VERONIQUE DUPONT
on slum demolitions in Delhi

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THERØY OF SETTLEMENTS
slums in Delhi

A slum is essentially an informal settlement, or a 'jhuggi-jhompri' (JJ) cluster, where land is occupied and built upon without the permission of the landowning agency.

- **Origins of slums in Delhi:**
  - The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) was established in 1957 to cater to the housing needs of refugees post the Indo-Pakistan partition.
  - From 1960-1985, DDA began to rescind on its original housing distribution across income groups, catering to the middle and higher income groups.
  - The lack of low-income housing resulted in an establishment of unplanned colonies and informal settlements, which were proposed to be 'cleaned-up' by the DDA themselves.

- **1990-91, three-pronged strategy for dealing with squatter settlements:**
  - In situ upgradation for the clusters whose "encroached land pockets are not required by the concerned landowning agencies for another 15 to 20 years for any project implementation."
  - Relocation of jhuggi-jhompri clusters that are located on land required to implement projects in the "larger public interest."
  - Environmental improvement of urban slums, based on the provision of basic amenities for community use, in other clusters irrespective of the encroached land (MCD 2000, in Dupont 2004).
slum demolitions

Figure 1. Demolished squatter settlements and relocated families per year: 1990-2008

- From 1990, till 2008, around 65,000 families from 221 demolished slums clusters were relocated in resettlement colonies in the rural fringes, up to 30 kms from the city centre.

- One of the rationales presented for this is the higher economic value of land in the city-center, which once freed, can be used for further ‘development’ opportunities.

- This fails to consider the significant contribution of the poor in the informal sector.

Source of data: Slum and Jhuggi-Jhompi Department, Municipal Corporation of Delhi
slum demolitions

Figure 2 Main demolished squatter settlements and resettlements colonies in the National Capital Territory of Delhi since 1990 (source: map prepared with data from the Slum and Jhuggi Jhoompi Department, Municipal Corporation of Delhi – MCD, 2006)
city ‘beautification’

• Most recent slum demolitions in the city have been in response to movements and public interest litigations (PILs) filed by industries, middle-income and high-income groups looking to ‘sanitise the city’

• The 2010 Commonwealth Games and the spread of the Delhi Metro has led to a widespread demolition of slums in the city

• These slums are replaced by a singular vision of what constitutes a ‘global city’ – one that is defined by images of shopping malls and other aids for middle-class consumption practices

• These epitomize the “concentration on spectacle and image rather than on the substance of economic and social problems” (Harvey 1989, in Dupont 2011)

• Judicial intervention has done little to push for resettlement:
  o The Yamuna Pushta slum demolition at the edge of the Yamuna river ahead of the 2010 Commonwealth Games was allegedly carried out on the grounds that it was ‘polluting the river’, as presented by the Delhi High Court, in contrast with data that proved otherwise
The eviction of Delhi’s largest slum, Yamuna Pushta, seems to follow the same trends put forward by DuPont.

Most of what was once the slum land remains unoccupied green fields. Resettlement has not been very successful either.

As a result, slums are beginning to return on the original site next to the new Commonwealth Games Village.
Eviction without resettlement does not solve the problem

Studies by DuPont suggests that most sites of demolished slums remain vacant with debris lying around even though the evictions had happened many years ago.

Vacant sites then become junkyards, or become JJ clusters again, which are evicted yet again, turning into a vicious cycle of events.

DuPont’s survey on spatial mobility suggests slum dwellers who weren’t eligible for resettlement have settled into other slums, or formed new slums or simple came back to the same site again.

Anti-poor based policies and preferential treatment

Some slums were evicted not because the site had to be used but because of its proximity to metro lines or proposed luxury hotels.

Also slums are being evicted because they were encroachments on the river bed but at the same time, Akshardam temple and CWG village was protected from demolition.
poverty and slums across the world: the placemaker’s tools

• Early 1950s-1960s
  • reforms in housing driven by the desire to build cities free of slums and informal settlements, seen as a manifestation of poverty

• 1976-UN-Habitat Conference, Vancouver:
  • a formal recognition of the informal sector as a legitimate provider of housing and other services

• 1999- World Bank and UN-Habitat form the Cities Alliance

• 2000-Millenium Development Goals
  • Target 11: achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020

• 1950s-1960s:
  • measured with quantitative economic indicators such as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), later GDP per capita

• 1970s:
  • policy emphasis shifted to GDP per capita + ‘basic needs’
  • this included the provision of food, water and shelter

• 1980s-1990s:
  • human development indicators such as health and literacy were introduced
  • Human Development Index - life expectancy, literacy and a composite of other qualitative indicators
we can see how each phase in our short history coincides with the evolution of ideals and policies that were devised in pursuit of development. It also coincides with significant shifts in the tools and methods of placemaking” (Hamdi 2010)

- modernisation and the standardisation of city plans and infrastructure should only occur once the basic rights of livelihood and sustainability of the poor have been met
- The necessary steps between the two situations include stakeholder participation, upgradations and the encouragement of self-help

Figure 1.1  The evolution of development and the placemaker’s tools
Source: Nabeel Hamdi
conclusions and analysis

• Slum evictions in the name of beautification have just pushed the slums further away without solving the root cause of the problem

• Evictions destroy the investments made by the slum dwellers and jeopardise their lives. Due to the prevailing instability of their investments, slum dwellers are discouraged from investing in their living condition and this in turn leads to more homelessness

• Vacant plots suggest the incompetence of the governing authority or that the evictions have not been carried out any greater public interest and that it is merely a part of the “clean-up” agenda

• Current land development policy does not give any access to urban spaces to the poor

• Clearly, with the aim of modernisation being moulded only for a certain class of people in Delhi, the necessary steps to address poverty and proper slum rehabilitation are absent in the legislative and judicial policies of Delhi

what are the right questions to ask, to address the root cause of poverty and slum settlements, rather than pushing them away?
A slum is essentially an informal settlement, or a 'jhuggi-jhompri' (JJ) cluster, where land is occupied and built upon without the permission of the landowning agency.

**origins of slums in Delhi**

In her paper titled ‘Slum demolitions in Delhi since the 1990s: an appraisal’, Veronique Dupont looks at the policies affecting slum demolitions, put in place by the DDA and the government. In ‘Infrastructure project, beautification and forced evictions in Delhi – the exemplary story of a cluster of slum dwellers rendered homeless’, she looks at the effects of Delhi’s vision to be a ‘global city’, on its slum dwellers.

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) was established in 1957 to cater to the demands of the overwhelming refugee population post the Indo-Pakistan partition. The Government of India sanctioned 25% of all residential land for the lowest two income groups.

From 1960-1985, DDA began to rescind on its original housing distribution across income groups, catering to the middle and higher income groups. The lack of low-income housing resulted in an establishment of unplanned colonies and informal settlements, which were proposed to be ‘cleaned-up’ by the DDA themselves – a 1980-81 report describes “a vigorous program […] to fence the vacant pockets so that the lands are saved from encroachments” (Mandelkern; Sheikh, 2014).

As presented by Dupont, from 1990-91, the government of Delhi adopted a "three-pronged strategy" for dealing with squatter settlements. Approved by the DDA in 1992, it included the following:

- in situ upgradation for the clusters whose "encroached land pockets are not required by the concerned landowning agencies for another 15 to 20 years for any project implementation"
- relocation of jhuggi-jhompri clusters that are located on land required to implement projects in the "larger public interest1"
- environmental improvement of urban slums, based on the provision of basic amenities for community use, in other clusters irrespective of the encroached land

(MCD 2000, cited in Dupont 2008)

From 1990 until 2008, around 65,000 families from 221 demolished slums clusters were relocated in resettlement colonies in the rural fringes, relegated up to 30 kms from the city centre (Dupont 2011). One of the rationales presented for this trend is the higher economic value of land in the city-center, which once freed, can be used for further ‘development’ opportunities. Such a rationale fails to consider the significant contribution of the poor in the informal sector and the latter’s input to the city/national economic growth and the long-term impact of displacement on vulnerability of the poor” (Khosla and Jha 2005, cited in Dupont 2004).

Most recent slum demolitions in the city have been in response to movements and public interest litigations (PILs) filed by industries, middle-income and high-income groups looking to ‘sanitise the city’. The slogan ‘clean and green Delhi’, Dupont (2004) posits, responds to this, which Baviskar
(2002, cited in Dupont 2004) denounces as "the increasing powerful presence of bourgeois environmentalism as an ideology shaping the landscapes".

Further, with the economic liberalisation of 1991, new national strategies of decentralisation, deregulation and privatisation have restructured urban space to a great extent. The 2010 Commonwealth Games along with other urban projects including shopping malls and the Delhi Metro rail system, epitomize the “concentration on spectacle and image rather than on the substance of economic and social problems” (Harvey 1989, in Dupont 2011).

Judicial intervention does little to push for resettlement alternatives to the evicted families. For instance, the slum demolition at the edge of Yamuna Pushta ahead of the 2010 Commonwealth Games was allegedly carried out on the grounds that it was ‘polluting the river’, as presented by the Delhi High Court, in contrast with a report from the Hazard Centre that proved the contribution of 3,00,000 people from the slum to river pollution as a mere 0.33 per cent (Dupont 2008).

case studies

Dupont (2008) looks at 67 sites as representative of 217 slum demolitions in Delhi, and posits the following conclusions:

*Eviction without resettlement does not solve the problem.*

Most sites as of 2006 vacant-debris lying around even though the evictions had happened many years ago

Vacant sites then become junkyards, or become JJ clusters, which are evicted again, in a vicious cycle.

A survey on spatial mobility suggests slum dwellers who weren’t eligible for resettlement have settled into other slums, or formed new slums or simply came back to the original site again.

*Change in land-use patterns*

Many slums have been converted to green open spaces, a part of an overall ‘beautification of the city’.

*Anti-poor based policies and preferential treatment*

Some slums were evicted not because the site had to be used but because of its proximity to metro lines or proposed luxury hotels. For instance, the Yamuna Pushta slum was evicted because it was an encroachment on the river bed, but at the same time, Akshardam temple and CWG Village, present in the same area, were left intact.

critique

Hamdi (2010) looks at the evolution of policies affecting informal settlements around the world from the 1950s. The 1970s saw a major shift to qualitative indicators of poverty, as opposed to the initial quantitative. With the inclusion of the Human Development Index as a tool to measure poverty in the 1980s-1990s, the importance given to slum development also changed.

The 1976 UN-Habitat Conference in Vancouver formally recognised the contribution of the informal sector to housing and other services (Hamdi 2010), a development move which seems to be missing in the way informal settlement residents are ignored in Delhi’s slum eviction methods and policies.
He also looks at the simultaneous evolution in ‘the placemaker’s tools’ – where modernisation and the standardisation of city plans and infrastructure should only occur once the basic rights of livelihood and sustainability of the poor have been met. The necessary steps between the two situations include stakeholder participation, upgradations and the encouragement of self-help.

Through Dupont’s literature, we see that slum evictions in the name of beautification has just pushed the slums further away without solving the root cause of the problem.

Evictions destroy the investments made by the slum dwellers and jeopardise their lives, hurting in the long run as well. Due to the prevailing instability of their investments, slum dwellers are discouraged from investing in their living condition and this in turn leads to more homelessness.

Vacant plots point towards neglect on the part of the governing authorities, or that the evictions have not been carried out any greater public interest and that it is merely a part of the “clean-up” agenda. Current land development policy does not give any access to urban spaces to the poor.

Clearly, with the aim of modernisation being moulded only for a certain class of people in Delhi, the necessary steps to address poverty and proper slum rehabilitation are absent in the legislative and judicial policies of Delhi. It seems, perhaps, easier, to push the problem away rather than asking the right questions.

references

