



**Sonali Rastogi**

Founder Partner, Morphogenesis

Graduated from the School of Planning and Architecture (New Delhi) and The Architectural Association (London) with a graduate diploma in Housing and Urbanism and a second graduate diploma in Graduate Design, Sonali is Founder Partner of Morphogenesis. Morphogenesis has been ranked, among the Top 100 Architectural Design Firms worldwide by Building Design Magazine, UK in WA100, 2016. The practice is the recipient of over 75 awards and has featured in over 500 publications, both International and National. Sonali, along with Mani, has recently been awarded Laureate of the SIA Getz Award for Emergent Architecture in Asia, Singapore.

Sonali is member of the Delhi Urban Arts Commission (DUAC), and Fellow of the IIA (Indian Institute of Architects) and the RSA (Royal Society of Arts, UK). Issues related to the environment and sustainability are at the core of Sonali's design attitude. Sonali has recently been listed among the 10 icons of the design world by the Platform Magazine. She lectures globally, has been a part of various academic and design juries, and been a speaker at events such as The Design Leadership Summit 2014 (New York), GRIHA Conference 2014, India Design ID 2013 Symposium, Women Leaders in India Conference & Awards, Pecha Kucha (Sydney and New Delhi). Sonali is also a founder member of Manthan; a cross-cultural platform for creative exchange, aiming to be the voice of the Indian creative community.



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# Urbanism and Density

By Sonali Rastogi

*Drawings: courtesy Report on Lutyens Bungalow Zone (LBZ) by the Delhi Urban Art Commission (DUAC)*

*Photographs: courtesy The Lutyens Trust 2013 ([www.lutyenstrust.org.uk](http://www.lutyenstrust.org.uk))*

Defined as the study of the characteristic ways of interaction of inhabitants of urban areas with the built environment, urbanism is largely understood as an exercise in place making. This exercise must be collaborative and aim for an inclusive environment between people and the physical space of an urban development. It should embody in itself the potential for growth and change.

The last few years have seen a paradigm shift in many aspects which can be broadly defined as outcomes of 'globalization'. This has resulted in large scale and unprecedented migration from rural to urban areas. Cities today are often struggling to cope with this large unplanned influx which in many cases is causing the urban structure to be stretched to the point of rupturing. From that perspective, the patterns of migration into Delhi are causing severe infrastructural stress. However there are still isolated, protected low-density island-areas in the heart of the city that are not subjected to development. With land being a limited resource, the issues that need to be addressed while planning range from addressing high population density to optimal resource management. A city's urban character or 'urbanism' lends, any habitat its primary identity. It is important that this be regarded as an opportunity to provide design solutions that focus on least

impact on the environmental whilst taking cognizance of socio-cultural sustainability. Resource optimization is essential to this approach.

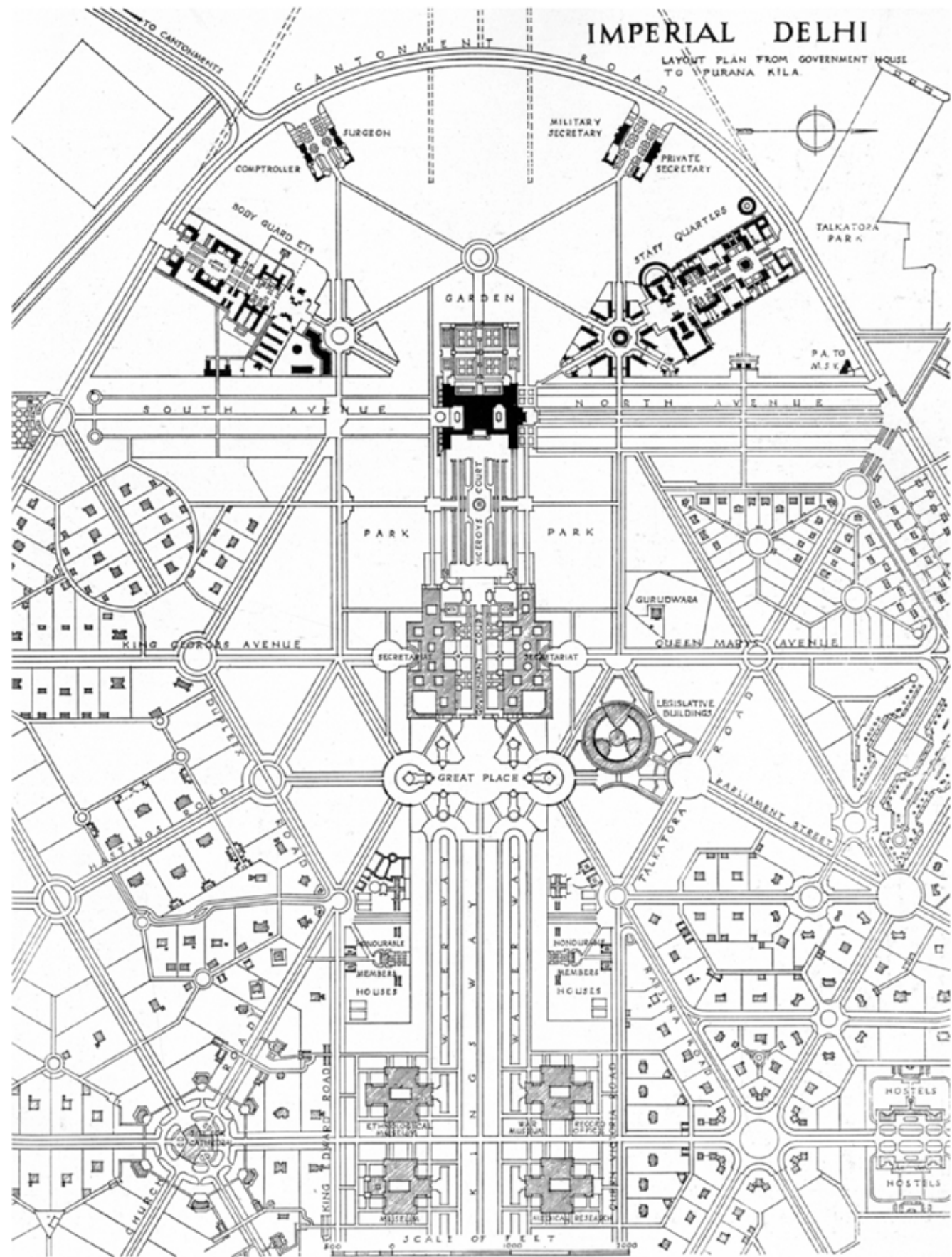
What is crucial today, is finding the appropriate sustainable Urbanism model for the Indian subcontinent, our master plans for the cities have to be master plans for the environment. To progressively bring about a strategic and sustainable change within our cities, we should restore and re-amalgamate the environment as a fundamental constituent of our ecosystem. Environmental strategy should not be a chapter, but is required to be a preamble defining the spirit of all existence in the city.

In addition to sustainability and resource optimization, it is crucial to address the socio-cultural planning of the city. Today, our cities are beginning to move away from the idea of democracy. We believe in creating an urbanism of shared space. Therefore what is key is to design a city to be safe, a city that has eyes on every democratic, public space. We need to look at a model that does not close or cordon off the city with setbacks and boundary walls, but instead builds pavements and puts eyes on the street. A self-regulating society is most effective. ■

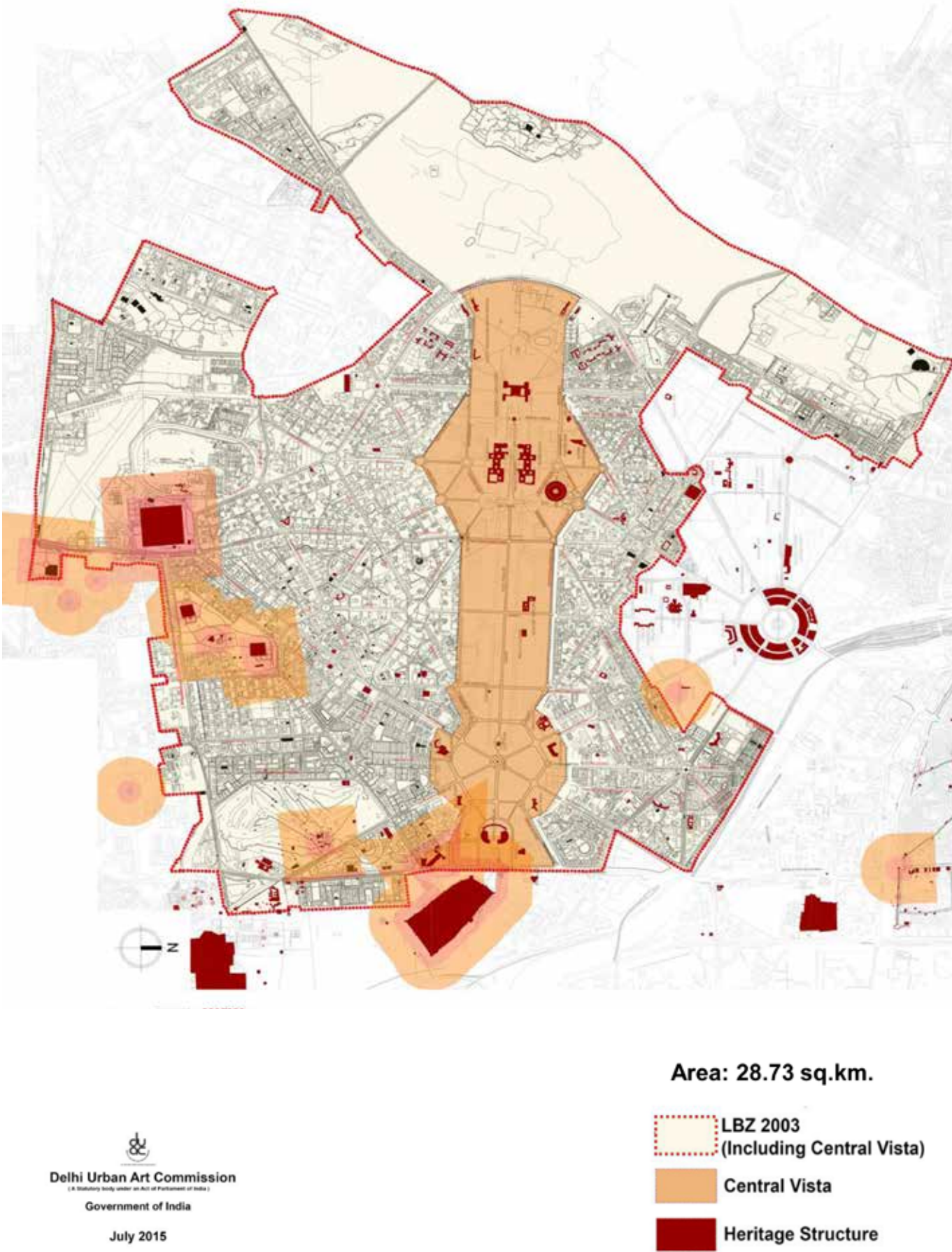








↑ Part Layout Plan of Imperial Delhi.



↑ Plan showing Heritage Buildings and the Lutyens' Bungalow Zone area in 2003.





↑ Rashtrapati Bhavan under construction.



↑ Rashtrapati Bhavan looking West.



↑ Garden Detail, Rashtrapati Bhavan.





↑ East Front, Rashtrapati Bhavan.



↑ Mughal Gardens, Rashtrapati Bhavan.



↑ Rashtrapati Bhavan and Jaipur Column.



↑ Rashtrapati Bhavan's dome under construction.

of dilapidated areas to stand frozen in time and in some way have destroyed the Lutyens' identity of the area. There are many examples existing around the world and as much as high-rise and preserving heritage can coexist, that much an urban design philosophy which stays low-rise and maintains scale concept is also equally successful. So here the question is not the validity of the argument but to develop a consensus about what should be the philosophy going forward about preserving, redeveloping and inserting into Lutyens' Bungalow Zone.

The potential solutions could range from reinforcing the historic character of the vistas, and preserving the skyline of the region to ensuring that the new construction respects the scale and context of the existing regional fabric. While there are a multitude of examples that demonstrate that modern interventions work well set within heritage or older, traditional blocks of the region. Be it The City of London; the Grand Louvre Pyramids intervention in Paris or the Lafayette Park in Detroit, these urban renewal projects successfully establish that works of all eras can co-exist. On the other hand there are examples like Washington DC and Beijing that demonstrate a presence of a strong historic cores that are encircled by a modern metropolises.

What we need is a coming together of professional view points; urban designers, planners, architects, historians, landscape designers, to chart out a cohesive development strategy that ensures a significant presence of the past whilst setting out the roadmap for a coherent redevelopment strategy for the robust urban renewal for LBZ. The Morphogenesis' philosophy would be to establish a backbone of sustainability and to prevent architectural atrophy and stagnation in time. ■