. Along with restructuring the urban fabric and the city experience, Delhi's metro model aims to enable a transformation of the Indian Citizen itself through shaping behaviour in particular ways. Through her revelatory ethnographic engagement with the Delhi Metro, Sadana (2010, p. 78) observed a decade ago,

“People mostly sit quietly; they do not eat or drink or spit. Most noticeable is what is missing: heat, sweat, food, smell, trash. The elements have been reordered, enabling a different view of this city of 14 million. Sometimes passengers just look around, almost as if there is not enough to notice. Curiously, people look, but do not stare, even the multiple packs of young men in slim jeans.”

She situates (ibid.) the impressiveness of these behavioural changes through the experience of Nobel Laureate V.S. Naipul, “he remarks on the ‘endless announcements’ in the trains, and how people are ‘behaving with great dignity’; they were ‘following the rules’. And then he speculates that the experience of riding the metro will, over time, ‘make them more civil’”. Naipul’s remarks substantiate former DMRC director E. Sreedharan’s vision and foresight that, “the metro will totally transform our social culture giving us a sense of discipline, cleanliness and enhance multifold development of this cosmopolitan city” (Joshi, 2001).

2.3 Contestations around ‘Safety’ of Women

In what can be considered an audacious move, the Aam Aadmi Party led Delhi government proposed to make the metro and bus travel free for women in 2019 with the objective of improving women’s safety in the city. These proposals received a strong public backlash especially from the urban upper middle-classes. Many women dismissed the scheme and asserted that they would give up their subsidy voluntarily and condemned the Chief Minister for using such tricks to appease women voters by providing ‘freebies’ out of tax-payers money. These women along with some urban experts claimed that the scheme would be redundant in achieving its desired goals of improving women’s safety.

However, there were others who welcomed the move including *Pinjra Tod* (Breaking Cages), an autonomous women students collective which has also been at the forefront of the anti-CAA movement in Delhi. They had issued a statement saying,

“Our movement has consistently argued that access to affordable public transport is an important aspect of ensuring safety for women in public spaces. Such infrastructure increases women’s presence in public spaces at all hours, and creates safe spaces for those who cannot afford private vehicles, cabs etc. Access to public transport also enhances overall access to the city. It is not just about going from work/school to home and back but also broadens the horizon of what constitutes the city for women, and the way women can gain from, and contribute to social/public life. This scheme can be an important contribution in this way and give women more ownership of space and time in the city.” (Pinjra Tod, 2019)

While the bus subsidy was rolled out in 2019 and has led to an increase in women riders⁸ in the public buses, the same has not yet materialised for the metro. The Supreme Court of India worried about the financial health of the metro and saw the scheme as a breach of ‘public money’ and ‘public trust’; it even reprimanded the Delhi government by saying “do not think that courts are powerless” (Economic Times, 2019). ‘Metro Man’ Mr. Sreedharan wrote a letter dated 10.06.2019 to country’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi to step in and not approve Delhi government’s scheme⁹, “now, if ladies are to be given free travel concession in the Delhi Metro, it would set an alarming precedence to all other metros in the country”. It is appalling as he himself had earlier advocated in an interview¹⁰ that, “you should not think profitability in urban transport. You should not treat it as a business, which, of course, the government is doing. All state governments, municipalities, everyone considers urban transport business. It’s not a business. It’s a social service.”

As the fare fixation committee of DMRC includes members from Central government and the Judiciary along with Delhi government, it is unlikely that this subsidy scheme will be implemented. However, what needs to be highlighted here is the highly politicised nature of debates around women’s safety and the metro. The concerns put forward by upper and middle class women, the Indian Judiciary and esteemed ‘Metro Man’ reflect the ways in which social welfare schemes in India are increasingly dismissed, and these debates are “wielded as weapons to avoid the core issue, pretexts to avoid questions of justice” (Mehta, 2019).

2.4 Problem Delimitation and Research Objectives

Earlier in 2017, two consecutive fare hikes which had then been opposed by the AAP Delhi government are said to have resulted in a loss of 26 million annual riders for DMRC¹¹. If we look at it from the perspective of the riders, then for the economically struggling users the metro reversed back from being a lived reality to turning into a desirous representation of a world-class city. In a meeting with Mr. Rajnish Kumar Rana¹², the Deputy General Manager of Operations at DMRC, I asked about the impact of the 2017 fare hikes and of the 2019 bus subsidy for women on the metro. He agreed that the overall metro ridership did fall after the 2017 fare hikes, but also asserted that the women ridership remained stabilised. He reasoned, “women riders won’t go because no other transportation system provides as much safety and security”. Similarly reflecting on the increase in bus

ridership after the recent subsidy he observed that “the women who used to walk or could not afford to travel at all would be taking the bus now but our customers will not shift”.

Assuming from his statements an evident dependency on ‘safety’- women need it and the metro provides it – how and why is it then that the proposal to extend the metro to ‘all’ women for free is so controversial. And, why did the debates around metro subsidy assert that such provision will not help in improving women’s safety? There also emerges a need to scrutinise the nature of safety provided by the metro which is crucial for its image in order to retain its women customers. Likewise, what about the experience of these safety provisions makes women opt for the metro even when its costs become financially draining.

This contestation on behalf of the wider public that occurs around the notion of women’s safety in the Delhi Metro is the analytical subject of this research. Owing to the influence of the Delhi Metro on urban transformation in other Indian cities, this study though empirically grounded in Delhi has implications for other cities and their transformation through similar public transport infrastructures.

The core objectives of the research are:

1. Analysing the contestation around women’s safety in a ‘world-class city’ in the making.
2. Unpacking the ways in which the modern space of the metro shapes Indian subjects.
3. Constructing relations between the constitution of the public - as people and spaces- through provisions of safety.

¹ Delhi, being the capital of India, has a complicated governance structure where some departments such as the Police and Urban Development are under the Indian Central Govt., and others such as Education and Housing are under the State Govt. For more, see: <https://urbanage.lsecities.net/data/delhi-s-governance-structure-2007>

² Namely: North Delhi, South Delhi, and East Delhi Municipal Corporations, New Delhi Municipal Council and Delhi Cantonment Board

³ See DMRC Annual Report 2018-19 which lays down its vision, mission and culture. Source: www.delhimetrorail.com

⁴ <https://twitter.com/OfficialDMRC>

⁵ In 2012, 14 Indian cities had population over 3 million. Metro projects in all 7 cities with population over 5 million were already underway. See: B. Alokesh and J. Anand, ‘DMRC MD E Sreedharan says many Indian cities need metro rail urgently’, Business Today, January 9, 2012

⁶ *Basti* is local terminology in Delhi for ‘Slums’; It is derived from the Hindi word

'basna' which means habitation.

7 Unified Traffic and Transportation Infrastructure (Planning & Engineering) Centre (UTTIPEC) set up by Delhi Development Authority (DDA) is officially working on Transit Oriented Development proposals for the city. Access here: <http://www.uttipecc.nic.in/cms/transit-oriented-development--tod.php>

8 See Lalwani, Vijayata (2019), 'In Delhi, more women are taking free bus rides. Is AAP's scheme making them feel the city is safer?', Scroll.in

9 See "Metro Man' Sreedharan says Delhi Metro free ride for women a poll gimmick", Telegraph India, 21 June, 2019. To access the full letter: 'Sreedharan's stand misunderstanding, says Sisodia on AAP's free travel scheme', The Print, 14 June, 2019

10 See: B. Alokesh and J. Anand, 'DMRC MD E Sreedharan says many Indian cities need metro rail urgently', Business Today, January 9, 2012

11 See 'Delhi Metro ridership takes a hit after two fare hikes in 2017', Hindustan Times, March 16, 2018

12 Meeting held on March 05, 2020 at DGM/Operations office at Shastri Park Metro Depot

Fieldwork: Women and the Metro

3.1 Understanding Women's Safety

Back in 2016 after completing 5 years of architecture school in Delhi, I moved to Gurgaon, Delhi's glitzy-neoliberal neighbour. The metro is a seamless link between the two cities and it acted as my portal to Delhi for work and for mapping it through my love of walking. At Huda City Centre - the southern end station on the yellow line in Gurgaon – during morning rush hours the queue for men at the security checkpoint would often extend to 500 meters, whereas it was a breeze for women. It felt as if the tables had turned – the claim of women to this space of the metro seemed no less than the men, if not more. It also felt like a win for Delhi – a city that is marked with troubling inequalities where society is deeply stratified and patriarchal, and where violence on womxn's¹ bodies (encompassing cis, non-binary, trans women) is commonplace. Even though there is no general consensus on the ways for addressing this issue, yet it remains too conspicuous to be brushed aside.

The brutal gang-rape of a 23-year-old woman on a private-company operated bus at night in 2012 put Delhi internationally under severe scrutiny for gender-based violence. The city was shamed as the rape capital of India which provided an opportunity and opening for multi-perspective public discourses around women's safety. The focus of media's coverage on the 'realm of spectacularity' (Lodhia, 2015) of this particular incident has been critiqued by feminist scholars as resulting in 'exceptionalizing this event' (Dutta & Sircar, 2013) which threatens to erase past experiences of violence especially against women from the margins.

It also tends to disproportionately focus the spotlight on gender violence in public spaces committed by strangers which constitute only a small proportion of the total reported cases in the country, most violent acts being committed by persons known to the victim. Moreover, the discourse reflects a class-bias in the unjust articulation that the problem is posed only by working-class men (Roychodhury, 2013), thus putting the onus of a systemic problem² on certain bodies alone. The overwhelming public outcry led to the formation of a committee to recommend amendments to the Criminal Law so as to provide for quicker trial and enhanced punishment for criminals accused of committing sexual assault against women³. The outcome, the ‘Justice Verma Committee report’ is considered a progressive document which enables a structural deconstruction of violence against womxn in India. It “situates violence within societal and institutional structures” and highlights “limited ideological framework within which some forms gendered violence have been conceived” (Lodhia, 2015, p. 97).

It also reprimands the State’s flawed perpetuation of “the crime of rape as deeply embedded in ideas about shame, honor, marriageability and community” (ibid., p. 98) which curtails women’s movement by looking to provide safety through family and state ‘protection’ and not by enabling women’s autonomy. The (in)ability of womxn to move freely and construction of gender norms are closely linked. Doreen Massey (1994) draws these connections in her seminal work ‘Space, Place and Gender’:

“The limitation of women’s mobility, in terms both of identity and space, has been in some cultural contexts a crucial means of subordination.”
(p. 179) ... *“Spatial control, whether enforced through the power of convention or symbolism, or through the straightforward threat of violence, can be a fundamental element in the constitution of gender in its (highly varied) forms.”* (p. 180)

These norms that limit womxn’s access to public space (Day, 1999) result in a performance of gender (Butler, 1990), and moderation of behaviour to match heteronormative standards of the society. To counteract these unequal social and power relations that result in subjugation in their attempt to ensure safety, feminist activists and theorists have stressed on the ‘right to risk’ in the city (Phadke, 2013) as a proposition that rests on empirical analysis that ‘the city offers women freedom’ (Wilson, 1991). However, a mere presence of women

in the public space is not enough, but in her definition of appropriating the French concept of a Flâneur for women as ‘Flâneuse’ Elkin (2017) stresses on an inversion of the gaze, from women being ‘looked at’ to women ‘looking’. Through ‘Why Loiter?’ (2011) which developed into a social movement, the authors argue that an articulation of safety for everyone in the city must derive from a point of access and freedom and not that of regulations and restrictions.

3.1.1 *When in the Metro*

The metro in Delhi is regarded to have significantly impacted mobility experiences and travel patterns in the city, specifically for women. Researchers have attributed it to several reasons, a women’s only compartment that provides a guarded private-like space, distinctively tamed male behaviour in the metro, or/and the novelty of it as compared to the public bus.

“The metro train which has brought unprecedented comfort to public transport has further added to this comfort by introducing an exclusive ladies coach. The ladies coach has become a phenomenon in the Delhi Metro, promising a safer journey to its women passengers.” (Tara, 2011, p. 71)

“There is a kind of gender neutrality on the metro, even though there are many more men, and even though the security is divided on gendered lines.” (Sadana, 2010, p. 82)

“On entering the Metro, one is literally transported to a quite different world. ... The Metro brings the sexes together which, while it can create further problems down the road, is, for the moment at least, literally creating new forms of gendered sociality that was unthinkable in Delhi barely a few years ago.” (Baber, 2010, pp. 479, 480)

These narratives resonate closely to my own ‘emancipatory’ experiences of traveling in the Delhi Metro. However, speaking of women’s safety while taking into account the class-caste-gender-community nexus of the Indian polity, Phadke et al. (2009) argue that the discourse of safety is not an inclusive one and tends to divide people into ‘us’ and ‘them’ by tacitly sanctioning violence against ‘them’ in order to protect ‘us’. I was not just any woman, but a ‘young, urban-professional, able-bodied, upper-caste, Hindu, heterosexual’ woman “around

whom the narratives of respectability are structured in contemporary India” (ibid., p. 187). My position as a user of the metro was, therefore, marked through my relative privilege. How do the narratives and experiences of safety alter with the shifting of these multifarious identities that we embody?



Figure 3.1 (a) Illustration to represent 'hybridisation of culture' embodied by the Delhi Metro created for the course 'New Theory of Urbanisation' by Dr. Zegeye Mamo at ABK-Stuttgart, 2019. This mental map captures my 'fascination' with the Delhi Metro as a frequent commuter. Source: Author

3.2 Researcher in the Field

I had taken the initial couple of weeks in February to immerse myself in the metro and observe. However, one cannot experience it in isolation. I walked or took a cycle-rickshaw to the closest station from where I stayed - Ashram metro station on the pink line at a distance of 1.5 kilometres. On days when I had to travel to areas not easily connected to the pink line, I would take an auto or an uber moto to be dropped at the Jangpura station on the violet line. Then there were yet other places for which I took the bus as google maps showed it to be the quickest option, or lastly a cab when nothing else seemed feasible.

Learning from these experiences, my key investigation focus remained ‘on’ the metro, but it was not limited to ‘inside’ its premises.

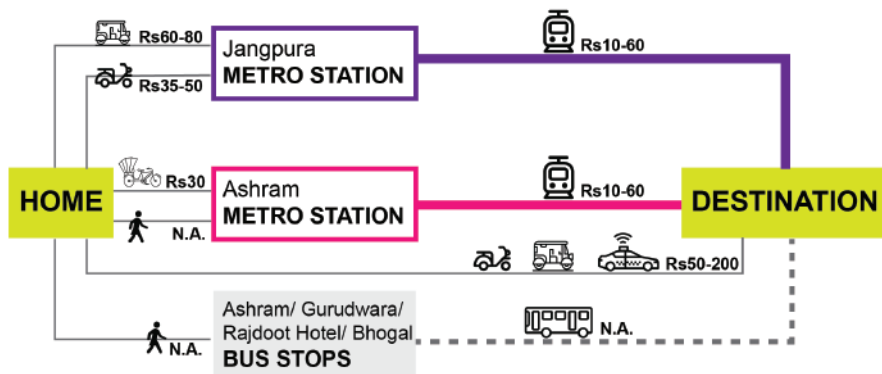


Figure 3.2 (a) Choosing a mobility mode is driven by a complex permutation combination of ‘availability x time x cost x comfort’. The diagram represents the modes I took and the attached cost in Indian rupees during the fieldwork in early 2020. The bus travel was free at the time due to the subsidy for women but otherwise bus fares range between Rs5-15 for ordinary buses and Rs10-25 for A/C buses. Source: Author

I positioned myself in the urban field as a participant-observer to develop an understanding of the ‘observed reality’ in order to highlight its complexities and contradictions. The objective was to avoid a simplistic ‘descriptive’ view where all experiences hold equal importance as it results in an erasure of existing social hierarchies in the society. Neither was the attempt to provide a ‘deterministic’ modernist view in which things are seen from an all-knowing position. I aimed to develop a ‘relational’ reading of the observations and interviews by critically reflecting through my personal position in the urban landscape of Delhi - spatially, socially and politically.

I tried to make sense of the ‘altered subjectivity’ (Plowman, 2003) that comes with describing other people’s lived realities through building relations in the field empathetically and in solidarity. Empathy lies at the core of feminist politics where polyvocality - multiple voices and realities - are made sense of in relation to structural stratification of the society. If empathy directed the ‘seeing’ and ‘listening’, then writing was my tool for ‘understanding’. Personal, reflective and prose-like mode of writing is considered an attribute of new ethnography as it “aims to be truer to the emotional and embodied forms of knowledge” (Saukko, 2003, p. 58).

In a research conducted from a feminist perspective, one acknowledges the possibility of building on and engaging with politics (Saukko, 2003). Although I actively looked for women and their experiences, my lens focused on ‘intersectionality’ which Gloria Steinman describes as a ‘patchwork quilt’, “we belong to patches of different colours and patterns, all separate, and yet sewn together” (Sharma, 2016). Striking up a conversation by evoking a blanket idea of women’s safety was useful in approaching strangers as everyone acknowledged it to be a *legitimate* concern, but slowly the conversation would pixelate revealing their position in the patchwork.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

I relied on my ‘personal sense’ to approach women who I perceived did not seem too occupied and would be willing to talk; initially by visiting the neighbourhood park. Slowly after gaining confidence, I forged conversations with fellow Delhiites while walking to the metro stations, at local shops, on the streets, in the buses, at the bus stops, on the metro’s platforms, station steps, and in the trains. I observed, experienced, chatted with many strangers, had intimate talks with friends alongside free-wheeling conversations with the DMRC officials, and participated in the political events of the city – all of which came together as the field notes from the beginning of February to mid-March, 2020.

After the Covid-19 lockdown was imposed and the metro was shut, I continued engaging online through social media channels. There was a remarkable difference between the people I could reach out to through both these modes. Earlier when I was out in the field I spoke to women across different age groups and sections of society but with the online medium it narrowed down to my friends and their networks, including men.

A critical mental note during the ethnographic immersion was to focus on ‘what’ was happening or being said and to side line the impulse to jump to an explanation of ‘why’ it was happening or being said (Emerson, et al., 2011). It was not always possible to take notes or seek permission for making voice recordings because many of the interactions were spontaneous, short and sometimes even on the move. The strategy that helped my inadequate memory retention was to make audio notes in the phone right after the conversation would end to capture verbatim as much as possible, and later to type them down as field jottings on the next morning.

Considering the turbulent time of the fieldwork which were also emotionally challenging for many people, I felt hesitant in approaching people as I did not wish to impose. A reminder from a friend helped me in overcoming this inhibition. He said that we are part of a community where we are *obliged* to help others in the pursuit of knowledge formation- I was entitled to seek help just like I should be willing to extend it. Given the highly politicised nature of the current time most names have been altered except for those holding official designations at DMRC, to ensure anonymity and discretion of the participants.

3.3.1 Ethnographic Immersion

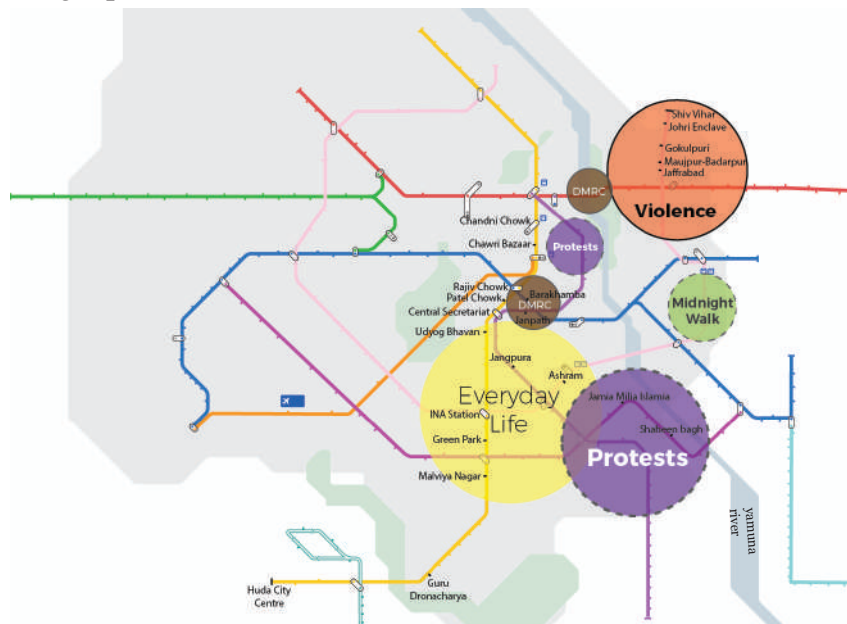


Figure 3.3.1 (a) My Fieldwork Footprint covered stations on 5 metro lines- pink, magenta, violet, red, and yellow. Here I have mentioned the names of the stations which have been particularly referenced at some point in this research, February-March 2020, Source: Author

As the map depicts, my fieldwork was mostly limited to the eastern and central parts, covering only a small area of this expansive city. The part of Delhi which lies to the east of the river is called '*Yamuna-paar*' or trans-Yamuna, and does not feature on the city's tourist guidebooks. It is here that the anti-Muslim violence took place and where I volunteered in efforts for rehabilitating the victims of the violence. I also participated in a women's only midnight walk in East Delhi. The two key nodes of the anti-CAA protests in Delhi, Jamia Milia Islamia university and *Shaheen Bagh*, are situated towards the south-eastern periphery of the city. My everyday footprint mostly revolved in the quintessential central and south Delhi- the parts which take up an overwhelming share in the imagination and resources of the city. The head office of DMRC is situated in central Delhi and the other one was at a metro train depot situated in the north of the city.

The orderly and neat lines of the metro which read as a connected system were disrupted by the fieldwork sites- the idea of safety could not be stuffed inside the metro and called to be read relationally to these wider socio-political occurrences in the city.

3.3.2 Online Engagement

During the lockdown from late March onwards, I continued to gather experiences around safety in the metro through social media platforms of Facebook and Instagram. Later to reach out to a wider audience, I circulated a questionnaire created on Google Forms. As this mode does not allow for a conversational style of engagement, I limited it to a specific topic which was to collect stories of the metro users regarding safety negotiations they had with the metro's security staff. In all, 57 responses were received from the form and 22 through direct messages.

It is interesting to note that almost all responses were from persons between the age of 18-30, men : the women ratio of the respondents was 1:1 with only one response from a non-binary person. The majority of the persons did not find being stopped by the metro security staff unreasonable. These statistics could reflect on a) the mode of engagement- relation between internet accessibility and age groups, b) limitation of my networks- similar age groups and largely cisgender persons.

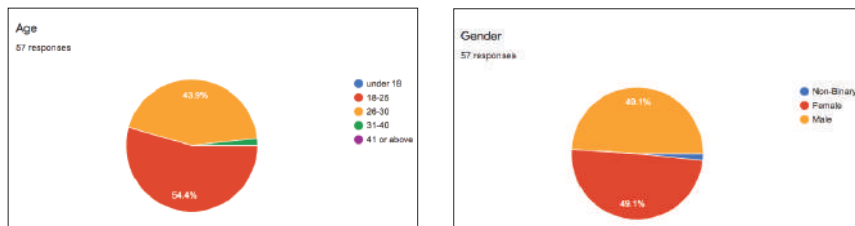


Figure 3.3.2 (a) Left: Analysis for 'Age groups' for the 57 responses. Source: Google Forms
Figure 3.3.2 (b) Right: Analysis for 'Gender' for the 57 responses. Source: Google Forms

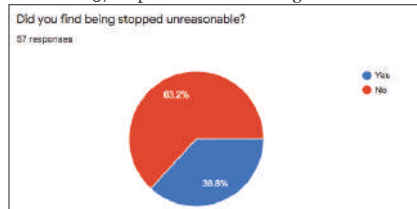


Figure 3.3.2 (c) Over 60% respondents did not find being stopped by the Metro security staff unreasonable. Source: Google Forms

Forbidden in the Metro!

Hi! This survey is part of an Urbanism Masters Thesis research exploring safety measures in the Delhi Metro and their implication on citizen behaviour. The idea here is to collect stories around mundane objects that came under scrutiny by the Metro Security Staff. Looking forward to your Metro Stories. Please feel free to write about multiple incidents in the same form/ send multiple responses.

What object(s) were you stopped for by the Metro Security Staff? (e.g. plants, stationery, camera equipment) *

Short answer text

At which Metro Station? (or 'line' if you don't remember the exact station)

Short answer text

When did this incident occur? (Roughly)

Short answer text

How did the negotiation end? (Could you successfully convince them?) *

Short answer text

Did you find being stopped unreasonable?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Figure 3.3.2 (d) Part of the Questionnaire created on Google Forms. Source: Author

3.3.3 Content Analysis

To structure the fieldnotes- observations, conversations and interviews- I used the technique of mind-mapping. The first step was to create broad categories around the “Delhi Metro” - [Space, System, Behaviour, Perception, Access] based on the emerging themes from the fieldnotes.



Figure 3.3.3 (a) The initial step of mind-mapping the fieldnotes

After a basic round with pen and paper I found it useful to switch to a software as the data set was very large. The X-Mind software enabled easy editing and coding. Next step was to create sub-categories, such as for “Space”- [women’s coach, mind space, non-ticketed areas, escalators, station surroundings]- and the verbatim field notes were sorted under these.

These fieldnotes were simplified to extract concepts and ideas that were being referred to by the participant or in my own observations. For example participant Anjali’s comment in reference to threat of sexual harassment, “one can go to the ladies coach in case anything happens” was classified under [Delhi Metro – Space – Women’s Coach] and the text was re-written to extract concepts as: *A ‘private’, ‘safe space’ amidst the public space of the Metro- gives women more ‘control’ by setting a ‘boundary’.* These concepts were then ordered as codes under “Space”.

The exercise was very useful to help spot repetition of ideas and also contradictions in the experiences of different persons to situate them in the power laden socio-spatial urban field. The next task was to understand these concepts emerging from the field in relation to those derived from reviewing literature to jointly build a background for the analysis.

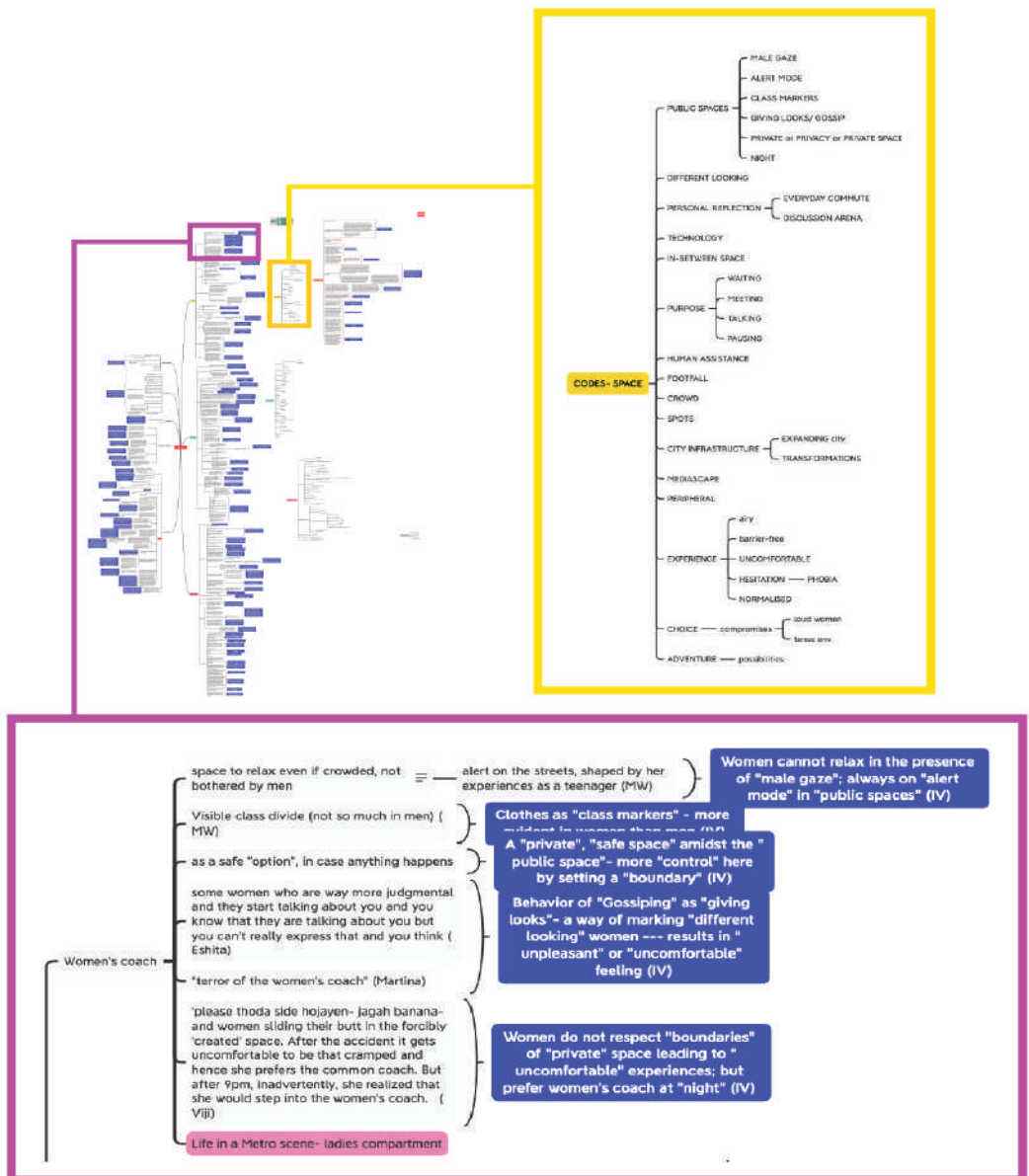


Figure 3.3.3. (b) A small section of the Mind Map [Delhi Metro – Space – Women's Coach] to illustrate the content analysis technique through structuring of data, simplification to extract ideas, and finally coding of emerging concepts. Source: Author; created on X-Mind

1 I use womxn here specifically as the violence is committed on not just cisgender women but on bodies that deviate from the heteronormative 'standards' - womxn enables "inclusion of trans, nonbinary, womxn of color, womxn with disabilities and all other marginalized genders" (Why We Should Use The Word Womxn And Not Women, Shethepeople.tv, April 2, 2020)

2 For a contemporary account on how women are subjugated across India in different ways to restrict their autonomy in order to perpetuate caste and religious purity, and how they act as pawns in the nationalistic agenda of the BJP refer to: Kavita Krishnan's book titled 'Fearless Freedom' (2019)

3 To access full Justice Verma Committee Report: <https://www.prsindia.org/report-summaries/justice-verma-committee-report-summary>

Public Space: Securitising or Democratising?

4.1 Security Updates from the Delhi Metro

Between the beginning of the anti-CAA protests in December 2019 and the nationwide Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020, the Delhi Metro shut down some of its stations temporarily for security concerns, several times. The stations included the ones close to Delhi's popular protest sites of Jantar Mantar and India Gate, ones near the Delhi Police Headquarters, those surrounding the anti-CAA sit-in protest sites such as Shaheen Bagh and Jamia Milia Islamia University, or the ones in the North-East Delhi where the violence had occurred. The metro did not remain a 'neutral' space for only everyday mobility but also became a conduit in facilitating (or not) the ensuing politics in the city. These exceptional events of 2020 surface the politicized nature of the metro which might have been otherwise hard to pin-point.

The metro, then, is both a securitised space but also a field for democratic engagement in the city. Do both these purposes contradict each other? In the following sub-sections I draw upon concepts from multi-disciplinary literature on 'public space', to theorise the causes and mechanisms behind space as being i) securitised and ii) democratised. Following it, the 'public' in public space is articulated in order to contextualise securitising and democratising as complexities embedded in the uneven socio-political urban field.

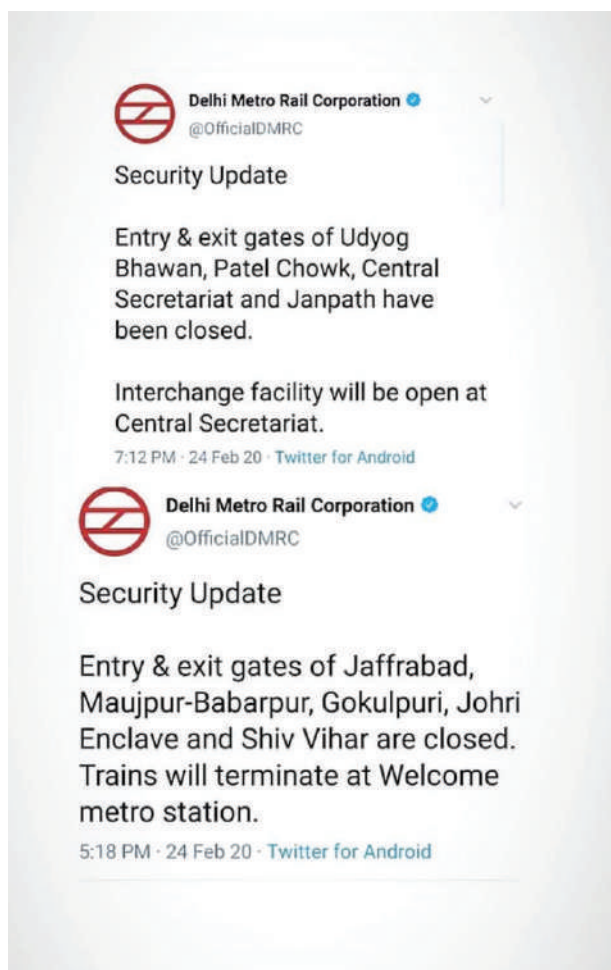


Figure 4.1 (a) Above: Citizen mass mobilization was called for the day after Delhi Police unlawfully entered the Jami Milia Islamia University and lathi-charged the protesting students, December 16, 2019, Screenshot source: Twitter

Figure 4.1 (b) Below: The day violence in N-E Delhi escalated, citizen mobilization was called for at Delhi's core protest sites of Jantar Mantar and India Gate- all the stations nearby were closed. Also, the stations on the pink line in the violence targeted areas were shut down until further notice, February 24, 2020, Screenshot source: Twitter

4.2 Securitising Space for Compounding Risks

While referring to terrorism and crime, W. Luke (2004, p. 135) states in an alarming description that as much the transportation networks of the city are part of a settled urban life, they are also “technostructured terrains perfectly suited for anonymous movements, undetected mobilizations, and shocking murders. They shape and steer large numbers of targets with nowhere to hide, no place to run, and no way to resist.” These networks that support flows of neoliberal capital and workforce are critical for ensuring efficiency within a capitalistic society. It is no surprise then that along with the airports, metro systems across the globe are also consciously designed for ‘keeping out crime’ (Vigne, 1996). These crimes may range anything from petty pickpocketing to mass bombing.

“The brilliantly staged risk of globalization has already become an instrument for re-opening the issue of power in society. By invoking the horrors of globalization, everything can be called into question: trade unions, of course, but also the welfare state, maxims of national policy and, it goes without saying, welfare assistance.” (Beck, 2000, p. 214)

Globalisation makes room for expedited movement of finance, people, and culture across national boundaries, but it is also increasingly articulated by nation-state governments as a threat to the collective national identity. This has led in a ‘production of official fear’ as a response to an increased insecurity born out of uncontrollable liquid power that transgresses nation-state boundaries and navigates through global ‘spaces of flows’ (Bauman, 2004). According to Ulrich Beck, who theorises that our times are defined by what he calls the ‘risk society’, such threats are partly real but they are also socio-politically constructed. He explains that risks are the “believed expectation of catastrophes” which are not bound by societal limitations and can thus be “generalized and fabricated as a global phenomenon” (Wimmer & Quandt, 2006). Although his analysis and theorisations are Eurocentric, but because the way in which power structures are laid out globally they also influence and impact nations of the global south.

Beck (2000, p. 220) also stresses on the ability of the risk to self-transform from ‘technical to economic risks, market risk, health risk, political risk and so on’. In a similar argument pushing us to develop a multi-dimensional understanding of risks, Bruno Latour asked nearly two decades ago, “Can anyone imagine a study that would treat the ozone hole as simultaneously naturalized, sociologized and

deconstructed?” (1993, p. 6). If not then, we can certainly do so now as we live through the Covid-19 experience, a global pandemic which has generated varied response from different governments based on a ‘perceived’ understanding of the risks involved despite the World Health Organization’s advisory. These risks transcended from purely the domains of public health into the economic and socio-political terrains.

It has also become a moment for authorities to launch new surveillance tools to monitor people in ways previously unimaginable and critics are sceptical that these measures would not be kept temporary (Harari, 2020). Thus the real ‘risk’ of the pandemic can be used as an opportunity to instil non-democratic practices by putting the public under stricter authoritative scrutiny. According to Foucault, visibility in the modern disciplinary age, is a trap (1995, p. 200). Here “to be ‘in public’ is to have one’s conduct exposed to the normative gaze of others, and exposure to this gaze is one of the technologies of governance which incite us to regulate our own conduct with regard to what is ‘appropriate’ when in public” (Ivenson, 2007, p. 214).

Aarogya Setu, a high-surveillance central government endorsed mobile application that tracks if you have come in contact with a corona carrier has been planned to be made mandatory when the metro in Delhi re-opens. Such additional layer of security in the metro would impinge on the fundamental right to privacy of its users, thus compromising the democratic purpose of the metro as a public transportation system.

4.3 Democratising Space through Negotiations

The experiences of post 9/11 developments in the US reveal how in the name of fighting terrorism, public space is secured *from* the public rather than *for* it by increasing barricading within the city. Marcuse argues, “security becomes the justification for measures that threaten the core of urban social and political life” (2004, p. 275), in turn restricting activities such as demonstrations and protests deemed essential for democratic societies. Processes where self-sufficient enclaves and business districts are created for upper-class residents of the society which Marcuse (2004) refers as ‘citadelization’ have become commonplace. People who service these gated enclaves such as domestic help, vendors, plumbers, etc. are provided conditional access after validation of identity cards within restricted timings. Segregation by income in the city is

accentuated by creating a desirability for such an exclusionary form of safety.

The trends in ‘world-class’ cities across the globe state that public spaces have been diminishing or are being privatized to cater to a consumeristic global culture (Day, 1999). Kurt Ivenson (2007) highlights that this criticism of privatization of public space is often linked to evoking a nostalgia of the lost ‘publicness’ of open spaces where a degradation of the current quality of spaces is put in contrast to a superior and a cohesive past. He critiques this position by drawing upon Don Mitchell that “access to public space is always a product of political struggle” and that “public spaces have never been ‘open to all’” (ibid., p. 7). Public space through this articulation is not something to be provided but rather actively created and constructed through political labour. In this spirit, Myriam Houssay-Holzschuch calls for a sustained dissing as a way of engaging with democratic public space,

“The state is massively present in public space, a space that is very much conceived in Lefebvrian terms. ... This is why sustained dissing should mark our physical and political engagement with public space: a healthy disrespect for state-imposed norms, behavioural or otherwise, that need to be systematically and critically reassessed in the light of the common good; open dissent if required. In other words, we should reintroduce differences, looseness, unpredictability and, well, a bit of chaos into urban space.” (2016, p. 219)

For John Allen (2006), a softer ‘ambient power’ does not actively criminalize behaviours but creates a seductive quality through atmospheric attunements in the form of a combination of suggestive practices that subtly direct social interactions. Mosselson (2018) complicates the discussion on securitizing public spaces by suggesting a ‘need’ for security, especially by groups on the margins for whom crime and vulnerability are part of an everyday lived reality. He stresses on the mundane everydayness of security as a need to construct urban order,

“Practices have been used to shape people’s actions and create a situation in which regulation is part of everyday life. It is a decidedly more subtle way of exercising power and shaping urban space. Rather than relying on spectacular, coercive force, it works on people’s dispositions and attitudes by shaping ‘material-affective relations’.” (ibid., p. 12)

4.4 City Public as Multiple and Diverse

In order for public spaces to retain their ‘public’ character, Jeffrey Hou (2012) makes a distinction between ‘institutional’ public spaces which are provided and regulated by the state and ‘insurgent’ public spaces shaped through appropriation and occupation using guerrilla tactics to transcend the legal domain of provision. He attributes the loss of public space to a deeper crisis of ‘privatisation of the political system’ which requires “the attention and intervention of a much more active and engaged public, a public that is willing and capable of speaking up and mobilizing politically to change the system” (ibid, p. 97). However, the ‘public’ is put out as a homogenous and cohesive entity in Hou’s articulation.

K. Day’s gendered reading of public space states that, “oppression and freedom are not tied to the qualities of places only, but rather to the meanings of these qualities in the context of individual identity” (1999, p. 174). In that sense, any singular way of imagining the public would risk mirroring the larger hegemonic relations of the society. Nancy Fraser (1990) engages in a historical reading and critique of the bourgeois ‘Public Sphere’ as defined by Habermas in order to re-define the concept to make it relevant for democracy in late-capitalistic societies. She reveals that along with the liberal-bourgeois public sphere there existed other “subaltern counterpublics” which are critical to institutionalize democracy,

“members of subordinated social groups-women, workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians- have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics. I propose to call these subaltern counterpublics in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs. ... In general, the proliferation of subaltern counterpublics means a widening of discursive contestation, and that is a good thing in stratified societies.” (ibid, p. 67)

The existence of these multiple arenas means that people participate in more than one public and these orientations are not fixed and remain open to re-groupment. This idea resonates with Iris Marion Young’s (1990) articulation of “city life as a normative ideal” which according to her has the potentiality of incorporating difference without exclusion by demanding justice through representation of diversity in decision-making processes. A heterogeneous public

critical for achieving this objective embodies two political ideals, “a) no actions to be forced into privacy b) no practices excluded from being subject to public discussion” (ibid., p. 120). Here, the differences remain unassimilated and the diverse publics are accepting of other cultures even if they do not understand them completely.

Ivenson (2007) cautions us that such an ideal of a ‘public city’ relies on the benevolence of dominant publics as it requires for them to be reasonable and accepting of the minorities and those on the margins. He argues that a revised articulation of the concept “must have at its heart a concern with the political labours of people who engage in struggles to make particular publics in particular contexts” (ibid, p. 232). The strength of the public city, Ivenson stresses, lies in the understanding of it as negotiations that occur within a field of politics.

Spatiality: Reading Delhi through the Metro

Until now I have situated the Delhi Metro in relation to i) the city's politics during the time of the fieldwork, ii) the metro's paramount influence on the trajectory of public transportation in the country, iii) its centrality to the question of women's safety and iv) as part of the urban discourse regarding weakening of democratic nature of public space through excessive securitising. From this chapter onwards, I will begin 'unravelling' the particular ways in which the safety experiences of city's diverse publics is shaped through and around the metro. In this chapter, I discuss the notion of safety in the metro as it being part of the 'world-class' city in the making and then in contrast to the city's margins created by the anti-CAA resistance.

5.1 Making of 'World Class' Aesthetics

"Stepping into the metro the first time, breathing the airconditioning, feeling the smooth silver seat beneath, listening to the clear announcements—this was world-class, we knew! It is the seductive power of 'world-class'—its promise of streamlined ease and efficiency—that keeps us hooked as we fight our way through the congestion, commercialisation and clangour that currently define Delhi." (Baviskar, 2020, p. 6)

The feminist geographer Doreen Massey (1994) defines spatiality as a configuration of dynamic social relations which are "inevitably and everywhere imbued with power and meaning and symbolism" (p. 3). She brings to our attention that this spatiality of power is laid out in terms of 'stretched-out social relations' which are not limited by cartographic boundaries but constantly derive signification at

multiple levels- local, national, and global. The process of becoming world-class, then, manifests through multiple scales and by re-configuring the existing urban social and power relations.

A decade ago Delhi hosted the 2010 Commonwealth Games, an international sporting event part of the colonial legacy from the British empire. These Games were seen as the ideal opportunity to elevate the city to a ‘world-class’ status in the eyes of a global audience. The tools and mechanisms used to attempt this elevation have been referred to as an ‘aestheticization of city-spaces’ (Bhan, 2009). The physical urban form of the city was altered rapidly in the years leading up to the Games through the construction of massive infrastructure projects such as the metro and flyovers (Dupont, 2008), and simultaneously by an extensive program of slum demolitions to ensure urban ‘beautification’. In the first five years of the 21st century, over half of the city’s 1160 *bastis*, home to more than a quarter of Delhi’s population, were evicted and majority of them were not resettled (Baviskar, 2006).

5.1.1 Class-Politics of Aestheticisation

Investigations by researchers into these evictions have revealed that more than the city’s development authorities, they were enabled through a particular form of class politics- what Amita Baviskar (2003, p. 90) calls “bourgeois environmentalism” – the imagination of urban experience driven by and catering to the palette of Delhi’s upper middle-classes. The *Yamuna Pushta* settlement, a 100 acre long strip along the river Yamuna was brutally evicted in 2004. It housed over 35,000 working class families most of whom had migrated as construction labour for an earlier international sporting event, the Asian Games of 1982. In her analysis of these evictions, Menon-Sen (2010, p. 680) points out the prevailing atmosphere of insensitivity towards the poor, “in a strange inversion of reality, privileged citizens of Delhi see themselves as victims of the poor whose mere presence in the city is felt to constitute a threat to both the economic and social order”.

The middle class residents moved the judicial courts to appeal their rights of enjoying the city as ‘legitimate’ urban citizens were being hampered by the poor and their filth. Bhan (2009, p. 139) illustrates how, “legal judgments issued in the name of ‘public interest’ work to deny citizenship of the poor and allow corporate capital’s moral–political hegemony to define urban

politics” through an analysis of judicial hearings of public interest litigations (PILs) filed by resident welfare associations and trade organisations in Delhi.

D. Asher Ghertner (2011, p. 288) describes it as a phenomenon of “aesthetic ordering of the city, in which the legality and essential features of space can be determined entirely from a distance”. He illustrates through two cases where the judicial courts pronounced a mall ‘legal’ and a slum ‘illegal’ based primarily on the ‘looks’ of what seemed to match the world-class vision, even though both constructions violated Delhi’s master plan. Such evictions of the marginalized in Delhi were catalysed by the judicial courts in an attempt to match Delhi with the “circulating models of other world-class cities (a little Singapore here, a little London there)” (ibid., p. 289).

This discourse of class-politics which highlights increasing systemic apathy towards the poor is closely linked to the erosion of the welfare responsibilities of the Indian state since the 1991 economic liberalization of India. The metro expedites the translation of such class politics spatially, *“The Metro’s expansive network is an example of the spatialization of class (Zhang 2010) in terms of its concrete network of stations and lines, which are driving the city’s property development, as well as the new dreams, tastes, and desires manufactured and disseminated through the production of the Metro”* (Sadana, 2018, p. 188).

5.1.2 Class-Coding of Public Transportation

If the metro is representative of the world-class city in the making, the public bus is now perceived as an artefact from the Nehruvian¹ socialist democracy. Public mass transportation- Indian railways and the buses- played a fundamental role in attempting to level the unequal social field in the making of independent India. It was only later when private automobiles started becoming accessible to the Indian middle classes that mobility experiences in cities started diversifying. Even today the bus remains a significant part of the grammar of the city of Delhi, on an average carrying around 3 times more passengers per day than the metro². Many citizens experience the two modes of transport with an ‘and’ conjunction- the bus and the metro- as part of their everyday mobility experiences³ in the city.

However, since the time of the 2010 Commonwealth Games, big ticket mega-projects such as the metro and flyovers are given precedence over the bus even though the radial nature of the city of Delhi relies upon multiple road-

based transportation modes to address the city's intricate urban fabric. The bus infrastructure is considered particularly notorious for enabling women's harassment both at the stops and inside the crowded buses. Leo Saldanha of the Environmental Support Group in the city of Bangalore argues that "the way buses are, they are not structured for safety. They are structured for mobility" (Social Life of a Bus, 2016).

In a recent move, Delhi government has promised to add 9,000 new buses to the city by the year 2021. They launched a sample set of 100 new such buses in March 2020⁴. This latest fleet of buses in Delhi has been designed with a focus on women's safety with the provision of CCTVs, panic buttons, GPS tracking, wheelchair ramps, and of course air conditioning. The fare of these air-conditioned buses is considerably higher compared to that of ordinary buses. The State thereby enables a class-segregation in the bus - the ordinary buses remain the predominant form of transport of the majority of the city's (poor) population while the new air-conditioned buses serve the growing middle class with a higher paying capacity (Social Life of a Bus, 2016). The optics of the air-conditioned bus which closely mimic the metro's safety provision criteria are used fundamentally to re-work the bus into the imagination of a world-class city in the making.

5.2 Differentiated Impacts of Metro Construction

With its emphasis on modernization, hygiene or progress, urban restructuring involves autocratic state violence even in democratic nations, and results in annihilating poorer parts of the city (Graham, 2004). In her reading of the "dialectic image" of the Indian world-class city, Ananya Roy (2011) argues that the state uses three kinds of socio-spatial technologies in its making: slum evictions, Special Economic Zones, and peri-urban new towns. Construction of the metro has been made possible through numerous land acquisitions and settlements,

"At first, those involved on the Indian side questioned the importance of carefully and thoroughly handling land acquisition and resident relocation according to the JICA Guidelines for Environmental and Social Considerations, saying, "Why do we have to go that far? Wouldn't it be easier to meet the deadline if we proceed more quickly?" However, JICA was able to obtain their understanding by continuing to explain that gaining the consent of residents and minimizing the impact on them are basic principles of public works" (JICA, 2019)

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is not only the principle source of funding⁵ for the Delhi Metro, but has also been instrumental in helping DMRC build its work culture based on international standards for executing public projects. Even though JICA aimed to set a better precedent than the business-as-usual attitude of some of their Indian partners, the gradations in terms of land tenure and legal entitlements in Delhi make the reality of compensations and relocations very complex. To illustrate the differentiated impact of the metro construction based on the existing vulnerabilities of a community, I draw upon the field notes of architecture students from the London Metropolitan University (LMU) who visited Delhi in 2009 and conducted site study of *Hauz Rani* neighbourhood in relation to the then ongoing construction of the underground Malviya Nagar metro station.

Hauz Rani is located in South Delhi, the site of several protected monuments dating back to the 14th century. The students note that the majority of the land-owning residents and businesses from the surroundings welcomed the project and anticipated the positive impact that the metro would have by providing an option of ‘fast, affordable and clean transport’. However, their investigation into three communities that lived cheek by jowl with the construction site - a gated Sikh community, a dense Muslim neighbourhood and a *basti* housing rural migrants from Rajasthan – revealed a more complex picture.

“To the wealthy Sikhs, owners of property built with full planning consent; the Metro presents no threat. The Muslim community living in houses abutting the Metro construction site occupy a more tenuous position. This land is legally owned but there is no formal planning consent for any of the buildings ... More precarious still is the plight of the slum dwellers. Already the area of land occupied by these families has been reduced by two thirds, swallowed up by the construction site. ... The slum dwellers have no rights of tenure and while they are likely to be re-housed, this will typically be in a more remote area even further from the centre of the city.” (LMU, 2009, p. 17)

The Malviya Nagar metro station that came up at the above documented site of *Hauz Rani* has been functional since 2010. It is the exit station for some of the most popular shopping malls in the city and for a specialty private hospital. The metro

station has created a new consumption node in the city through ‘spatialization of class’ by working to the advantage of the already relatively wealthy residents of the city. It simultaneously comes at the price of further marginalizing those communities that came in its way during construction without being part of the planned-and-legal footprint of the city.

Recently in 2020, this station became an important access point to reach the Hauz Rani anti-CAA sit-in⁶ protest modelled on Shaheen Bagh; serving as a conduit for the citizens resistance.

5.3 Resistance from Margins as Safe Spaces

In the light of Delhi’s classist discourse of becoming a world-class city and more recently in relation also to the state-enabled discrimination of minorities, understanding spatiality of the margins becomes particularly useful. Defining margins as both social and spatial in nature Govinda (2013, p. 6) argues, *“Marginal subjects inhabit multiple identities in multiple peripheral spaces in the city; margins are sites of not only deprivation but also agency; the marginal subjects’ positionality—being at the edge of the city—affords them a unique insight into the making of the city as a whole. These references point to the centrality of the notion of space to urban marginality.”* Thus, space when defined from the position of the margins can help build on the ‘politics of location’ (Massey, 1995).

During the anti-CAA movement we witnessed that Delhi’s spatial margins - neighbourhoods not only on the physical peripheries of the city but also lacking adequate infrastructure provisions - turned into sites of unprecedented resistance. Moreover, they were formed and strengthened through the bodies of working class, Muslim women protestors who are thought of as lacking personal agency (hence dependent on familial and state protection) in the social imagination of the country. In parallel to the designated large open public spaces for mobilization such as Jantar Mantar or India Gate, these marginal sites transformed into important stops on Delhi’s ‘spaces for protest’ map. The wider public participating in the movement thronged to these occupied-and-claimed spaces using all transportation modes available to them- the bus, the metro, the cab, the auto, private vehicles, or just walking.

The city itself had metamorphosed into a large discursive arena. Most banal

places could be turned into spaces for political address and the resistance sites themselves featured activities of everyday living- eating, sleeping, reading or conversing. The political events seeped everywhere from intimate bedroom conversations, online solidarity groups to discussions with strangers. One could be neutral, in support of or against the protestors; each graded stance contributed to the ongoing political discourse in the city. The personal was visibly political. Judith Butler explains how the breaking down of the personal and the public through protesting bodies that occupied Tahrir Square around-the-clock was critical for the success of the 2011 uprising in Egypt,

“Sleeping on that pavement was not only a way to lay claim to the public, to contest the legitimacy of the state, but also quite clearly, a way to put the body on the line in its insistence, obduracy and precarity, overcoming the distinction between public and private for the time of revolution. In other words, it was only when those needs that are supposed to remain private came out into the day and night of the square, formed into image and discourse for the media, did it finally become possible to extend the space and time of the event with such tenacity to bring the regime down”
(Butler, 2011, p.12)

The spaces of resistance in Delhi were also environments of enabling newly-acquired literacies such as the common people self-schooling themselves to use the Constitution of India as a language for challenging the State. Its copies were to be found at the ‘insurgent’ libraries created out of bus stops at the protest sites and echoed through the slogans such as *“hum samvidhan bachane nikle hain, aao humare saath chalo”* (‘We are headed to save the Constitution, come walk with us’).

It was also a moment of training to converse, co-operate and learn across class barriers. The number of gated enclaves in Delhi’s upper middle class housing areas have shot up over the past decades as markers of deepening socio-spatial segregation. However, this citizens movement in the history of the city called to collectivize at the city’s margins – the public from the sedimented centres of ‘posh’ South Delhi visited places which were thought to be too ‘weird’ and spoke to those Delhiites who didn’t probably exist in their imagination. Antra one of the organizers at the post-violence rehabilitation relief camp in NE Delhi reflected that although there were many people out there creating violence what gave

her solace was that there were many others, who are generally too privileged to even locate trans-yamuna on the Delhi map, volunteering to help the victims. A growing environment of care and empathy towards city's marginal publics was thus a silver lining in these times of adversity.

The most conspicuous effect of this women led resistance was the direct challenge that it posed to the patriarchal setup of the society. It enabled solidarity building across different political movements such as those of gender and caste minorities. An ensemble which is inclusive to LGBTQIA+ people emerged during this time. They call themselves *zanana ka zamana* (the era of the womxn). They hosted performances across various protest sites in Delhi and sang songs of resistance inside the Delhi Metro during the commute. Also, a large mural depicting two women protestors of *Shaheen Bagh* sloganeering *Ishq Inquilab* and *Mohabbat Zindabad* (the revolution will live long through love) was painted by the Fearless Collective- a movement of participative storytelling and art to provide means to move from 'fear' to 'love' in the public space.

If these sites were battlefields for safety and survival emerging from the cries of marginalized communities, they had also become educational spaces for learning to speak up, to voice one's concerns and to extend love and solidarity in the face of injustice. These margins worked to unsettle our defensive or limited ways of imagining the city and enabled the spatial to become what Massey (1994, p. 119) would refer to as a progressive "project of becoming". These unprecedented ways of creating safe spaces arguably in the history of Delhi lie in contrast to the safety measures directed at women in the Delhi Metro such as exclusive coach for ladies, monetary fines, emergency buttons, helplines, and most importantly the CCTV surveillance. It begs the question of how this model of safety provided by the metro - which is being enthusiastically replicated in different forms - experienced by discrepant publics?

1 Jawaharlal Nehru was independent India's first Prime Minister who was a strong believer in Socialism and the role of urbanization in achieving it.

2 Avg. daily ridership in the Metro is 1.5 million, source: DMRC; Avg. daily ridership in the DTC buses is 4.3 million, source: Planning Department, Government of NCT of Delhi

3 'And' the auto, the cycle rickshaw, cabs, walking etc. all come together to form the complete experience.

4 See: 'Delhi to get 9,000 new buses by next year: Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal', The Economic Times, March 06, 2020

5 <http://www.delhimetrorail.com/funding.aspx>

6 See: Nagpal, M., 'At Delhi's Anti-CAA Sit-In Protests, Women Continue Their Struggle', The Wire, Mar 04, 2020

Figure 5.3 (a) Poster listing initiatives by the Delhi Metro to ensure safety of women, INA Metro Station, New Delhi, March 2020; Credit: Author

Figure 5.3 (b) The mural at Shaheen Bagh depicting a falcon (*Shaheen*), the Constitution of India and two Muslim women protestors, February 2020; Credit: Tanya Singh



Safety: Experiences in the Metro

After reading safety in the metro relationally from a macro perspective, I will now focus on unfolding of the safety experiences inside this transportation system by drawing upon my interactions with some of the city's publics.

6.1 Perceptions of Safety by Metro Users

Some of the young women that I spoke to find the metro safer than all other modes of transportation. For Rashi, a 21-year-old student at the Delhi University who has been living in the Capital since the past three years, it is even better than taking a cab. She says, "there are so many ways in the metro that you can reach out for help, be it from the co-passengers or the metro staff, one wouldn't be left clueless." She had never taken the bus in Delhi in all these years and asked me if it were safe to do so.

A young professional Loveleen who started blushing when I asked about her commute said that she finds the metro safer than even her own personal car. Her workplace is just two metro stops away. She can cut traffic and the delay between two trains is never more than 8 minutes, making the metro safe, quick, convenient and reliable for her.

Mona, a young mother of two, feels taking the metro is much safer than the bus. I briefly shared companionship with her one morning while walking to the Ashram metro station. She was going to make an hour long commute back to Gurgaon city after visiting her maternal home in Delhi. She prefers to take the metro till wherever it goes. She stresses, "always, always, because it is safe for women and

also for my kids safety. It is a struggle for me in the bus, crossing the road is really tough with the kids.”

For Jyoti, the expectation of reliability and accountability from the metro staff is what sets the metro apart from other commuting experiences. She recalled an incident where she had forgotten her phone in the metro train but found it back from the station’s control room- a rare occurrence otherwise in Delhi. She works with the SafeCity initiative and conducts safety audits of public spaces and interviews women to quantify their safety concerns in order to help design safer public spaces. She also feels the metro is preferable for women over the bus or an auto, especially if it is getting late at night. A major reason for feeling safe according to her is that “the crowd in the metro is purposeful. No one is going to just loiter in there, they are paying a lot.”

If for these young women gauging safety was driven through comparison with other transportation options, for my architect friend Taufeeq it was primarily about being able to trust the system. The socio-political environment has become unabashedly hostile towards Muslims with the State and the Police acting as mute spectators at best. He shared, “you feels safe in the metro, you feel that you have entered a system and there is a faith that you would reach your destination”. He also found the presence of armed personnel in the metro re-assuring, expecting them to be unbiased if a security threat occurs as otherwise he finds that the “justice system in India is not quick and cannot be relied upon”.

Each of the aforementioned person’s subjective position in Delhi contributes to their positive experiences regarding safety in the metro, however what binds them together is that all of them are part of the young urban middle-class of the city. In what ways does the metro consciously work towards building the trust of these particular subjects in its system? Does it happen by pawning city’s other publics?

6.2 Official Ways for Ensuring Security

In its attempt of keeping out danger, there are clear rules (Government of India, 2002) which explicitly prohibit the entry of certain items and persons inside the metro. A printed graphical copy of these rules is available with the security staff at each station who can draw upon them when required. The list includes ‘dangerous’ materials like inflammable liquids, radioactive substance

and ‘offensive’ materials like blood, corpses or rags. Also, any item weighing over 15kgs or larger than a size that wouldn’t fit the cross-section of the x-ray baggage scanner is banned. Passengers suffering from contagious diseases such as cholera, typhoid fever, according to the rules, shall be strictly denied entry. The rules also state that if the metro official is suspicious of any item then they “may cause the container to be opened” and remove the person from the metro premises.

A metro station in Delhi usually has several entry gates which connect to the non-ticketed concourse area through a flight of stairs. Depending on whether the station is overhead or underground, this area also acts as a free pedestrian crossing across the road. Next, one goes through the security checkpoint which is divided into separate queues for men and women. These are bifurcated by an x-ray baggage scanner and after getting full-body frisked by the security personnel, the belongings are then collected from the x-ray scanner on the other side of the checkpoint. For women passengers, the frisking takes place in a semi-covered booth as is customary at shopping malls and airports in the country. Following this procedure one enters the ticketed area of the metro station by swiping their metro card or token at the secured AFC¹ Gates.



Figure 6.2 (a) Typical scene at the Security checkpoint of a metro station just before entering the ticketed area, Delhi, Source: HT Photo

A DMRC official explained that the security measures in the metro can be comparable to an airport due to the provision of a large number of touch points and a quick response time in case of any emergency situation. There is a dedicated police force deployed under the command of Central Industrial Security Force

(CISF) which is administered by the central government. Alongside CISF, the DMRC official evoked several abbreviations which created an aura of command, such as OCC, CFA, SCR² to emphasize the importance that the metro lays on ensuring security. The stations and trains are under complete CCTV surveillance whose footage is monitored from the station control room. Lost & found items and harassment complaints can also be lodged there which are then verified through the recorded footage. Through announcements and posters DMRC also tries to actively inculcate vigilance in the commuters to report to the authorities if they ‘see’ or ‘hear’ anything suspicious.



Figure 6.2 (b) Poster to inculcate cooperation and vigilance in the passengers, INA metro station, March 2020, Delhi; Credit: Author

6.2.1 The Metro's Image and Women's Safety

Ensuring safety of women is a matter of great concern for the city's image. We find autorickshaws stamped with “*Mera imaan, mahilaon ka samman*” (My integrity lies in respecting women), costless ‘pink tickets’ for women riders as mementos for the free bus initiative, and a perpetually soaring number of CCTV cameras promised to be installed in the public spaces to ensure women's safety. DMRC is no different. “You must have seen the eve teasing case at ITO Metro station (of a 25-year-old journalist in 2017) which became famous. The video was captured in the CCTV and the culprit was later caught by the police. It showed metro in good light”, said a researcher³ at DMRC who had at first brushed aside the question regarding harassment cases in the metro as he was concerned about how I would portray the metro in my research. He explained that the complaint cell has to sometimes deal with customers who create a nuisance for as little as

1Rs and hence they need to work a great deal towards maintaining the metro's public image.

The question of the image also spills into what facilities in the metro are considered important. Most metro stations, if not all, have toilet provisions for men, women and for differently abled; services considered fundamental by experts for encouraging women's safe mobility in the city. However, toilets do not surface in conversations regarding important facilities provided by the metro but instead a latest 'feature' installed at one metro station- a women's convenience lounge to provide space for lactating mothers and menstruating women was proudly mentioned by the DMRC researcher. The initiative is co-sponsored by multinational companies and matches the metro's own corporate-style outlook and aesthetics. When talking about other women-centric initiatives, he mentioned the ubiquitous reserved coach for women, reserved seats in common coaches and security squads but was quick to state that the metro will not be made free for women, thereby dismissing the Delhi government's subsidy proposal.



Figure 6.2.1 (a) View from women only zone at one end of the platform, Green Park Metro station, Delhi, February 2020, Credits: Author

6.3 The Contested Women's Coach

The first coach in the moving direction of each metro train has been reserved for women and is heralded as an icon regarding women's safety and comfort. In late February 2020 when I had interviewed the chief architect at DMRC, Ar. Papiya Sarkar, her office was busy preparing for the upcoming International Women's day celebrations. The theme for the year 2020 was 'I am Gender Equality: Realising women's rights'. DMRC had organised a competition for which women metro users were encouraged to submit short poems and stories on 'My experience of 1st coach Reserved for Women in Delhi Metro'. A prize distribution event was to be held on March 6th but was cancelled because of Covid-19. I pointed out to Ar. Papiya that it was ironic that the theme talked about equality but only women staff was involved in the preparations; she agreed, smiled and then shrugged slightly.



Figure 6.3 (a) Delhi Metro's poster celebrating surveillance of women posted around International women's day, March 2020, source: DMRC Twitter

6.3.1 The Just-in-Case Option

For many women, the provision of the women's coach gives them the possibility to recede into a 'private' space within the public metro, thus acting like a *zenana* - traditionally the part of a house reserved for women and girls. One Sunday

afternoon, I struck a conversation with a young software engineer seated next to me in the women's coach. Anjali takes the bus on weekdays to travel to work and on weekends takes the metro to visit far off places in the city for leisure. Comparing the fear of sexual harassment and safety experience in these two modes of public transportation, she reflected "in the bus even if nothing actually happens, one feels weirded out by the 'looks' or you're afraid of pick-pocketers. But in the metro even if you do feel weird, then you get up and come here to the women's compartment. That option remains".

Similarly for Lizzy, an editor in her late 30s based out of Delhi, the primary reason why the metro or the Mumbai's local train work so well are because of the provision of the women's coach. I met Lizzy at a women's only midnight walk which aimed to reclaim city's streets as access to city's public spaces is culturally curtailed for women especially at night. She sighed, "you've already had a long day and it (women's coach) gives you the space to relax. Even though the coach is crowded but at least I am not bothered by others (men)". Her experiences as a teenager shaped her to become very alert on the streets, turning her hands into a fist position whenever she crosses a man, ready to put up a fight.

6.3.2 *The As-Good-as-it-Gets Limitation*

The women's coach comes with its own trade-offs. A Delhi university professor succinctly put it as, "*aurton ka coach hai tou kya godi mein baith jaogi?*" (Will you come and sit in my lap just because it is the women's coach?). What she was referring to is a common behaviour of how women ask the seated passengers to 'scooch' and make space in order to fit in more people than the number of designated seats.

Eshita, a 19-year-old history honours student who was wearing black lipstick and was fashionably dressed, further problematizes the attitude of encroaching physical and mental space prevalent in the women's coach. I had approached her at a metro station platform where she was sitting by herself and we ended up having a long conversation. She noted that even though her preference for the common coach might sound abnormal, due to my research she would be honest with me.



Figure 6.3.2 (a) An almost empty women's coach while passengers can be seen standing at the beginning of the common coach highlighting the scanty number of women metro users- a common sight in the metro, Delhi, March 2020; Credit: Author

"I prefer the common coach. When you're travelling and don't get a seat and at times you have to sit, they (men) get up and let you sit but in a women's coach you never get a seat and you'll have to stand. I feel more comfortable in a common coach than women's coach- I know that's weird. When I'm travelling I like having people around me who are upfront and don't initiate a conversation out of the blue when you don't want it. ... And then there are some women who are way more judgmental and they start talking about you and you know that they are talking about you but you can't really express that and you think 'ok, maybe I should just take the normal coach'. Because if men judge someone that's sexism, so they cannot but if a woman is judging another you can't really say anything, so it gets kind of..."

Eshita's preference stems from being marked and pointed at for looking 'different' by fellow women passengers and the helplessness she feels is due to the inability to talk back because they are all 'women' and wouldn't take her discomfort seriously. The women's coach, a contested space, then becomes a ceiling for the best case scenario available to women.

Not only women, but also differently abled persons who are assisted by the metro's customer facilitation agents (CFA) are placed inside this reserved coach. Through their ethnographic work on how the disabled experience women's coach, Ragupathy & Shreyas (2018) argue, *"emplacing of disabled bodies in the 'safe space' of the women's coach feminizes disabled bodies in the sense that it affixes the non-masculine to a series of characterizations that enumerate the composite disabled body. A segregation of space establishes a zone of safety by fashioning a substantial break with an unsafe environment i.e. a zone of the untrammelled movement of men."*

The metro then like the society remains by default a masculine space where 'non-masculine' spaces need to be carved out through strict and sometimes hostile boundary policing by the authorities and the women themselves. The safety is thought to be conditional, amongst other things, upon gender segregation and restrictions.

6.4 Disciplining the Modern Metro Subject

"Those who had previously been unfamiliar with the custom of standing in line have learned to board the train in an orderly fashion, queueing behind the lines drawn on the platforms and following the instructions of (metro) station staff. Urban railway development has also brought about a change in the behavior patterns of Indian people." (JICA, 2019)



Figure 6.4 (a) Passengers queue at the platform as the metro train arrives at one of the busiest interchange stations, Rajiv Chowk metro station, New Delhi, 2017; Credit: Saumya Khandelwal/HT PHOTO

While the metro is applauded for having been able to achieve the seemingly unfathomable task of making the Indian public stand in queues, this project of shaping Indian behaviour has a much longer history dating back to the colonial period. During the Emergency (1975-77) which put the country's civil liberties under grave danger, then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was asked in an interview how long the Emergency situation would last. She responded, "Emergency would not be unduly prolonged, India will not become totalitarian and has no need for authoritarian government, only for 'more discipline' and for some adjustment such as the reform of the judicial system to keep in step with social change" (Morris-Jones, 1975, p. 460). This 'disciplining zeal of the state' which under the current classist transformation is being directed through the interests of the wealthy citizens of the city (Baviskar, 2003) is closely tied with the ideas of modernity, progress and order.

6.4.1 Publicly Affectionate Couples

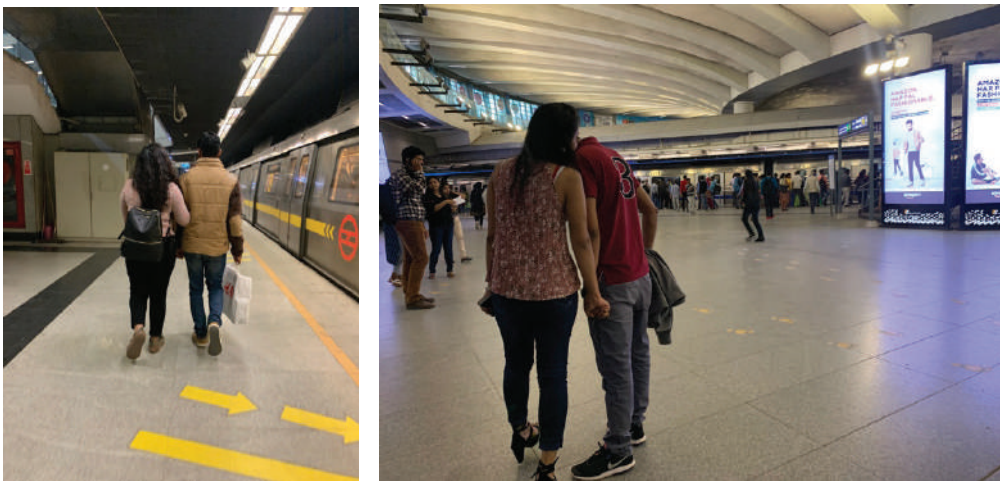


Figure 6.4.1 (a,b) Couples can commonly be seen indulging in PDA, a sight generally morally policed and scorned upon in most public spaces in Delhi, March 2020; Credits: Author

Perhaps no other behaviour can vouch for the metro's modernity as much as the normalization of couples openly engaging in public display of affection (PDA). Generally morally policed and obscured from public view by limiting it to 'shady' parks for the poor and privatized coffee places and shopping malls for the middle classes- falling in love in Delhi is an experience of living urban segregation and discrimination. But in the metro heterosexual couples can be commonly seen holding hands, hugging in a light embrace, or sitting closely and talking in low whispers for hours.

Anjali, the young software engineer, feels it is because more ‘educated’ public takes the metro. She says, “there might be some who stare but rarely will anyone comment.” There are clear instructions in the metro- you cannot eat, drink, play music, click photographs, sit on the floor, deface the property etc. – but PDA is not punishable (i.e. cannot be reported) and hence will have to be accepted by the passengers, even if reluctantly.

6.4.2 Prohibiting Everyday Use Items

Other forms of disciplining happens through the careful monitoring of what one carries in the metro. The smooth mastered act of moving through the security check by a veteran metro user is interrupted when the authorities spot that she is carrying something ‘out of place’. It depends on the security person manning the baggage scan, they either turn a blind eye and let one pass but if stopped then there are little chances that the negotiation will end in her favour.

Carrying ‘sharp’ objects such as cutters and scissors are basic necessities during architecture training. I received many stories from students of architecture whose cutters had been confiscated by the metro security staff erratically. While some were able to plead by drawing upon the legitimacy of their student ID cards, but many times even that wouldn’t work. Reflecting upon the short-sightedness of such rules, Sanya asserts, “Metros aren’t like flights, they are public transport that we use on a daily/regular basis. One can’t help carrying stationery.”

Sometimes the security staff and the metro users are both clueless regarding why is something prohibited but the argument boils down to ‘rules are rules’. For the guards, going by the book is presented as a matter of survival, “*camera lage hue hain, meri naukri chali jayegi*” (There are cameras watching us, I would lose my job). This situation can be highlighted through the conundrum of a potted plant. While many of the metro users who were stopped for questioning carrying a potted plant assumed that the reason why it is prohibited was that perhaps it can be weaponized to harm someone. However, according to the rules, carrying manure in any form is listed under ‘offensive’ items and thus prohibited in the metro.

On rare occasions the negotiations did turn favourable when an empathetic understanding could be established- such as it would be ‘too expensive’ or it is ‘too late at night’ to find an auto, or the passenger takes care ‘not to spill dirt in

the metro', or makes sure 'it doesn't show on the cameras' and promises to 'never do it again'.

6.4.3 Self-Rationalising Restrictions

The metro has become a source of pride, something that we flaunt especially to those who look down upon Delhi (by extension Delhiites) as chaotic, filthy and uncivil. The metro is imagined as something better than what we may 'collectively' deserve and hence we are willing to discipline ourselves for its sake. During my fieldwork many young people appreciated vigilance of the metro security staff even if it has caused them inconvenience personally.

Akanksha, a student shares her experience of being stopped for carrying a biology lab kit. She empathises with the security personnel by stating, "I understand their situation and they did a good thing to check up on me". She was able to negotiate her way by drawing upon her Delhi University Identity card which legitimised her need for carrying the sharp objects in the kit. Similarly Shivam, a young camping enthusiast who has been stopped several times over the course of the years for carrying various 'strange' equipment rationalizes these checks as,

"While I find these restrictions massively inconvenient for me and to some extent also unreasonable, I understand the need as well. Delhi's a place where things can escalate easily and scope for public nuisance is massive and today, everything eye catchy makes the news. Plus there's the security threat as well. In a country where there's the (genuine) need for metal detectors at mall entrances, I guess abolition of baggage scans at metro stations is a pipe dream."

One is ready to face such inconveniences so long as the larger public is kept under check, a thought process that gets normalised through regularly traveling in the metro in conjunction with similarly securitised spaces in the city such as the privatised shopping malls. The disruption in our flow is then seen as only a small price to pay so long as the 'larger public' is kept under a check- a necessity in the making of a 'world-class' city of which the Delhi Metro is a shining poster child.

6.5 Construction of the "Other"

"I've heard that people keep bombs ... that's one thing that I'm actually scared of because metro is too crowded and there are 'weird' people everywhere and I

think, maybe someone is carrying a bomb”, shared Eshita the history honours student. I asked her if this was because of the recurring announcements in the metro, she replied “Of course it is. Because they keep on making announcements saying if you see (an unidentified) bag then make sure to report it. Otherwise I would not think this far.” Pausing for a breath she continued, “Also because of knowing that people who inspect are careless, you can bribe anyone in this country and it would not be hard for them to pass through the security checking. Some people have that ‘look’, and you suspect and think that this person is carrying a bomb!”

Eshita’s paranoia might be most likely harmless, but marking some people as ‘weird’, having the ‘look’, or being possible ‘suspects’ hint at the subtle ways in which our biased dispositions come out. This process of “Othering” destroys empathy (Krook, 2014) even though these judgments might be disguised as a rational and impartial view but are in fact closely tied with ideas of respectability, civility and decency whose norms are set by the dominant groups in the society (Young, 1990). For the members of the oppressed groups, “such behaviors throw them back into their group identity, making them feel noticed, marked, or conversely invisible, not taken seriously, or worse, demeaned” (ibid., p. 134).

6.5.1 Seemingly Exceptional Events

Through three experiences shared by regular Delhi Metro users, I would like to highlight how particular identities were marked out in the metro rendering people to change their behaviour in the future to comply with the unwritten ‘norms’ within the metro.

V, an urban professional in her mid 30s, shared an incident from a few years ago. She recalls, *“Coming back from my parents’ place, I had jasmine in my hair which is common in South India. Realised that here (in Delhi), it’s seen as something common only among red light workers. I was gawked at and propositioned by the x-ray security guards. Totally confused and angry. Never made that mistake again.”* Here an association with sex-workers put V outside the purview of protection otherwise available to her as a middle-class woman (Phadke et. al, 2011, p. 28), also surfacing the troublesome ways of defining a ‘respectable’ woman in the society.

Aditya, a Delhi based urban planner and researcher shared an account he

witnessed back in 2016, *“the person, visibly a labourer, was stopped because he was wearing soiled clothes. They were not allowing him to enter and I raised an alarm and questioned the security staff as to why they were not letting him in? They pointed at the list of prohibited items which vaguely mentioned something regarding this. When I questioned them that there is no ‘dangerous’ object that he is carrying and you are simply harassing him because he is poor, then they started arguing back, saying ‘you don’t teach us what we should be doing’. I had to leave from there because it was a futile argument.”* Unlike the architecture or biology students who can put forth an argument by displaying their legitimacy through university identity cards, the urban poor are left at the benevolence of the authorities or co-passengers to negotiate.

Dakshya is currently pursuing bachelors in economics and philosophy. He and his friends had been actively engaged in the anti-CAA protests. He was stopped for carrying a protest poster at the Jamia Milia Islamia metro station on the magenta line. *“I tried to explain that there is nothing wrong with the poster, it was just stuck on my hoodie, and it wasn’t harming anyone. But they just forced it off and stripped the poster. It took me hours to fix it because of how crudely they ripped it.”* Once reprimanded for transgressing the boundaries of tolerance thresholds of the metro officials, he says that he is now *“more careful in the metro vis a vis things that can be construed as political expression”*.

These incidents point out that in the modern space of the metro hegemonic social relations and power structures train and produce particular subjects and deserving publics. Through its surveillance technology, rulebook of prohibitions, and sanitised spatial attributes the metro rider is disciplined through streamlining of temperaments, expectations and behaviours, and normalizing practices of expulsion of others.

1 Automated Fare Collection; Unlike some European subway systems where you need to produce the ticket only upon checking or Indian buses where you purchase the ticket inside the bus, the metro trains in India cannot be entered without swiping the card/token at the AFC Gates.

2 OCC- Operations Control Centre; CFA- Customer Facilitation Agent; SCR- Station Control Room

3 I choose not to reveal the identity of the person to ensure anonymity because the remarks showcase his personal opinion and not necessarily the official stance of DMRC.

Expulsions: The Shrinking Safe Public

WHICH PUBLICS COME UNDER THE DELHI METRO'S FOLD?



Figure 7.1 (a) City's Publics that I engaged with during the fieldwork of this research, but only some qualify 'unconditionally' for the securitised space of the Delhi Metro; source: Author

7.1 Reconfigured Public through the Metro

Rashmi Sadana in a recent essay on the Delhi Metro makes a distinction between crowds and publics, *“If the crowd is characterized by a physical experience and set of sensations, bounded in a specific time and place, then a public is different. A public is not necessarily connected to a reality in the here and now but rather to life experiences and circumstances beyond a physical grouping; it is an idea as much as it is a lived reality. Publics are multiple but also evanescent.”* (2019, p. 98)

Building on her distinction, I argue that even though the crowd is not representative of the public, its ‘changing’ nature over the years – that the new metro lines seem *less crowded* or that the crowd increasingly *looks and feels* the same- points towards a normalisation of expulsion of some publics from our imagination. Who, then, qualifies unconditionally for the securitised space of the metro?

Certain publics that occupy power positions in the making of a world-class city, who are part of the neoliberal economy- or as the Covid-19 lockdown has helped us see them as the ones who ironically retained the possibility of ‘working from home’- are essential to the project of the metro. It caters primarily to them and transforms others to act and behave more like them and the ones who are unable to mould themselves are moved to the metro’s peripheral vision and eventually are always already subject to expulsion. Two kinds of subjects are shaped through the modern metro — the ‘individuated self’ who is the metro’s ideal subject and the ‘reluctant metro user’ who is pushed to the margins in the formation of the ideal metro user.

7.1.1 The Individuated Self

The metro is a space for withdrawing into oneself, to self-entertain by reading, watching a movie, listening to music on our mobile phones, or simply by taking a nap. We can even get some work done on the laptop, provided we get a seat and the train is not too crowded. Sometimes, even in a coach full of people, it is so quiet that there is little noise apart from the continuous announcements stating the behavioural do’s and the don’ts inside the metro.

For Samita, the most valuable thing about metro (or cab) commute is that it gives her ‘me-time’. We met as participants at the women’s midnight walk. Samita

has an MA from the UK, and works as a researcher in Delhi. She feels that she can relax in the metro, “even though we are amongst people, we are not obliged to speak to them”. She doesn’t mind the long commutes as a shorter distance would reduce this time she gets for herself. My personal experience over the year, and that of many other young professionals I spoke with during my research, highlight this feature of the metro.

“We” can create our own bubble, ideally undisturbed by our bubbled co-passengers. In that way we experience the metro seamlessly. We know the drill from taking the escalator, passing through the security check, swiping our metro cards, and finally sitting in the train. We can do so without uttering a word, an experience remarkably different from the bus where to manoeuvre one relies on human interactions and negotiations with the bus conductor and co-passengers.

We feel that we can relax because we are under CCTV surveillance, thinking that at least the larger public is being monitored. If something goes wrong we can shift to the women’s coach if possible, report it to the metro staff, or just tweet about it. There are many ways in which we can guard ourselves and cut off from any semblance of a ‘collective’ experience. Riding the metro comes so effortlessly to us that we think of the one who has trouble taking the metro as an anomaly and it’s only a matter of time until she too learns.

7.1.2 *The Reluctant Metro User*

Several of the middle-aged and older women that I spoke to- on the streets, in the parks, at the bus stops- reiterated that metro is a ‘*suvridha*’ for the city, a Hindi word which means both facility and convenience. This *suvridha*, they’d say is not for them but for the ‘students, gentlemen and the young public’. Seeing people struggle with stepping on the escalators is a very common sight especially at the busy interchange or end metro stations which service first-time or occasional users every day. For someone who is not literate, understanding the metro map, riding the escalator, and finding the right platform can cause great discomfort.

Once while waiting at a bus stop, Kumari Devi, an older sari-clad woman asked me to read the bus names and let her know when the one going to *Mehrauli* arrives. I asked about her experience in the metro, she replied, “*mujhe tou bus badhiya hai, metro mein darr lage*” (The bus is better for me as I am scared of the metro). While we might think that her lack of formal literacy is the sole

cause of this intimidation, it is not so. Other highly educated and economically privileged women also experience a similar reluctance to riding the metro.

Ms. Papiya Sarkar, the chief architect at DMRC commutes from Gurgaon in her car. In a candid moment during our interview she note *“Metro is fine, but I am old now. For the young people, changing one interchange is not difficult unlike for me. I don’t feel so comfortable, so I always tell my boys to come with me and then I’ll come in the metro. Because I always need someone with me. Otherwise I’m not so comfortable. Although I design and tell that public mass transport should be used, then only carbon footprint will reduce. But at the same time and I feel ashamed but I can’t help it because I’m too old for it.”* Even though Ms. Sarkar designs the metro, her experience of using it resonates more with Kumari Devi than with that of Samita.

Metro, then in order to bring publics into its fold of a securitised space requires a literacy beyond that of reading or writing. Or, at the very least being accompanied by someone else who meets these requirements. It expects a person to be ‘confident’ to navigate its world-class, complicatedly designed, and tech-savvy spaces.



Figure 7.1 (b, c) Waiting at a bus stop (Left) and a metro platform (Right) in Delhi, February 2020; Credits: Author

7.2 Reconfigured Space through the Metro

In order to institute democratic public spaces, Massey (2005, p. 153) argues that our understanding of spatiality must scrutinise the “play of the social relations which construct them”. However, the politics of space, especially in the making of a world-class city, has mostly focused on “how chaos can be ordered, how juxtapositions may be regulated, how space might be coded, how the terms of

connectivity might be negotiated” (ibid., p. 151). The Metro is not chaotic, is severely regulated, and has been colour coded- then does it remain democratic?

Protests and demonstrations are prohibited on the premises of the Delhi Metro. Neither does it allow for the vivacious aura of the European subways where musicians and performers are integral part of one’s commuting experience. It especially expels out informal vending such as in the Cairo Metro where impromptu *bazaars* inside the trains are part of one’s shopping map in the city. Nor does it tolerate defacement of property such as the famous graffiti in New York city’s subways. One may unexpectedly come across a refugee asking for monetary help in the trains of Stuttgart, but no one asks for alms in the Delhi Metro. It is a space that, in its very foundations, is carved out of expulsions.

Yet, we remain smitten with it. The “we” here is not a unified group, it includes the habitual metro users from the upper middle class who can pride in its seemingly ‘egalitarian’ modernity, the foreigners who couldn’t expect something this ‘impressive’ from India, and the lower middle-classes who occasionally ride it but for whom the metro mostly stays as a new ‘aspirational’ reference. How we relate to the metro socially is also contingent upon its physical design which has undergone constant transformations over the years.

7.2.1 Chasing Latest Design Standards

Talking about the effect that design has on behaviour Ar. Papiya Sarkar of DMRC comments “The glitter of the new stations is the result of LED lighting and the installation of commissioned art works. The areas are kept very clean. If the area is dirty this affects behaviour, the same people behave differently in a ‘smart’ environment.” In the latest magenta and pink lines, the stations and trains feel different. The stations, powered from newly installed solar panels, are so brightly lit that one feels being under a spotlight. The coaches here are wider, shinier and emptier like the stations themselves. We suddenly seem to have much more space for ourselves compared to the older, relatively more crowded blue and yellow lines.

DMRC is technologically up to date both in its customer interface and behind the scenes in design and management. Ar. Papiya shared that her team is working with BIM 360 and Revit software in order to streamline design according to the latest technology. At the new stations, most of the counters for purchasing tokens

lie empty as vending machines replace them as part of DMRC's outlook to cut down human assistance to a minimum. In the new trains the fixed map with jumping red lights marking the approaching station has been replaced with an animation displayed on an LED screen which flashes the name of the next station. The metro consciously moves towards technological efficiency in order to match contemporary international standards.



Figure 7.2.1 (a) The older style Metro map inside a train on Yellow line which began in 2004. Notice all the pasted additions which capture the expansion of the metro network over the years. February 2020, Delhi; Credit: Author

7.2.2 Trying to Keep-Up with the Metro

The metro officials highlight the Delhi Metro's global standing by referring to its membership with the Community of Metros (CoMET) since 2015 which also includes Berlin's U-Bahn, the New York City subway system, the metro networks of Paris, Tokyo, and Mexico. "CoMET provides a confidential forum for member metros to share experiences, compare performance, identify best practices, and learn from one another to improve performance" (DMRC, 2016). The same report mentions that this membership has been achieved without a government subsidy as DMRC has been able to gain operational profit through consultancy services. Financial sustainability is one of the major goals of DMRC and the fare hikes of 2017 are part of this quest.

The Delhi government aims to capitalize on technological innovation and the image of the metro in its restructuring of the other major public transportation system in the city- the bus. The metro card has been re-designed and now features the tagline, "One Delhi, One Ride" with the logos of DMRC, the Delhi government, and the operating body for public buses in Delhi- DTC (Delhi Transport Corporation). The metro forms a desired benchmark for the world-class aspirations of Delhi and there is an attempt to elevate the buses to this platform- but, at what cost?



Figure 7.2.2 (a) The buses of the city have a pasted notice stating 'The ticket can be purchased with the DMRC Metro card' written in Hindi to let passengers know about the integration of transport systems. Underneath it is an older notice 'Women Helpline - 1091, 181', February 2020, Delhi, Credit: Author

7.3 Safety in the Metro vs the Bus

Radha, a woman in her mid 20s who wants to work on bettering the condition of women in the Indian society feels the only way to cope with threats of sexual harassment is by using one's own agency, "*sakhti dikhaiye*" (show sternness). Seated next to each other on an ordinary bus¹, she argued that be it in the metro or on the bus "*bheed ka fayada sab uthate hain*" (Everyone takes advantage of a crowded situation) and suggests that the only way to deal with it is by "becoming strong ourselves".

Both the bus and the metro come with their own forms of disenfranchisement. The bus is affordable, barrier-free, navigable with minimal literacy, but it is also crowded, bumpy, smelly, and ripe with possibilities of sexual harassment. While the metro is air-conditioned, quick, comfortable with a women's only coach, it is also an expensive² surveillance space which requires technological literacy for easy navigability. The metro is set up in such a manner that the barriers to accessing it can easily be multiplied- fare hikes, items you carry, hesitation towards machines.

One of the ways to make the bus safer for women (and everyone else) is to increase the frequency of buses on the road during peak hours to reduce overcrowding. However, for the technocratic urban planners the favoured solution is to put CCTV cameras in each bus. Vinay Sreenivasa of the Bengaluru Bus Commuter Forum questions the feasibility of the CCTV for city buses, "would these cameras be able to capture everything that goes on in a bus and who is going to monitor thousands of cameras?" (Social Life of a Bus, 2016).

Commuting in the bus is verbal, it requires women to talk back, engage and assert their right to be in that space. Recently, to increase safety in Delhi buses along with the fare subsidy for women, bus marshals were introduced who act as a disciplinarian to resolve conflicts amongst passengers. They have been successful in moving men who occupy the seats reserved for women, yet the authority of the bus marshal is not absolute. People argue back if s/he is being impolite or unreasonable with the bus passengers.

As part of new safety measures for the metro, DMRC plans to make the government software application ‘Aarogya Setu’ for tracking Covid-19 cases mandatory for Delhi metro users once the services resume after the lockdown. This would, absurdly, make the possession of a smartphone a minimum requirement to access a ‘public’ transportation system to ensure in the words of DMRC, a “smooth functioning of the (metro) network”³. As the city started unlocking with several precautions, the buses - now less crowded with all passengers wearing masks - have been functional, but even as of early August 2020 the metro has not yet re-opened.

It raises the question what is being prioritised – the metro’s bulletproof image or its purpose as a conduit for the city’s public. The decision to extend the shutdown of the metro for such long time underscores which publics does the metro serve? The pandemic has highlighted severe shortcomings in state welfare systems, including transportation infrastructures and the pressing need to invest in buses. The attempt to create a new bus system to mimic the metro to match its world-class image runs the risk of further expulsion of marginal publics from the city’s public transport systems. If we were to take the bus seriously, including its qualities that make it accessible to the city’s majority, then the metro has much to learn from the bus and not just the other way around.



Figure 7.3 (a) Migrant workers collect to return back to their homes during lockdown once the bus services were allowed to function, New Delhi, March 2020; Source: CNN/ Getty Images



Figure 7.3 (b) Delhi Metro prepares for social distancing post-lockdown, New Delhi, May 2020, Source: DMRC Twitter

7.3.1 *Should the Metro become Free*

Interestingly, what brought back welfare schemes in the political imagination of Delhi were the protests that followed corruption scandals from the 2010 Commonwealth Games which were supposed to materialise Delhi's dreams of becoming world-class. In 2011, a full-blown anti-corruption movement emerged out of which some activists formed the AAP- *Aam Aadmi Party* (Common Man's Party)⁴. AAP won the Delhi Assembly elections in 2015 and were re-elected with a landslide victory in February 2020. The party's portfolio, amongst other things, includes the bus subsidy and the yet unmaterialised metro subsidy for women.

One evening while traveling in the bus with roughly 50% women passengers, I overheard a middle-aged male passenger lament *"jabse free ho gayi hain buses, ladies hee nazar aati hain"* (Only ladies are visible since the buses have become free for them). The sight of women occupying more seats than just those 'reserved' for them clearly bothered this man who had to stand like many others in the crowded bus.

Extrapolating from his remark we can draw three reflections. One, the bus subsidy has worked in enabling women's mobility in the city. Second, by default men perceive themselves as being entitled to the space of the bus where women are 'allowed' but don't belong. Third, the physical presence of more women creates disruption in the unequal social and power relations, a critical step in creating safe spaces.

Hence, if the debate around the subsidy for women in the metro was truly about women's safety then it would not have been met with such fierce resistance from those who hold political power and social privilege. Since it would enable freedom of movement (and arguably eventual upward social mobility) of those who aren't part of the 'world-class' vocabulary – i.e. the sweaty, 'rowdy', poor bus-taking public – the scheme is being vehemently opposed. The safety of the metro is available only at a high cost – monetary and metaphorical – with classist boundary policing, high fares, restrictions, tech-oriented space design, shaping of behaviour, limited articulation of safety measures and shrinking our imagination of the deserving public.

1 Delhi has both ordinary buses that are non-airconditioned and the red line A/C buses- both are free for women under the Delhi government's scheme

2 See: 'Metro ride in Delhi is 'second-most unaffordable' in the world: Study', Economic Times, 05 Sept, 2018

3 See: 'After Delhi Metro opens, you may be denied ride without mask, Aarogya Setu pass', Livemint, 23 April, 2020

4 See Sharma, Prashant (2012) *'From India Against Corruption to the Aam Aadmi Party: Social Movements, Political Parties and Citizen Engagement in India'*, ASEF / Hanns Seidel Foundation / International IDEA

Re-imagining: Future as ‘We the People’

8.1 Subversive Publics confront Power

The year 2020 began with citizens resistance against government’s policies of putting the citizenship of its own people into question. The attempt by power to re-configure the foundational idea of the nation and to alter the country’s socio-political landscape also materialise through physical form and design. The central government plans to construct a new parliament building adjacent to the old one in Delhi with the aim to better represent their idea of the “New India”. Surreptitiously, the approval from the judiciary for this project worth Rs.20,000 crore was received during the Covid-19 lockdown when the country is battling the ongoing pandemic. Architect A.G.K Menon (2020) vehemently criticised the project by stating that the government here acted as if the public were its enemy, “I use the war metaphor, because, the Ministry of Urban Development, the project proponent, handled the proposal not as a public welfare project but as a state secret whose objectives had to be veiled from public scrutiny.”

Constructing a new idea of the nation or chasing the image of a ‘world-class’ city, both occur through marking people as ‘us’ vs ‘them’, empowering certain publics and expelling others from the hegemonic imagination. The BJP government’s attempts to reconfigure the nation is closely entangled with the subjugation of women by way of the production of an ideal “Hindu” woman. While nationalism requires women to be ‘good’ women, the world-class project relies on discriminatory forms of technological literacies, thus both admonish those who lie outside of their ideal mould.

As hate speeches by right-wing groups have been instigating violence in North East Delhi, on 29th February one such group chanted “*desh ke gaddaron ko, goli maaro saalon ko*” (Shoot down the traitors who betray the country) at a busy interchange metro station¹. It left the city shocked as the securitised and ‘rational’ space of the metro is otherwise perceived to be immune to the formal articulation of “politics”.

In violation of the Metro rule book, in 2020 we also witnessed moments where songs of resistance were sung in the metro, when surveillance broke apart as groups of citizens moved through stations carrying anti-CAA protest badges and posters. The bodies of Muslim women resisting on the streets were strengthened by these floating student-activist-artist protestors, all coming together to form a nexus of a dissenting, subversive public.

8.1.1 *Stitching together Multiple Identities*

Sociologist Stuart Hall reminds us that each of us is composed of multiple identities which occupy different positions of marginality in the society and for counter-politics to be constructed from the margins there is a need of political ‘re-identification and re-territorialization’,

“It is the politics of recognizing that all of us are composed of multiple social identities, not of one. That we are all complexly constructed through different categories, of different antagonisms, and these may have the effect of locating us socially in multiple positions of marginality and subordination, but which do not yet operate on us in exactly the same way.” (1997, p. 57)

The anti-CAA protests were able to stitch together these multifarious identities by drawing upon the Indian constitution where “We, the people of India” constitute the nation and vouch to secure the ideals of equality and fraternity to ‘all’ its citizens. It calls upon us to question in what ways can we further the politics of ‘We the people’ to form safe spaces- ones which make room for imagining beyond the hegemonic power structures in the society and therefore attempts to include, rather than exclude.

8.2 Reflections as a Spatial Practitioner

I was introduced to Delhi and its metro in 2010 when I moved there to study architecture. Even though during those years my daily route involved mostly bus and auto travel, the metro's complex and modern design always inspired awe. In a university seminar I was introduced to the work of Rashmi Sadana who ethnographically engages the city's transportation system, which peaked my curiosity. After graduation I became a regular metro commuter, it became my space to observe people and collect stories from the crowded metro trains on the yellow line. At that time, I regarded the metro as an ideal crucible for the city's public. What eluded me as an architect was a critical reading of the metro, or of perhaps space in general, from a socio-political perspective.

I share here some considerations that I have developed over the course of this research for spatial practice in order to design more inclusive and democratic spaces:

1. Reading space as a product of *conflicting* social relations. No space is/ can be 'open' or 'public' in the absolute sense. Different groups lay claim to a space and if the power dynamics between them are left unchecked then the desires of the dominant groups will govern the design and use of space.
2. Gendered understanding of space is not limited to focusing on women. It requires an intersectional lens of reading gender along with other 'identities' that we inhabit, thus opening up the possibility of integrating with politics from the margins.
3. A relational reading of spatiality requires us to question our own privilege. Each of us inherently occupy a position in the caste-class-gender-religion nexus of the society and our preferences and aesthetics are often driven from that. We can, then, better analyse how simple 'design' decisions can lead to accentuating marginalisation.
4. Safety cannot be ensured through increasing barriers. Safe spaces for everyone can emerge only from a position of justice and freedom. Denying access, increasing restrictions or boundary policing only provide temporary measures for ensuring safety and can often lead to a deeper stratification within the society.

8.3 Summing Up and Looking Forward

Delhi Metro, like the city of Delhi itself, holds an unparalleled centrality in the urban discourse of India. What happens here will find echoes in other Indian cities as new metro projects are rapidly being constructed. Desirability of a metro-like aura goes beyond strictly transportation, and its sphere of influence extends far and wide, enabling a technocratic outlook to projects as an accepted norm both by experts and users. DMRC has been able to transform the stereotypes of lethargy and corruption attached with government work by bringing in a refreshing efficiency in its bureaucratic operations and management. Alongside, its unparalleled safety record has led it to being treated as a model for designing safe public spaces, specifically for women.

However, as the research argues the provision of this safety is based on a multiplication of barriers and boundaries, exclusion of activities to ensure order, disciplining of certain behaviours, and a creation of an “us” through expulsion of some publics who do not transform to fit the mould of the metro. The metro’s world-class, tech-oriented spatial characteristics closely match the ambience of a privatised public space. The novelty of the metro lies in the fact that such an experience has now been extended to a much larger population of the city. But, it retains the problematics attached with such spaces, especially that of eroding the purpose of public space in furthering democratic engagement within the society. And owing to a physical classist restructuring of the city around the metro, it leads to making the city further unequal spatially and socially- by reconfiguring the very idea of the imagined public.

Finally, the research further highlights how the global tech and transportation infrastructures along with their world-class desires manifest in the particular socio-political context of Delhi - by creating and carving civilised bodies out of the Indian public and its successful image being configured around providing safety for women. The research aims to provoke an investigation into similar projects developing across India and in cities of global south from Lima to Jakarta to unravel what particularities they produce.

It is unlikely that a citizens protest movement, a pogrom and a pandemic will ever reoccur in close succession in the future of Delhi which makes the timeframe of this research an interlude, where we wait to see what happens next. On a hopeful note, Arundhati Roy² reminds us that the ‘pandemic is a portal’- hence critical

attention to this moment can provide us with the tools to engage the question of *how we can emerge on the other side without having to rely on swiping our metro cards for urban safety*.

1 See “‘Goli Maaro’ At Delhi’s Busiest Metro Station In Rush Hour, 6 Detained”, NDTV on Youtube, Feb 29, 2020

2 Arundhati Roy: ‘The pandemic is a portal’, Financial Times, April 3, 2020

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مريدولا جارج

الأمان في الحضر تأثير مترو دلهي علي سكان المدينة

عصالخ

في عام 2019 ، اقترحت حكومة دلهي ان يكون السفر بالمترو والحافلات مجانيًا للنساء في محاولة لتعزيز السلامة في وسائل النقل العام. بينما تم طرح دعم الحافلات ، الخطاب العام الناشئ عارض مجانية ركوب النساء ، وبالتالي منع وصول „جميع” النساء إلى المساحة المؤمنة في المترو. من قبيل الصدفة ، ظهرت الأحداث السياسية الرئيسية خلال وقت هذا البحث - حركة المواطنين المناهضة لـ CAA ، والعنف الطائفي في شمال شرق دلهي، وأزمة المهاجرين من إغلاق Covid-19 - أوجه للحرمان المنهجي لمجموعات هامشية أخرى. أصبح السؤال، ما هو الجمهور المثالي للمترو؟ وكيف يختبرون الراحة غير المسبوقة ذات المستوى العالمي؟ هذا هو محور هذه الأطروحة. يعتمد البحث على الإثنوغرافيا في مترو دلهي، والملاحظات مع مستخدمي المترو والحافلات، واستطلاعات المستخدمين عبر الإنترنت، والمقابلات مع مسؤولي المترو، والمشاركة في سياسات المدينة. يكشف تحليل العلاقات الاجتماعية-المكانية المتضاربة أن السلامة في المترو تتكون من التنافس في مدرب النساء المنتشر، وتأديب المجتمع الهندي و „تغريب” الأقليات وسكان المناطق الحضرية غير المستقرة. أنا أزعم أن المترو في تشكيلته تم اقتطاعه من عمليات إقصاء، حيث تم وضع نظامه بطريقة تضاعف الحدود القائمة بين أطراف المجتمع، مما يصعب الوصول إليه. وبذلك يعزز من تكوين الجمهور المتفارق، وتآكل المشاركة الديمقراطية في الأماكن العامة. وبالتالي ، فإن الفعل البسيط المتمثل في تمرير بطاقة المترو يعكس أيضًا من لديه القدرة على الدخول إلى مساحته الآمنة ؛ إن جعل المترو مجانيًا سيمنح الوصول إلى جميع فئات المجتمع „غير المرغوب فيها” وبالتالي تمزيق أجنداث الهيمنة لصورة المترو التي تبدو غير قابلة للجدل. نظرًا لأن المشاريع المماثلة القائمة على مترو دلهي تعمل على تغيير المدن الهندية بسرعة، فإن هذا البحث يحث على ضرورة تخيل مساحات آمنة بدون عمليات إقصائية ونجروء على إشراك جماهير المدينة المتنوعة.

الكلمات الدالة:

الأمان ، الجمهور ، المستوى العالمي ، النساء ، دلهي ، مترو دلهي ، النقل العام ، النذب ، الفضاء الآمن

إقرار

هذه الرسالة مقدمة في جامعة عين شمس وجامعة شوتجارت للحصول على درجة العمران المتكامل والتصميم المستدام. إن العمل الذي تحويه هذه الرسالة قد تم إنجازه بمعرفة الباحث سنة ...

هذا ويقر الباحث أن العمل المقدم هو خلاصة بحثه الشخصي وأنه قد اتبع الأسلوب العلمي السليم في الإشارة إلى المواد المؤخذه من المراجع العلمية كل في مكانه في مختلف أجزاء الرسالة..

وهذا إقرار مني بذلك،،،

التوقيع:

الباحث: مريدولا جارج

التاريخ: ٢٠٢٠/١٦/٨.

الأمان في الحضر

مقدمة للحصول على درجة الماجستير في العمران المتكامل والتصميم المستدام

أعداد: مريدولا جارج

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تاريخ المناقشة:

الدراسات العليا

أُجيزت الرسالة بتاريخ:

موافقة مجلس الجامعة/...../.....

ختم الإجازة
موافقة مجلس الكلية .../.../...


 جامعة عين شمس

جامعة شتوتجارت



08/16/2020



الأمان في الحضر تأثير مترو دلهي علي سكان المدينة

رسالة مقدمة للحصول على درجة الماجستير في العمران المتكامل والتصميم المستدام

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