

Refereed article

Urban Cultural Heritage in Delhi, India: An Asset for the Future or a Neglected Resource?

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Summary

The attractiveness of cities and their national and international competitiveness are partly determined by “soft” and “intangible” factors: cultural, social, and individual aspects are becoming the basis for the “unique competitive edge” that cities have and play a crucial role with regard to the creation of identity. In Delhi, every epoch of the city’s rich history has left its traces, and the Indian capital has numerous monuments, gardens, historic areas, and ancient buildings as a result. Affected by globalization and urbanization, Delhi has been increasingly turning into a globalized metropolis, which has had a major impact on its urban fabric.

Framed against the backdrop of the changing concepts and perception of urban heritage, this article focuses on the question of how Delhi’s unique urban heritage should be safeguarded. The responsibility for this task does not lie with the authorities alone, but is embedded in the complex structure of public, private, individual, and collective stakeholders acting at different levels with their respective interests. These diverse stakeholders act within the scope of a differentiated set of rules and legislation. Thus, safeguarding urban heritage and integrating it into the urban planning process requires laws and regulations specifically relevant to cultural heritage and not just planning instruments. The institutional and legal framework of heritage protection in Delhi, its implementation, and the complex challenges that go with this are investigated.

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