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(Un)Settling the City

Analyzing Displacement in Delhi from 1990-2007

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Abstract:

The experience of displacement – of single and multiple evictions and resultant resettlement or homelessness – has defined processes of inhabitation for an overwhelming majority of the poor in Indian cities, including the capital. Millennial evictions of poor, informal settlements – known as bastis -- in Delhi represent a dramatic increase in the intensity and frequency of cycles of displacement with tremendous consequences for the poor. Analyses in this paper and in Dupont (2008), among others, suggest that at least 218 evictions have occurred between 1990 and 2007 in the capital, covering at least 60,000 households. Recent documentation of heightened evictions for the Commonwealth Games in 2010 indicates the continuation and deepening of this trend.

Analyses of the production and reproduction of urban inequality must understand this phase of displacement more closely, looking in particular at understudied processes of resettlement. Using analytical as well as geo-spatial data on 218 evictions that occurred within Delhi between 1990 and 2007, this essay asks four key questions: (a) what is the relationship between processes of eviction and those of resettlement?;

(b) what is the imagination of public purpose within these cycles of displacement and the reality of the use of the land?; (c) how is displacement impacted by the ruling political party at the state and central level?; and (d) what is the relationship, if any, of this displacement to history of planning in Delhi, particularly to its three Master Plans?

Our findings argue strongly in support of current policy paradigms like the Rajeev Awaas Yojana that prioritize in-situ upgrading rather than resettlement arguing both that the geographies of settlement and eviction indicate a possible upgrading dividend as well as showing that processes of resettlement involve significant exclusions. Political challenges to in-situ upgrading are discussed, particularly in light of findings that suggest that evictions occur with similar intensity regardless of which political party is in power and often occur with greater intensity in the constituencies in which the ruling party also holds a mandate.

This paper is part of The Evictions Project, an interdisciplinary research endeavour at the Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS; www.iihs.co.in). Gautam Bhan is a consultant at the IIHS and with the Department of City and Regional Planning, University of California, Berkeley. At the time of the project, Swathi Shivanand was an

Associate with the Indian Institute for Human Settlements. Geo-Spatial mapping was aided by Deepika Jha, then Associate, Indian Institute for Human Settlements as well as Imran Basha, then a Research Intern at the IIHS. Further research support and assistance in physical verification of eviction sites was provided by Anusha Hariharan and Sonal Sharma.

The experience of displacement – of single and multiple evictions and resultant resettlement or homelessness – has defined processes of inhabitation for an overwhelming majority of the poor in Indian cities, including the capital. In Delhi, attempts to house the poor legally – through either public or private means – have been extremely limited in their impact and auto-construction has defined the housing of the rich and poor alike. In the absence of any access to legal housing stock through either ownership or rental, the poor are forced into bastis.¹ These represent a diverse range of settlements – some large colonies of nearly ten thousand households that have existed for over thirty years and others that are smaller and newer, bringing together a few hundred households.

Bastis are built on public or private lands not owned in title by their residents, leaving them vulnerable to cycles of displacement. Historically, this experience of displacement is a double-edged moment for the poor: it is certainly a moment of violence and eviction but is also, for many households, a moment of possibility where the process of resettlement offers the hope of legality and tenure security.² Indeed, in 2000 if (according to official estimates) 14.8% of the population of Delhi lived in bastis, then another 12.7% lived in Resettlement Colonies where they had been placed post-eviction with some measure of security of tenure (Government of Delhi 2006).³ It is within negotiating and delaying, if not preventing, eviction and similarly in fighting to access resettlement, then, that the poor claim shelter in the city.

Millennial evictions in Delhi represent a dramatic increase in the intensity and frequency of cycles of displacement with tremendous consequences for the poor. Analyses in this paper and in Dupont (2008), among others, suggest at least 218 evictions

between 1990 and 2007 in the capital, covering at least 60,000 households. Recent documentation of heightened evictions for the Commonwealth Games in 2010 indicates the continuation and deepening of this trend post-2007 (HLRN 2010). Several authors have shown that contemporary evictions have been the result of Delhi High Court and Supreme Court of India orders, ironically, in Public Interest Litigations. Authors searching for explanations for this have looked closely at the Courts' portrayal of the poor as "encroachers" (Ramanathan 2004; Dupont 2008), the use of "nuisance" laws (Ghertner 2008), changing environmental mores that portray the poor as "dirty" in what one scholar has termed "bourgeoisie environmentalism" (Baviskar 2003), a newly expanded and vocal middle-class that is seen as "anti-poor," a shifting political climate in Indian cities that seek global transformations into "World-Class Cities" where there is little, if any, place for the poor (Chatterjee 2004; Menon and Nigam 2007; Bhan 2009), or simply the "anti-poor" nature of the judiciary (Bhushan 2004; Rajagopal 2007).

This paper builds upon these studies of evictions but suggests both a different focus and purpose of inquiry. Using data on 218 evictions that occurred within Delhi between 1990 and 2007, it asks four key questions: (a) what is the relationship between processes of eviction and those of resettlement?; (b) what is the imagination of public purpose within these cycles of displacement and the reality of the use of the land?; (c) how is displacement impacted by the ruling political party at the state and central level?; and (d) what is the relationship, if any, of this displacement to history of planning in Delhi, particularly to its three Master Plans?

The paper is structured in four parts. The first describes the data used with both its strengths and limitations. The second assesses patterns within 218 evictions that have been officially recorded within Delhi between 1990 and 2007. It does so, in particular, by spatialising these evictions in order to read and assess their geographies within the city. The third then assesses the nature and extent of resettlement. The fourth then analyses these assessments by looking closely at the impact of political parties, of conceptions of public purpose and, finally, of master planning.

Data as Empiric and as Artifact

Before we present our findings, it is necessary in a context where data is a reliable empiric just as often as it is an artifact to clearly state the sources, strengths and limitations of our data. Data used to map evictions and resettlement, as well as existing JJ Clusters, Slums and Resettlement Colonies, was

¹ The *basti* (plural: *bastis*) is often referred to outside the settlement and within policy and media discourses as the "slum." We do not use the word "slum" for these settlements of the poor because it is not the word that residents of the *basti* use to describe themselves. Moreover, there is a legal definition of "slum" as areas defined and protected under the Slum Areas Act 1956. Planning documents use *Jhuggi Jhopdi Clusters*, or JJ Clusters, a term again not used in the *basti*, where "JJ Colony" is used. We use the word *basti* to refer the settlements of the poor that are built on public or private land, and JJ Cluster when specifically referring to the Master Plan category.

² It must be noted here that the move to 5 or 10 year licenses, rather than leaseholds or longer term pattas, have made even this hope of legality rather tenuous.

³ Post-facto legalization is not just how the poor settle the city. While 5.3% of the city lived in Unauthorised Colonies in 2000, a much larger 12.7% lived in "Regularised-Unauthorised Colonies," i.e. colonies that had been legalized *post-facto*, or after they had been illegally built (Government of Delhi 2004).

sourced from a variety of public agencies. A set of three lists were combined to make the maps below: a list made in by the Department of Food and Supplies in the Municipal Corporation, another by the Slum & JJ Department of the Municipal Corporation and a third by the newly formed Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB).

How Accurate are the Estimates?

The data on existing bastis is 2010 data from the newly formed Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board, or DUSIB, based on surveys carried out throughout 2009 (hereinafter called List A). DUSIB, since its formation in 2009, is now the singular authority responsible for slum housing, upgradation and resettlement in Delhi. Their data is the only systemic survey of existing JJ Clusters undertaken or commissioned by a public agency and hence represents the most accurate public data available. The DUSIB data lists 685 JJ Clusters in Delhi in 2010. This figure is contested. Other data sources – such as those with the Delhi-based Centre for Urban and Regional Excellence (CURE) – list 905 bastis while recent public orders including guidelines for the Delhi Government’s resettlement policy lists 860 JJ clusters⁴.

The data on evictions is drawn from a list⁵ (hereinafter List B) prepared by the erstwhile Slum and JJ Department. It provides data not on evictions but on resettlement. This means it gives information about how many households were resettled from different eviction sites. They provide a name and location of the eviction site, the name of the resettlement colony where some of the evicted families were sent as well as the year in which they were sent. This implies that if entire sites were evicted without any resettlement, they will not appear on our lists. There is, therefore, the possibility of an undercounting of evictions in the data. How large is this possible undercounting? It is nearly impossible to tell – there are no systematic surveys of eviction to compare it with. This does imply that we cannot make definitive conclusions about evictions per se using this data set, but merely indicate trends from what is certainly a minimum set of evictions in the city and is the complete set of evictions that are acknowledged by the government.

⁴Government order dated 19.02.10, Modified Policy Guidelines for implementation of the scheme for relocation/rehabilitation and allotment of 7900 flats to slums and JJ dwellers in the first phase, Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi, Department of Urban Development

⁵The list is titled ‘Status report on Relocated/Resettled Jhuggie families cluster-wise/year-wise since inception of the scheme i.e.1.4.90’.

In trying to grasp the scale of displacement, the numbers of families resettled have been matched with a Food and Civil Supplies Department list⁶ (hereinafter List C) which contains numbers of families who were officially “surveyed” as being present as residents of the JJ cluster. Admittedly, this list would have had its own set of ineligible families but is useful in indicating at least a minimum number of households living in these bastis. It then allows us to see how many people recognized as residents by one wing of the State itself were rendered homeless by another.

Three considerations support using this data for analysis despite its limitations. The first is that these lists contain data used by public authorities. Across the Delhi Economic Survey, the Master and Zonal Plans, the City Development Plan under the JNNURM, or any of the other urban planning and governance reports, it is these data that are used. Even if limited, it is important to engage with these data on their own terms. In that sense, these data are empirics as well as artifacts and the geographies in which they circulate unquestioned, are precisely those from within which policy regimes on housing and shelter in the city emerge.

The second consideration is that it is because bastis in Delhi are nearly universally on public land, the executing agency for evictions in the time period under consideration⁷ has been a single agency: the Slum and JJ Department of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi. This means that no matter the land owning agency on whose land the evicted basti stood, it is the Slum and JJ Department who executes the eviction. Its own record of evictions, therefore, is perhaps as close to an accurate record as is possible. There is no evidence – even anecdotal – of privatized evictions in Delhi in the time period under consideration, making data on evictions from public sources the most accurate and appropriate to use.

The third is that even if the data does not fully capture evictions, it certainly accurately represents the universe of resettlement precisely because only

⁶This 170 page list, procured from the DUSIB, is titled “Slum Wing, Municipal Corporation of Delhi, Detail of No. of Clusters Constituency wise” and contains the number of jhuggies (not families) that were recognized as residents of JJ clusters in the years 1990 and 1994. The 1994 figure has been used to ascertain the resettlement ratio – i.e. the number of families who were offered resettlement plots vs the number who were officially recognized as residents in this list. Where the 1994 figures were not available, the 1990 figure has been considered.

⁷Anecdotal evidence suggests that post-2007, direct evictions by the police force implementing orders of the Delhi High Court or the Supreme Court of India have taken place.

public agencies provide and undertake resettlement – there is no case of private resettlement colonies being built in Delhi. In other words, the data is perhaps the best sample available of JJ Clusters that received some form of resettlement between 1990 and 2007, allowing us to draw definitive conclusions about resettlement.

Verifying Locations

The project initially was conceived as an exploratory exercise with a broad aim of recovering a particular strand of urban history by mapping evictions. The first hurdle was in pinpointing the exact location of an evicted basti. Even before being demolished, most bastis hardly had a specific official address. Often, a JJ Cluster would be listed as being, for e.g., on “Masjid Road,” which is a 5km road in the city. At this level of information, it was impossible to plot an eviction site. To overcome this limitation, the 218 eviction sites, therefore, had to be physically verified.

How does one find and map a basti that no longer exists? Using the lists as our guides, an initial mapping of 218 eviction sites was done using the timeline satellite imagery available through Google Earth. Over a period of two months, each of these sites was then visited by a research team of two surveyors each. Once at the approximate location of the site, the team relied on the recall of local residents to accurately find the site where the basti had stood. For each site, several informants were asked in order to be certain of the location. Once the site was exactly identified, its geo-spatial location was recorded using a GPS device and a photograph taken to record current use of the land. We found, in this process, a remarkably clear and certain recall of basti locations and were able to accurately map the location of the settlements.

Assessing Displacement: The Quantum of Evictions

In our study, we have been able to identify 205 sites on which 2188 instances of evictions followed by resettlement have been identified⁹. In this section, we present a quick summary of the trends witnessed when the data is looked at chronologically and seen against its current land use.

Displacement through the years

In this study, we have been able to verify 218 evictions that has led to the displacement of 62,817

families in Delhi from the years 1990 to 2007. A year-wise look at evictions points to a steady increase in the number of evictions between the years 1999 and 2002, finally reaching its highest in the year 2001-2002. These years have had 79 evictions, leading to the official displacement of over 30,000 families.

Within this period, the year 2001-2002 marks the highest number of officially evicted and resettled families in Delhi with 32 evictions displacing over 14,000 families. This outstripped the number of evictions and resettlement that occurred in the preceding year when 27 evictions had displaced over 10,000 families. What happened in the state of Delhi between the year 2001 and 2002 in particular and between 1999 and 2002 in general in Delhi is an important question that this data throws up. It is possible that these evictions are related to the tenure of Jagmohan, then in the Union Government first in the Ministry of Urban Development and then in the Ministry of Tourism, who later came to be known as “Demolition Man” for his emphasis on basti clearance. Post 2002, either the number of evictions reduced or the more possibly, the instances of resettlement along with evictions have decreased. Given that a series of Delhi High Court judgments in 2002-2004 made resettlement discretionary rather than a part of eviction, it is likely the latter.¹⁰ The next upsurge is seen in 2006-2007, when a number of demolitions occurred along the Yamuna Pushta as well as the demolition of the Nangla Devat village, for the extension of the IGI Airport.

Current Land Use

Dupont (2008) reported a preliminary pattern of land use based on 67 of the 217 eviction sites surveyed in her study. Her preliminary findings show that four primary uses were vacant land, parks and green areas, built (road infrastructure) and under construction. While broadly corresponding to these findings, our study has found that the four primary uses are vacant land, road and related infrastructure, parks and playgrounds and government infrastructure (see Figure One below).

⁸ Dupont (2008) which draws from the same list has identified 217 instances of evictions

⁹Some sites have witnessed multiple evictions.

¹⁰ On the judgments in question, see Ramanathan (2004) and Bhan (2009). Since large scale evictions with little or no resettlement took place along the banks of the Yamuna post 2002-03, the reduced numbers in these years are most likely testament to reduced resettlement.

Year	No. of Evictions	No. of households displaced
1990-1991	2	670
1991-1992	2	356
1992-1993	5	1058
1993-1994	2	165
1994-1995	10	820
1995-1996	13	2306
1996-1997	11	726
1997-1998	16	2412
1998-1999	6	2672
1999-2000	20	4218
2000-2001	27	10968
2001-2002	32	14876
2002-2003	24	7275
2003-2004	16	3960
2004-2005	9	1680
2005-2006	7	1495
2006-2007	13	9013
2007-2008	3	240
Total	218	64910

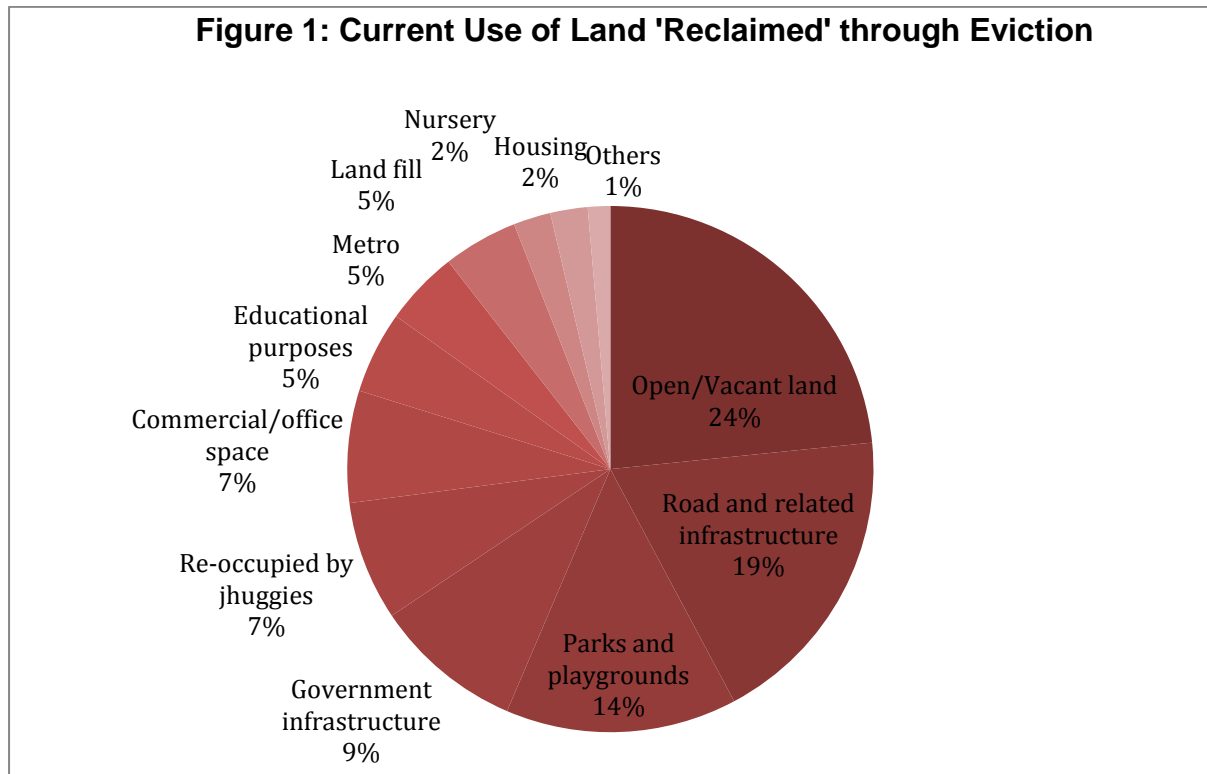
After a first-hand survey of 185 evicted sites, we have classified the land uses into 12 different types. Due to multiple uses of single eviction sites, the land uses we have counted are 208 in number. Nearly 25 percent of the 'recovered' land remains empty, vacant and unused. 17 percent of previously basti land has been used for road and related infrastructure while 15 percent of the sites have parks and playgrounds built on them. The rest are commercial/office spaces, re-occupied by jhuggies, being used for commercial purposes, house metro infrastructure, land-fills, concrete residences, nurseries or have drain-related infrastructure on them.

In the vacant land category, we find that at least 27 such sites have been fully or partially vacant for anywhere between 10-21 years. Of the 13 sites demolished in the year 2006-2007, ten remain vacant even in 2011. The extent of time lags between eviction and land has strong implications for the poor. Recent experiments such as those as the Slum Networking Project in Ahmedabad have obtained No-Eviction Assurances from local city and state authorities for land that is not needed for at least ten years. These assurances, while not granting the poor long-term security, enable

significant incremental gains for these households. The data suggests that such no-eviction assurances are definitely possible for multiple sites in Delhi.

The Other Side of Displacement: Resettlement Ratios

Yet as stated earlier, this data represents the number of resettled households. We have no way of knowing how many households actually lived in the original settlement when it was evicted and therefore no way of fully assessing the degree of resettlement. However, by comparing Lists B and C, it has been possible to intuit a picture of resettlement for 142 of the 205 identified sites. Table Two indicates the number of surveyed households in a settlement with those that were resettled post eviction. It also indicates a Resettlement Ratio (RR) as a percentage of surveyed households that were resettled.

Figure 1: Current Use of Land 'Reclaimed' through Eviction

The data shows that for the 142 sites that we have data on surveyed households and resettled households, the RR is 52%.¹¹ It would be correct to report this RR not as an actual resettlement ratio but in fact as the maximum possible resettlement ratio for this set of evictions. This is because of the nature of the data at hand. Two clear limits of the data are: (a) the total number of “surveyed” households may not be the actual number of households in the settlement since surveys typically undercount basti residents for a number of reasons;¹² and (b) the population of households almost certainly would have grown between 1994 and the date of eviction. This bias will worsen the later the eviction occurred. Both these limitations imply that our resettlement ratio of 52% is certainly an overestimation and should be considered to be

the maximum possible resettlement ratio. Updated and more accurate data would most, in other words, lower the resettlement ratio even further.

Even so, this best-case scenario shows us that not more than 52% of evicted households received resettlement post-eviction. Pertinent here is that families counted here as left out of the resettlement process are ones that were officially recognized being resident in the basti in the government survey itself. This low resettlement ratio has strong implications when choosing between in-situ upgradation and resettlement as the developmental pathway for a given settlement. The experience of resettlement, even at its best estimate, seems to retain no more than half a community’s residents.

The low resettlement ratio indicate the important exclusionary role being played by eligibility requirements such as cut-off dates that require families to be resident before 1990, 1998, and more recently, 2007, in order to qualify for resettlement at all. Further, for many families that have been in residence for the sufficient time, the ability to prove acceptable documentation of such residence is extremely difficult.

¹¹ Having stated the above figure, particularities of evicted sites are important to be noted. For instance, at the Rajiv Gandhi camp JJ cluster that has seen evictions occur thrice and in whose place the Central Government Office Complex has come up, the number of families resettled (3565) are more than those officially identified in the 1994 survey (2000). Similarly in the 8 eviction sites counted in and around DDU Marg, the number of families resettled (3601) exceeds the number of families officially recorded (2852). In total, 39 such evicted sites have seen similar patterns.

¹² These may range from logistical concerns such as no member of the household being present at the time of the survey to the inability to show official documents at the correct time to even incentives for public surveyors to undercount residents.

Table 2: Resettled Households and Resettlement Ratios

Year	No. of Evictions	Households Relocated	Households Surveyed	Resettlement Ratio
1990-1991	1	670	470	143% ¹³
1992-1993	3	291	5500	5
1993-1994	2	165	307	54
1994-1995	7	707	1953	56
1995-1996	7	1071	3373	32
1996-1997	7	339	1699	30
1997-1998	11	2067	8325	25
1998-1999	4	2326	11827	20
1999-2000	14	7063	12057	59
2000-2001	18	7087	8628	82
2001-2002	29	13892	18059	77
2002-2003	18	6311	7326	86
2003-2004	11	2963	8841	34
2004-2005	3	1234	3660	34
2005-2006	5	1285	3802	34
2006-2007	2	1219	1430	85
Total	142	48690	97257	Avg: 52%

It is likely that procedural difficulties themselves contribute to a very low resettlement ratio and deeply impact the developmental impacts of any settlement transformation strategy. Current policy frameworks like the Rajeev Awaas Yojana and the MCD policy of resettlement and upgradation both emphasize in-situ upgradation as the preferred option for settlement transformation and this data strongly supports the importance of that prioritization by highlighting the exclusions evident in processes of resettlement.

In response to an RTI application filed by the authors, DUSIB reported only five post-2007 evictions, a number significantly challenged by the forty four documented by HRLN (2010) just for the Commonwealth Games in 2010. Nevertheless, even for those five evictions, only 119 of 562 households were given resettlement, indicating an RR of only 21% of households. While this is not enough to draw definitive conclusions from, it does seem to indicate that RRs have not improved, and have possibly fallen much further, post-2007.

An additional argument for in-situ upgrading emerges from the availability of space within resettlement colonies themselves. Post 1990, 15 resettlement colonies have been created¹⁴ and 73,177 plots carved out of these sites. With 64, 901 plots being officially allotted in this phase of resettlement, a little less than 10,000 remain empty. With continued evictions even after 2007, the question of land banks and where those who have been and will be evicted in the future are to be housed is an area of concern.

Official data upto 2007 shows that over 7000 sites remain to be allotted in Savda Ghevra and Bawana¹⁵. Over 1000 sites remain to be allotted in Tikri Khurd and Rohini. Curiously, however, five sites – Madanpur Khadar, Bakarwala, Bhalswa, Holambi Kalan and Narela – seem to have more families resettled on it than the plots carved from it. Infact, a little less than 12000 families have been shifted to Narela while official records indicate that the resettlement colony has only about 6,800 sites. It is likely that many of these families are squatting in the periphery of resettlement colonies with a

¹³ See footnote 12.

¹⁴For the purposes of this study, sectors within a particular resettlement colony have been combined to represent a single resettlement site. This has been done in the case of Rohini and Pappan Kalan particularly

¹⁵ This may have changed after 2007

range of claims to the plots. The argument that resettlement colonies seem to be little more than “planned slums” finds significant support in our data.

Displacement and the political landscape

Amidst this large scale displacement of people within the capital city, how do we weave in the political landscape against which these movements occur? Does situating the evicted sites within political constituencies help in understanding the role of formal elected representatives in this phenomenon of evictions and resettlement?

Displacement occurred in 51 of the 70 constituencies that existed prior to the latest delimitation. Spatialising this data, we find that there are three loose rings along which evictions have taken place – the outer ring consists of constituencies with 0-2 evictions, the intermediate ring is where anywhere between 3 and 7 evictions have taken place with the innermost ring consisting of three adjoining constituencies with the maximum number of evictions (see figure below). Two of them – Gole Market and Minto Road account for 31 and 27 evictions of a total of 218 evictions in the city¹⁶. In these two centrally located constituencies alone, nearly 20,000 families have been displaced, accounting for about 32 percent of the total displacement. Expelled from literally the centre of modern Delhi, evicted families were given plots in places far away such as Pappan Kalan, Holambi Kalan, Narela among other resettlement colonies.

To understand the political landscape further, we divided the data on resettled sites into two periods – 1993-1998 (when the BJP had formed the Government in Delhi) and 1998-2006 (when the Congress did). In the case of evictions in Minto Road and Matia Mahal, it is pertinent to note that the constituencies have had the same elected representatives across the two periods. In the case of Gole Market, in the two elections in 1998 and 2006 (the time period when most number of evictions took place) one political leader was elected both times.¹⁷ What then has been the role of these elected representatives is beyond the scope of our

study but is a key question to be explored.

However, more general trends can be discerned. Between 1993 and 1998, in the BJP period, a total of 50 evictions have been recorded. Thirty two of these evictions happened in constituencies where BJP was in power, accounting for 62 percent of the evictions in this period. Between 1998 and 2006, out of the 144 evictions that are recorded, 114 evictions are in constituencies that had Congress representatives, accounting for 79 percent of the evictions in this period. Further, even in the upsurge of evictions that is seen between 1999-2003, of the 104 evictions that took place between 1999 and 2003, 83 had Congress MLAs and 20 had BJP MLAs representing them. While clearly larger national imagination processes are at play in evictions in the city, what this preliminary analysis seems to suggest is that evictions are concentrated in areas where ruling party MLAs were given the mandate. What this indicates is the curious fact that the occurrence of evictions during one’s mandate does not seem to be something that either party fears will have negative political repercussions. Further, it seems to indicate a convergence across the political spectrum on the perception of the ‘slum’ and the urban poor as sites of eviction rather than development in a broader agenda of urban restructuring.

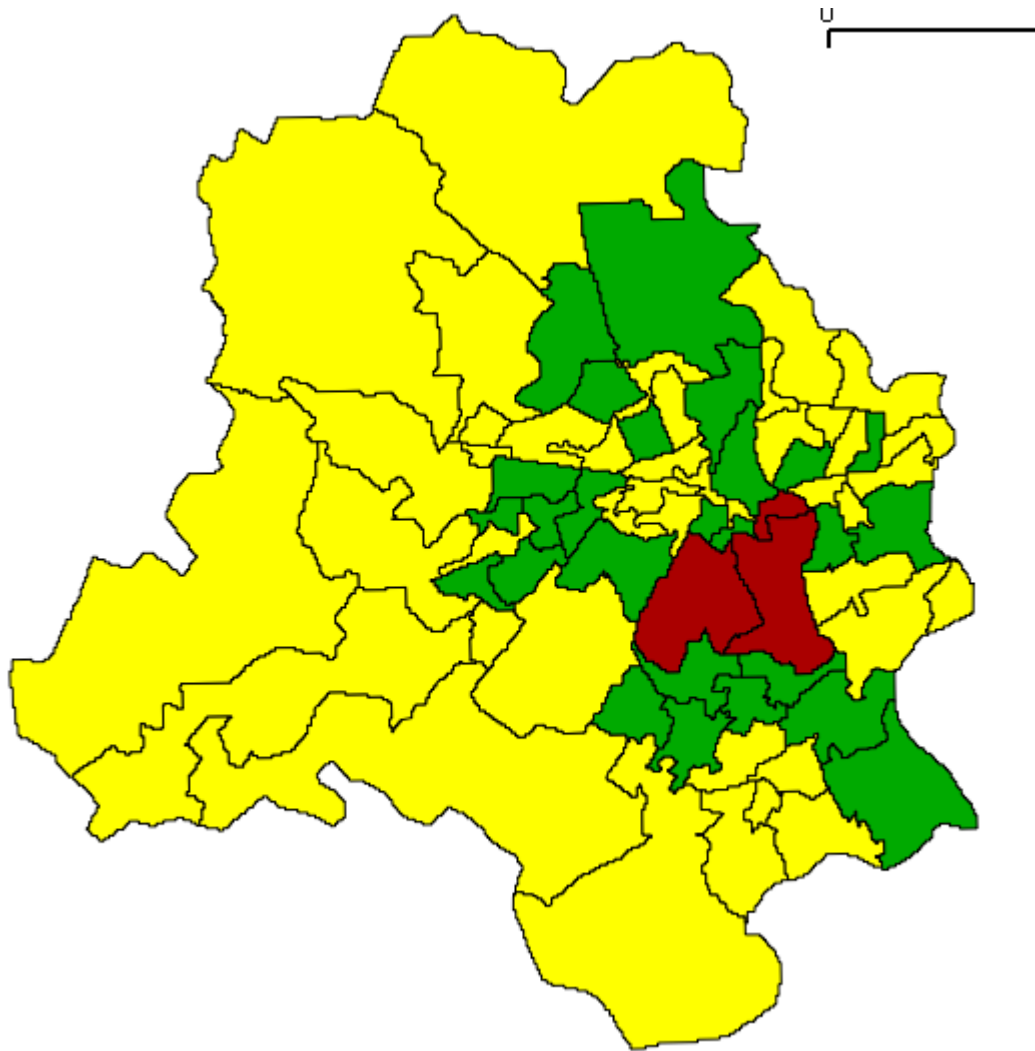
A related question asks how families of JJ clusters fared in terms of negotiating with formal, political authorities such as their MLA in getting themselves a resettlement plot elsewhere. Similar to evictions, we see that the two parties do not differ widely in how many families get resettled – both have similar resettlement ratios of about 60 percent. In the BJP period (’93-’98), the resettlement ratio in BJP-ruled constituencies was 36% while it was 24% in Congress ruled constituencies. In the Congress period (’98-’06), the resettlement ratio for BJP-ruled constituencies was lesser at 46 percent than the Congress’ 59 percent. In other words, our preliminary findings suggest that resettlement rates are higher within constituencies where the MLA is from the party that also holds mandate at the state level.¹⁸

¹⁶ Matia Mahal comes third with most of the Yamuna Pushta evictions taking place in this constituency. The party in power has been the Janata Dal and its various successors, represented continuously by one candidate Shoaib Iqbal.

¹⁷ Minto Road has been represented by Tajdar Babar and Shoaib Iqbal has represented Matia Mahal from 1993-2008. Gole Market is represented by current chief minister Sheila Dikshit between 1998-2008

¹⁸ This data is only illustrative and needs to be further deepened by analysing the role of elected representatives at the Centre as well as at the ward level.

Map 1: Evictions by Political Constituency



	0-2 evictions
	3-7 evictions
	Minto Road (31), Gole Market (27) and Matia Mahal (12)

Re-Thinking the Delhi Experiment: An Upgrading Dividend?

The 1962 Delhi Master Plan was not just the independent capital’s first major planning exercise but also the site of what came to be known as the ‘Delhi Experiment’ – the largest urban land acquisition in India. In 1959, the DDA notified 34,070 acres of urban and urbanisable land in Delhi for acquisition under the Land Acquisition Act that would be “be sufficient for the growth of Delhi according to plan for the next 10 years or so” (Master Plan of Delhi ’62). The land was to remain in public ownership, with developed plots being leased out to individuals or co-operative societies,

or auctioned for development by approved state agencies. Direct ownership of land, argued the MPD’ 62:

makes planning and implementation of plans easier and is imperative if slum clearance, redevelopment and subsidized housing and provision of community facilities according to accepted standards have to be undertaken, as indeed they must be in Delhi, in a determined way.¹⁹

The Delhi Experiment has been largely seen as a “failure.” It is argued that the experiment failed in its primary objectives: to restrain the spatial segregation of the poor and to prevent speculation

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 7

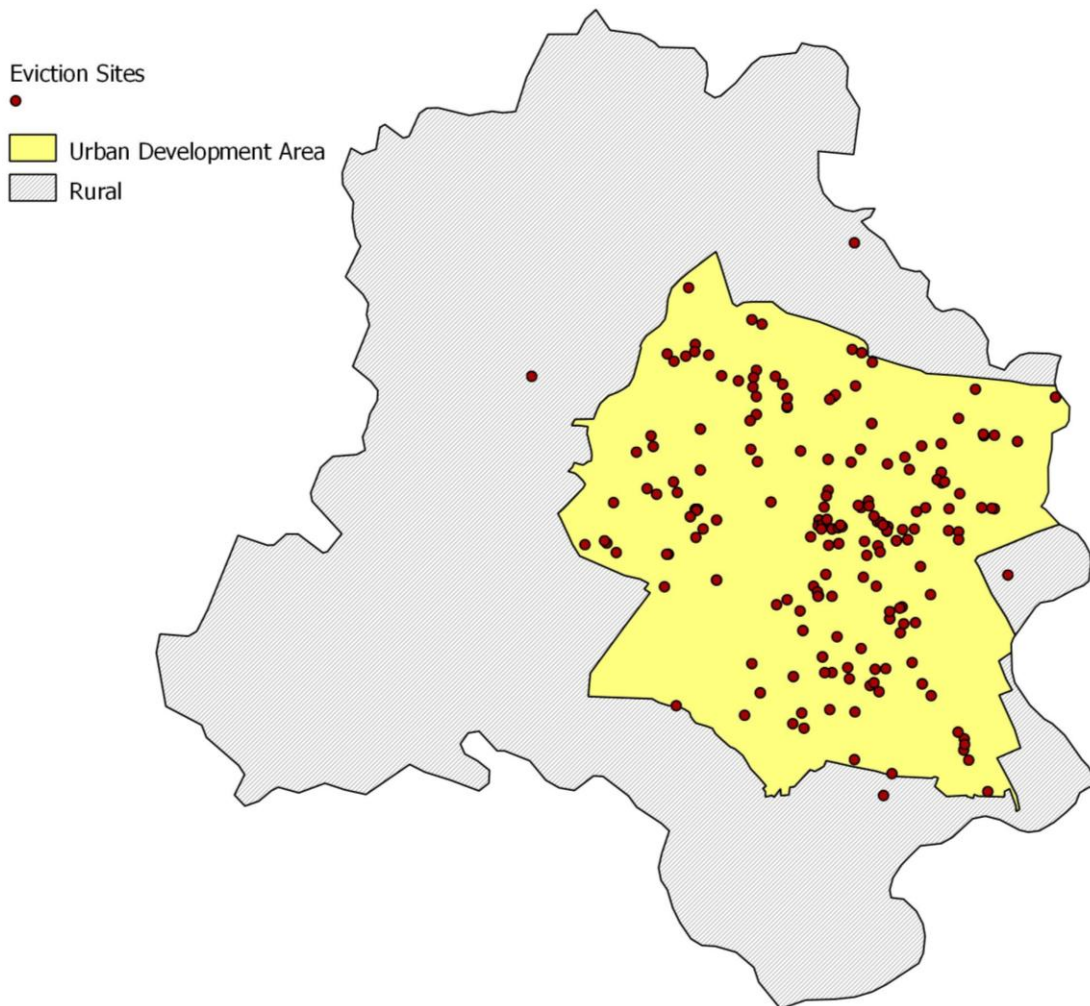
and vast inequalities in land and housing markets. The land acquisition, particularly because it was not accompanied by corresponding large-scale housing development, is seen instead to have distorted the land market. These are certainly legitimate critiques. Yet the data presents another side to thinking about how to evaluate the Delhi experiment and the impact of public land ownership on housing for the poor.

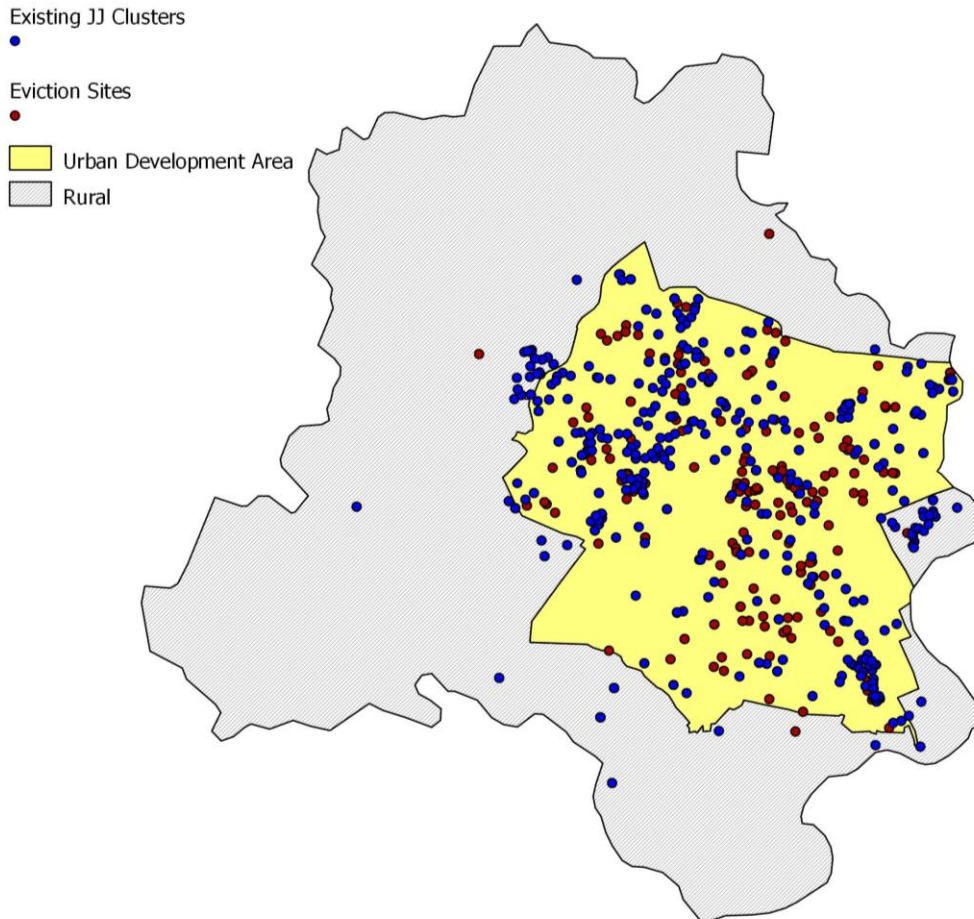
When we plot the eviction sites against the boundaries of the MPD '62, a curious pattern emerges: nearly all the eviction sites, even four decades later, fall within the marked urban

development area of the MPD '62 (See Map Two).

Yet that is not the complete story. If we add a third layer to our maps – that of existing JJ Clusters that have not been evicted – we see another rather unexpected observation (see Map Three). Nearly all the existing JJ Clusters, or bastis, also fall within or just on the border of the urban development area of the MPD'62. In other words, nearly all the sites were the poor used to reside and where they reside now seem to be contained within the lands of the Delhi Experiment – the notified and publicly acquired land under the MPD '62.

Map 2: *Evictions 1990-2007 and the MPD '62*



Map 3: Evictions 1990-2007 and existing JJ Clusters (2010) mapped against MPD '62

One clear possibility here could be one of a data bias, i.e. the DUSIB lists of existing JJ Clusters systematically excludes bastis outside planned areas. This seems an unlikely bias given that the MPD '21 notifies far larger areas for legal settlement than the MPD '62 so DUSIB has no incentive to not include settlements outside the MPD '62 boundaries. The other possible bias, as discussed earlier, is that the total number of bastis is itself underestimated. If we use other estimates of 905 total bastis, this may reduce the degree of clustering of bastis within the MPD '62 boundaries but would still imply – even if all uncounted bastis were outside the MPD '62 boundaries – that the majority of bastis remain within them.

Plans see bastis as the result of an absence or incompleteness of planning –the result of “unplanned and unregulated urban growth” (Swamy, Bhaskara Rao et al. 2008). They are settlements assumed to be entirely divorced from planning or that exist despite or outside Plans. Yet what is clear from the data is that, in the case of Delhi and its experiment, planning has determined where bastis have been built: the locational patterns of the bastis have been determined by public land ownership. The MPD '62 here appears almost as a bounding condition still clearly shaping where the poor have settled, possibly where evictions have occurred, and certainly where resettlement has been a part of eviction.

It is a pattern that, for the poor, is arguably a beneficial one: a large number of bastis still remain in the centre of the city as imagined by the MPD '62. One could argue, in fact, that as the city has grown around and beyond the MPD '62, poor households that have managed to escape evictions and resettlement have – as Map Three suggests – remained in the core imagined by the first plan. They have done so, importantly, not just during the 1962-81 period when the MPD '62 applied but also well beyond it, through the 1980s to 2000s. Bastis, in other words, chose to settle on public land in the MPD '62 area rather than in the vast areas in the West and Northwest of the city. These areas were where large middle and upper middle class colonies were being built through the 1990s. These were by no means peripheral or underdeveloped areas without markets, employment or housing.

The implications of this spatial clustering for interventions in housing are immense. For Delhi, debates on ideas of “public purpose” determining the use of publicly owned land, thus have a specific and disproportionate importance for the poor. This is both an opportunity and a potential pitfall. The former lies in the far reaching effects state action can still have on housing for the poor, even within a time of what Michael Goldman calls “speculative urbanism” where the state in Indian cities has actively aided the unbundling and commoditization of land (Goldman, 2011).

The mechanisms to do so exist. If, for example, as current housing policies and particularly the new central housing initiative for the poor under JNNURM suggest, in-situ upgradation is implemented for existing JJ Clusters, the locations poor households find themselves in would be tremendously advantageous. One may think of this as an upgrading dividend – securing the tenure of settlements within the core of the city would yield remarkable developmental gains if they were allowed to remain on-site as both the JNNURM as well as new policy regimes like the Rajeev Awaas Yojana (RAY) suggest. However, it is precisely these locations that may make this political imperative difficult. The darker counter-argument suggests that the current trend of increased evictions and peripheral resettlement occurs precisely because of the prime locations of many JJ Clusters within the city centre.

Indeed following these resettlement colonies on the map is a revealing exercise, affirming the latter

argument. Most resettlement sites pre-1990s were situated at the urban borders of the 1962 Master Plan while those post-1990s are also situated at the edge of the urban plan boundaries of the 2001 Master Plan. Some resettlement colonies such as Bawana, Bhalswa, Bakkarwala and Savda Ghevra created after the year 2000 remain outside even the urban boundaries of the latest Master Plan of 2021. A visual representation thus reveals to us that as the city's urban boundaries grow, resettlement colonies follow the edges of the city.

This peripheralisation has increased post-1990s, with resettlement colonies²⁰ literally at the edge of the borders of Delhi. This is seen particularly in the case of Narela and Holambi Kalan/Khurd where over 25,000 families from about 88 evictions were offered resettlement plots. These two resettlement colonies are at the farthest tip of the northern edge of Delhi. Similarly, the newest resettlement colony of Savda Ghevra where over 9000 families have been offered plots since 2006, lies at the western edge of the borders of Delhi. None of the resettlement colonies starting in the mid-1960s fall within the NDMC and Cantonment areas even as at least 48 evictions have taken place within these municipal boundaries, indicating the premium that space holds in these areas.

The increasingly peripheral location of resettlement colonies along with the continuing practice of prioritising resettlement rather than in-situ upgradation taken together will thus create precisely the spatial segregation that the MPD '62 sought to avoid.

Conclusion

Through this paper we have not only tried to deepen the findings presented in Dupont (2008) but also look at evictions and resettlement in Delhi spatially to tease out the politico-geographic processes at play in this continuing phenomenon of displacement. Several key conclusions are worth highlighting. One, the significant number of reclaimed lands lying vacant and/or used as dumping grounds show that the not only has the claimed public purpose of the land not been achieved, entirely self-financed and self-constructed low-income housing stock has been wiped off for no discernable gain either to the poor or to the state.

²⁰ Himmatpuri is an odd case where even as plots have been carved out, not a single resettlement case has been recorded in the lists displaying evictions and resettlement post-1990s.

Further, it makes the oft-made claim that land is unavailable for low-income housing in viable areas a suspect one.

Two, the preliminary finding that both the quantum of evictions as well as resettlement rates are higher in constituencies of the ruling political party deserves much deeper analysis, both by extending it to the ward level but also by ethnographic explorations of what this implies for the negotiations between basti residents and local MLAs.

Three, several aspects of the analysis suggest a strong support for the current policy emphasis on in-situ upgradation as opposed to resettlement, particularly given the possibility of an upgrading dividend and the reality of low resettlement ratios. While the former suggests that strong developmental gains can still be made by upgrading existing bastis on-site, the latter cautions against resettlement having any benefits for the poor given the extent of the exclusions within the process.

Four, low resettlement ratios indicate the vastly exclusionary and most likely arbitrary process informing the process of resettlement, particularly in determining eligibility. Such levels of exclusion from resettlement processes is simply untenable in the pursuit of an equitable city. Emergent policy frameworks like the Rajeev Awaas Yojana (RAY) that seek to give a right of shelter and residence to the poor must confront the realities of resettlement in the city particularly as they deliberate the policy's own criteria of eligibility and inclusion.

Finally, the fact that most bastis still lie within the planned boundaries of MPD '62 and currently in what are central areas of the city indicates an important relationship between public land ownership and land-banking with the settling patterns (legal or illegal) of the poor. Even as the Delhi Experiment may have "failed" in some ways, the fact that a majority of bastis remain on central city public land could be considered as having upheld its spirit at the very least. At a time when the land market in Delhi is increasingly being deregulated and privatized, this has strong implications for the poor's future access to the city.

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