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Resettlement Ecologies: Environmental Subjectivity and Graduated Citizenship in Mumbai

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Introduction

Mumbai's overcrowded trains, traffic-jammed roads, and sprawling underserviced slums undergird the paradigmatic Malthusian imaginary of the Indian city living beyond its means. Efforts to redevelop the city's informal 'slum' settlements into world-class infrastructure and residential and commercial real estate promise a remedy for these urban ills. Such slum redevelopment projects have unfolded through social and material processes in which the 'environment'—as spatial experience, discourse, and geographical imaginary—has figured centrally. Most notably, redevelopment has entailed what Amita Baviskar (2003) calls "bourgeois environmentalism," a set of discourses and interventions aimed at remaking and ostensibly cleaning the city through the removal of the poor. This is an environmental politics in which the subjective desires and material interests of the upper and middle classes, business owners, and financiers are secured through state-facilitated slum demolitions, an instantiation of "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2003). Yet, as this chapter argues, redevelopment in Mumbai has not unfolded in a simple top-down fashion where elites and a bulldozing state serve as the only agents of spatial transformation. Rather in a city with a strong history of social mobilization, slum-residents and their representatives also play a critical role in facilitating, negotiating, and thwarting projects of urban environmental transformation in the service of capital accumulation. Slum clearance in Mumbai entails a complex ecology of state force, accommodation, and negotiation, as well as diverse and changing understandings of space and belonging. Slum-residents are making claims to

space as citizens and environmental subjects in highly differentiated ways with significant implications for whether and how the city is remade.

Focusing on collective actions of slum-residents, this chapter examines how urban subjectivity is produced through the intersecting experiences and politics of redevelopment, displacement, and ecology. I take as a point of departure the works of Amita Baviskar (2003) and Colin McFarlane (2008), who argue that urban environmental citizenship is often rife with hierarchy: it either seeks to erase the 'polluting' poor from the space of the city or relegates them to sub-standard environmental conditions. My project develops this line of reasoning by investigating how evicted slum-dwellers and their representative organizations have advanced new forms of environmental politics that negotiate or challenge displacements that occur as a result of redevelopment. This work takes seriously the call made by a number of political ecologists to engage more deeply with questions of subject formation and cultural politics, in addition to questions of urban political economy, infrastructure, and urban nature (Agrawal 2005; Braun 2002; Grove 2009; Peet and Watts 2004). In Mumbai, slum-dwellers emerge as environmental subjects through complex spatial processes in which relations of class, ethnicity, religion, and gender are articulated in diverse and politically salient ways.

Highlighting the environmental subjectivities of the urban poor, this chapter also engages recent scholarship on new citizenship formations in Third World cities that has sought to challenge commonly held notions of modern democratic political participation (Appadurai 2002; Chatterjee 2004; Holston 2008). The chapter departs from these works, however, by emphasizing the relational and differentiated nature of subject formation—in the space of a single city—and the political implications of such processes for urban environmental change. The Mumbai case demonstrates that environmental subjectivity operates through the terrain of what Ong (2007) has called "graduated citizenship," where class-based, gendered, and ethno-religious identities fracture and remake experiences of citizenship and claims to legitimacy. Here environmental politics is shaped by a political ecology of redevelopment that privileges capital accumulation through slum clearance. Differentiated environmental subjectivities emerge through the uneven distribution of resettlement compensation as well as a contentious cultural politics of urban belonging. Resettlement compensation is thus a central arena for the formation and recalibration of urban environmental citizenship.

This analysis of differentiated slum citizenship is not merely an effort to expose the complexity of neoliberal politics in 'actually existing' cities like Mumbai. Rather, I argue, it is precisely the production of difference, or what Ruth Wilson Gilmore, following Stuart Hall, has called the "fatal couplings of power and difference" (2002, 16), that provides the contradictory spatial experiences that incite displaced slum-inhabitants to engage in global city projects. Drawing on environmental discourses and situated experiences of unequal access to resources, slum-residents have made new claims to legitimacy and belonging. Paying attention to these multiple, relational subjectivities shows us how slum-residents both reinforce and challenge elite projects of urban environmental transformation in cities like Mumbai.

Accordingly, this chapter specifically explores spatio-environmental conflicts and subjectivity in and around Mankhurd, an area on the suburban northeastern coast of Mumbai that has become a major slum resettlement hub for the city. I consider three moments in which Mankhurd served as a frontier site for producing new forms of environmental subjectivity among evicted slum-dwellers. The first examines an off-site participatory resettlement project where NGO mediation harnessed particular forms of gendered environmental subjectivity to enable cooperation with slum clearance. In the second case, river basin slum evictees contested resettlement countering the ecological justifications of eviction embedded in "bourgeois environmentalism." The third moment pertains to the ways that discourses of the urban periphery—as a vast and empty space of resettlement opportunity—belie the violent erasure of those who already occupy those lands. In this instance, North Indian and Muslim minority evictees of a slum in Mankhurd have—with the assistance of a social movement—struggled to negotiate rights to slum land demolished to make way for evicted slum-dwellers from other parts of the city, the latter of whom were eligible for compensation.

These examples show how the politics of eviction and resettlement on the urban fringe have shaped environmental experiences, subjectivities, and problem framings that are differentiated according to the specific positionings of slum-dwellers in relation to each other, and to agents of neoliberal urban transformation. Mediating groups including NGOs, social movements, and advocacy lawyers further shape political possibilities through highly partial representations of evicted slum-dwellers' experiences. Examining these ethnographic cases in "relational comparison" (Hart 2002), I suggest that

the environmental subjects in question form not in social isolation, but in ways that are deeply interconnected both spatially and politically in relation to each other, and to powerful, translocal forces of urban development. Resettlement compensation and legitimate belonging in the space of the city have emerged as key signifiers of symbolic and material struggle invigorated by the political and economic transformations of the 1990s. The following overview of slum redevelopment policies and identity politics during this period helps to situate the current geographies of environmental politics and the ethnographic cases to follow.

Violent Environments: Neoliberal Redevelopment and Graduated Slum Citizenship

The decade of the 1990s represents a period of significant change in redevelopment and resettlement policy and practice in the city. In the early part of the decade, Mumbai's real estate markets surged as economic liberalization in India created new demand for urban land among the local middle and upper classes and transnational elites (Banerjee-Guha 2002; Nijman 2000). Flows of foreign capital and increasing middle-class incomes fueled elite desires for a city with world-class transport infrastructure, spaces of consumption and leisure, and upscale residences (Fernandes 2004). Such processes resulted in upper-class impatience with slums while low-income residents faced an intensified squeeze in affordable housing. Under these conditions, the Shiv Sena, a political party and populist movement known for its unique brand of Hindu nationalism and regionalist xenophobia, won the state of Maharashtra elections. The Shiv Sena campaign promised to beautify the city, expand transportation infrastructure, eradicate slums, and provide 'free' resettlement flats to 4 million slum-dwellers, which appealed to a broad set of constituents. The Shiv Sena-led state government subsequently established the Slum Rehabilitation Scheme (SRS), a neoliberal policy that aimed to promote real estate and infrastructure redevelopment through mass slum clearance. The scheme would facilitate slum clearance by leveraging the market to resettle slum-dwellers evicted by state projects. Elite and middle-class resistance to spending tax revenue on so-called 'encroachers' would be quelled by the promise that the state would not spend a rupee on providing 'free' flats. Rather, the market would create a 'win–win' solution, addressing housing for the poor and redevelopment desires for the upper classes.

Resettlement, however, would not be extended equitably to all slum-residents. In the SRS policy, resettlement housing was guaranteed only to evicted slum-dwellers who could furnish documentary proof of residency in Mumbai prior to a 'cutoff date' of January 1, 1995. The cutoff date helped to limit resettlement by excluding ostensibly freeloading populations attracted by government giveaways. Furthermore, resettlement compensation would be financed entirely by the market; a newly created Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) would offer incentives to private developers to build tenements for slum-dwellers free of cost in exchange for coveted transfers of development rights to build taller buildings throughout the city. All other public housing and slum improvement schemes would be phased out and replaced entirely by this market-oriented model. The SRS not only increased the role of the private sector in low-income housing construction, it also dramatically expanded the space available for market-rate redevelopment and created a vigorous market for transferable development rights. Both the release of cleared slum land and transferable development rights for high-value neighborhoods offered a windfall of opportunities for developers. Slum rehabilitation thus merged the imperatives of a booming real estate market with the political management of slum clearance and the tightening supplies of affordable housing.

Exclusions embedded in the resettlement policy, which belied its win–win image, must be understood in relation to the ethno-religious, political violence gripping Mumbai during the 1990s. In a scenario of intense struggles over space, the housing crisis was articulated through anti-Muslim, regionalist, and xenophobic frames fueled by the right wing Shiv Sena party in diverse arenas. As Arjun Appadurai has argued, the Shiv Sena "sutured a specific form of regional chauvanism with a national message about Hindu power through the deployment of the figure of the Muslim as the archetype of the invader, the stranger, and the traitor" (2000, 646). The Shiv Sena played a central role in the communal riots of 1993, shattering thousands of lives, especially in poor and Muslim neighborhoods (Chatterji and Mehta 2007; Hansen 2001). Shiv Sena leaders like Bal Thackeray fused the utopian promise of a Hinduized global city with a thuggish strategy of scapegoating outsiders for the ills of the city and nation. In the realm of slum redevelopment, the exclusions of Hindu nationalist and regionalist imaginaries became concretely embedded in resettlement policy through the cutoff date eligibility criterion for resettlement mentioned above. The cutoff

date discursively invoked a barrier to an imagined migratory tide of invasion by Muslims and North Indians. As one bureaucrat said in an interview: "We cannot keep allowing Mumbai to turn into a 'mumbaiabad,'" (fieldwork interview, July 2005) referring to an imagined Islamicized, North Indian colonization of the city. The vilification of the slum-dweller as an encroaching outsider—while actively disregarding his or her actual ethno-religious background—was compounded under the Shiv Sena and the xenophobic climate in Mumbai, further justifying the curtailment of public benefits like resettlement. Thus, slum clearance and resettlement compensation practices have undergirded powerful real estate interests and violently exclusionary class and identity-based ideals regarding who rightfully belongs in the space of the city. The contradictions of differentiated spatial politics of resettlement eligibility and public imaginaries of legitimacy were brought into sharp relief in the demolition sweeps of the next decade.

Eviction and resettlement practices reflecting both inclusive and exclusionary notions of belonging have contoured the boundaries of urban citizenship among slum-residents. Accordingly, I argue that Mumbai's slum redevelopment exhibits a form of accumulation by differentiated displacement—experienced through graduated forms of urban citizenship—rather than a simple form of dispossession (Doshi 2013). Divisions were created not only by resettlement eligibility criteria, but also by the location of the original slum of residence. While redevelopment policies gained popularity among slum-residents who expected resettlement in newly constructed buildings on the same plot of land, not all displaced residents were to be resettled in their former neighborhoods. The residents of hundreds of slums in areas where resettlement could not be offered on-site due to their location on river basins, railway tracks, or road projects would be relocated off-site. Moreover, given the high cost of real estate in the city and the anxieties of the upper and middle classes over what they considered government handouts to encroachers, off-site resettlement would have to be undertaken as cheaply as possible. Developing low-value land on the urban fringe emerged as the state's principal strategy for resettling slum-dwellers displaced by environmental improvement and infrastructure projects. City officials, planners, and developers have argued that the solution to Mumbai's environmental problems and housing shortages lay in releasing for development 5,000 acres of marshy coastal land, known as the 'salt pans.' Located on the northern fringes of the city, most of these peripheral wetlands

have until recent years quietly retained 'no-development' zoning status, and have thus been of little interest to the powerbrokers of the city. Since the mid-1990s, these areas have emerged in the planning imaginary as the ideal locations for resettling slum-dwellers evicted by infrastructure projects. Accordingly, these areas now represent a "new urban frontier" (Smith 1996), an opportunity for the urbanization of the capital in a formerly devalued space.

Redevelopment interventions have significantly altered the landscape of several northeastern coastal neighborhoods, which have now seen the emergence of new colonies of densely concentrated resettlement buildings. Many of these colonies, linked to the resettlement component of a World Bank–supported transportation infrastructure project, have become models for the mass rehabilitation of slum-dwellers. These resettlement interventions have not only transformed the political ecology of the area, but also reflect a set of urban ecological framings of slums and slum-dwellers by non-governmental and neighborhood-based groups. Yet, expansion into the urban fringe is hardly a foregone conclusion: resettlement and redevelopment have incited conflicts often couched in environmental terms. Insofar as the periphery represents a solution for buffering large-scale evictions, it reveals the dynamic and contradictory forms of environmental politics shaping urban citizenship in the city. I now turn to examine three distinct cases of social mobilization around eviction and resettlement in Mankhurd, a neighborhood known for including several of the city's largest resettlement colonies.

Embodied Environments: Resettlement and Feminized Stewardship

If redeveloping the urban fringe today is posited as the principal strategy for relocating slums for infrastructure, it is also true that such resettlement policies have emerged from longstanding struggles over evictions of people generally excluded from adequate compensation (Mitlin and Patel 2005). One of the best-known groups involved in resettlement implementation and policy negotiations in Mumbai is the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC), an NGO that has been involved in the resettlement of thousands of slum-dwellers affected by road and rail projects. This section examines the history, strategies, and development

discourse advanced by this internationally-known housing and development organization. It culminates in an analysis of the alliance SPARC formed with two other advocacy groups in order to bolster their involvement in resettling slum-dwellers affected by the Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP), a World Bank–funded project that has been hailed as a model for resettlement in transnational development circles. I argue that environmental subjectivity was contoured by gender in ways that facilitated cooperation in a potentially volatile situation of mass off-site displacement. Understanding this gendered environmental subjectivity requires an investigation into the histories and practices of mobilization in slums prior to and during the MUTP resettlement.

SPARC began its work in the early 1980s with women living in shacks along the busy streets of south-central Mumbai. Repeatedly facing the threat of the demolition of their homes by the authorities, these 'pavement-dwellers' were considered by activists to be the city's poorest and most vulnerable population. SPARC leaders recall that the organization grew frustrated not only with government mal-treatment of pavement-dwellers but also with housing organizations and movements in the city. SPARC leaders and staff argued that many housing movements, though well meaning, demonstrated a middle-class bias in their strategies. They asserted that an activists' rights-based approach, which consisted of protesting the government with little follow-up, did not adequately engage the participation of poor women who they claimed were less interested in conflicts with the government than in long-term solutions (D'Cruz, n.d.).

Working with pavement-dwelling women, SPARC developed an alternative and now-famous model of participatory development and non-confrontational negotiation with state bureaucracies. The organization sought to convey the needs of slum-dwellers to state and transnational agents by promoting the participation of women in activities such as savings, housing and sanitation design alternatives, and community surveying. The idea was to demonstrate to state and development agents that the poor had viable and economical solutions to addressing their own problems. These activities soon led to the creation of Mahila Milan, a slum-based women's collective, and a subsequent alliance with the well-established grassroots group, the National Slum Dwellers Federation. Today, these three organizations, known collectively as the SPARC Alliance, are involved in a variety of slum interventions ranging from toilet construction to resettlement. In virtually all of its interventions, the Alliance has focused on the participation of

slum-dwelling women in social and environmental improvement. In the Alliance's discursive framing, women's knowledge of the home, role in water provision, and special needs with regard to sanitation make them ideal environmental stewards for the slum. In a context in which slum-dwellers are dehumanized for their ostensibly polluting practices, the reframing of poor women as practical solution-seeking subjects has provided a powerful non-confrontational counter-narrative to bourgeois environmentalism. This mode of engaging with the local state and development agencies around the world has made the group a powerful advocate for many of its members and constituents.

A large range of academic and policy literature has hailed the SPARC Alliance as a model for empowering the urban poor (Appadurai 2002; Mitlin and Patel 2005), though critiques of the limits of SPARC and similar NGOs have arisen from diverse quarters more recently (Benjamin 2008; McFarlane 2004; McFarlane 2008; Roy 2009). Housing activists in Mumbai have also recognized the important influence of the Alliance but have criticized the group for its cozy relationship with developers and the xenophobic Shiv Sena political party. Yet, to date there has been little in-depth, independent ethnographic work on precisely how slum-dwellers have engaged with the organization.

Drawing briefly on ethnographic data collected between 2006 and 2007, I examine the particularly gendered forms of environmental subjectivity in a large-scale resettlement project implemented by SPARC from 1998 to 2007. With its strong, positive relationship with the state, broad grassroots support base, and excellent reputation in international development circles, the SPARC Alliance was chosen as the major NGO partner for implementing community-based resettlement activities for the MUTP. The project involved the relocation of approximately 20,000 slum-dwellers into neighborhoods mostly on the eastern suburban periphery, with the greatest concentration in Mankhurd.

In interviews with SPARC Alliance leaders and in the Alliance's literature on the project, women slum-dwellers are consistently highlighted as both participants and primary beneficiaries of the resettlement. As one SPARC Alliance staff member writes, "the central role that women played in the Kanjur Marg [resettlement] experiment is justified not only on the grounds of gender equity but also upon the demonstration of their skills as managers of the family. With their experience of running households on inadequate

budgets, poor women take easily to managing projects when given exposure, training, and opportunity" (Burra 1999). Arputham Jockin, an award-winning leader of the Alliance, has also put the needs of slum-dwellers into a gender-sensitive historical context. During a workshop for British urban planning students that I attended in May 2007 in Mumbai, Jockin explained that early in urbanization processes the need for housing and infrastructure was less acute because single male migrant workers could bathe and sleep freely in public. When these migrants settled with their families, their needs shifted because girls and women required more privacy. Similarly, in a broadly circulated SPARC publication, women slum-dwellers were interviewed about the great difficulties that they faced in accessing water and relieving themselves in the absence of toilets and regular water supplies (Bapat and Agarwal 2003). Appadurai's (2002) compelling notion of the "politics of shit" thus becomes markedly gendered. In SPARC Alliance discourse, the management of formalized resettlement and environmental concerns of sanitation, water supply, and appropriate design were all designated as women's concerns due to their roles in social reproduction. In this narrative, poor women are presented as problem solvers whose participation benefits not only the urban environment but also the lives of poor families. Although the focus on women remained similar in tone to that of the earlier struggles of pavement-dwellers, the actuality of gendered roles and experiences diverged fundamentally from this ideal in the later MUTP resettlement. Here, women's participation in resettlement was geared less to negotiating with the state for their needs and more to facilitating the organized cooperation of residents over years of arduous resettlement processes from slum to transit camp to the Mankhurd resettlement colony (Doshi 2012). Volunteer activities included information transmission, surveying and mapping activities (in some though not all neighborhoods), and facilitation of community social and environmental activities such as neighborhood clean-ups, festivals, and collective water provision in the transit camps and colonies. These activities drew on gendered social-reproductive labor roles in the household and extended them materially and symbolically into the space of the community. Highlighting these feminized activities is not meant to tell a narrative of gendered false consciousness. Indeed, a significant number of women interviewed in this research expressed a sense of accomplishment and growth arising from their participation in resettlement processes. I elucidate these experiences more thoroughly elsewhere (Doshi 2012). Here

I would like to emphasize two key issues that stand out with regard to the resettlement experiences of women residents and an understanding of urban environmental subjectivity.

The first is that women's experiences in participatory resettlement were significantly intertwined with their own social and economic positioning in relation to each other. The women who participated the most tended to have more free time and material resources to sustain themselves, enabling them to engage in the volunteer resettlement and post-resettlement work of Mahila Milan.[1] With few exceptions they identified as housewives able to volunteer in community activities. They reported not needing to work for wages outside the home because their husbands or grown children financially supported the household. For instance, Jyoti, one highly active participant of Mahila Milan, conveyed how much she enjoyed spending her free time attending SPARC Alliance meetings, where she organized activities with others and learned how slum-dwellers could improve their lives (fieldwork interview, October 7, 2007). Another member, Meena, is one of a small group of women leaders who have benefited financially by working on SPARC's toilet construction contracts with the state. Organizational leaders like Arputham Jockin have cited this kind of involvement of women in contracted construction activities as a form of empowerment that taps into women's specific knowledge of housing and sanitation (fieldwork, May 2007). Yet, as one Mahila Milan leader admitted, only a very small number of women have had access to such opportunities (fieldwork interview, November 15, 2007); in fact the loss of work and income is the biggest problem facing most women in the resettlement colonies.

The second key issue concerns the gendered framings of environmental improvements. Piped water, toilets, and *pucca* (solidly constructed) housing are all widely considered to be particularly beneficial for women, as claimed by SPARC staff, project impact evaluations, and several Mahila Milan participants themselves. The amenities were welcomed by most women (and men) despite notable infrastructure problems arising from shoddy construction and water supply constraints (Modi 2009). However, not all women valued these changes to the same extent, a fact that was hardly reflected in SPARC Alliance discourses or independent impact evaluations. Several women who had been recruited to participate expressed the view that they did not have the time or energy necessary to continue participating due to the increased economic and physical burdens of commuting from their

new homes in resettlement colonies to their former neighborhoods to work as domestic servants (fieldwork 2007). This view was supported by MUTP impact evaluations which found that many resettled residents either lost their jobs or faced the pressures of increased transport costs or commuting exhaustion (Tata Institute of Social Sciences 2007). Loss of women's income due to fewer employment opportunities in the new neighborhoods also intensified financial insecurity and reduced overall household incomes. As one resident commented caustically, "What good are toilets when we can no longer feed ourselves?" (fieldwork interview, October 2007).

Constructions of environmental subjectivity among resettled slum-dwellers thus relied on gendered discursive practices in which women's participation was hailed both as an environmental solution for the city and as a benefit to the women themselves. However, the gendering of participation relied on a discursive emphasis of women's domestic social-reproductive needs and roles to the exclusion of those who work outside of the home. While women who could afford to participate as volunteers cited more benefits to themselves, women who relied on income sources in their former neighborhoods were either less involved with the SPARC Alliance or experienced increased hardships resulting from resettlement.

In response to the MUTP, several slums have utilized oppositional strategies to resettlement in areas far from their livelihoods, eliciting the support of politicians, as in the case of Mumbai's airport-land slums.[2] Slum-dwellers and advocates have presented cases against distant resettlement based on environmental reasoning, thereby forming counter-narratives to the bourgeois environmentalism that undergirds evictions. For example, slum-dwellers displaced by a later road component of the MUTP presented the World Bank with complaints not only about livelihood and resettlement-process concerns but also about the proximity of the Mankhurd resettlement colony to toxic dump sites. These complaints prompted a suspension in World Bank funding and a contentious independent investigation by the Inspection Panel into the case.

Inverting Anne Rademacher's provocative question "when is housing an environmental problem?" (Rademacher et al. 2009), the following case of organized resistance to resettlement by slum-based shop owners located on the Mithi River Basin in central Mumbai demonstrates that the environment can also be framed as a housing problem.

Flood Politics: River Basin Clean-up and Conflicts over Resettlement

During the monsoon of 2005, a few weeks before Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, Mumbai was showered with a record-breaking thirty-nine inches of rain in twenty-four hours, which produced one of the worst floods in the city's history. Hundreds of people died almost immediately due to inundation, and thousands more would continue to suffer from water-borne diseases and homelessness. Although flooding during the monsoons is nothing new for slums located in the city's low-lying areas, the scale of the flood and its impacts on the middle classes led to a vociferous outcry in the local media and among civic groups. Newspaper headlines railed against the incompetent emergency response of the government and hailed the spirit of cooperation among Mumbaikars during a time of crisis (Anjaria 2006). City officials facing public outcry over the poor emergency response attempted to identify a cause, one that was inevitably environmental in nature. Blame was assigned to the informal settlements located in the Mithi River basin, which had flooded. Official accounts claimed that sewage and trash from slums clogged the basin, causing overflows into neighboring low-lying areas. Such narratives resonated well with middle-class frustrations over the pollution, ugliness, and supposed civic irresponsibility of slums and their dwellers. Meanwhile, left-leaning environmentalists suggested that the flooding was less a symptom of informal settlements and more likely one of rapid formal development in ecologically sensitive areas of the city. One scientist estimated that of the 800 million liters of sewage dumped into the river daily, only 2 million liters came from informal settlements. Large-scale industry and formal, modern buildings produce most of this waste (Faleiro 2006). Other activists, like Chandrashekhar Prabhu (2005), blamed developments such as the Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC), a massive complex built on reclaimed swampland on the Mithi River. The BKC consists of some of the most expensive commercial real estate in Mumbai, is home to several local and transnational banks and corporations, and is therefore not an appealing target for government officials aimed at transforming Mumbai into a "global city."

Despite the contradictory evidence, the state concentrated its actions on slums located along the Mithi River. Soon after the 2005 deluge, former member of parliament Kirit Somaiya filed a public-interest petition calling

for the clearance of all illegal structures located in the basin. In March 2006, the Mumbai High Court ordered the demolition and rehabilitation of 3,600 illegal structures found to be within thirty meters of the river. Two months later, the city demolished several hundred structures including those belonging to scrap metal dealers, paper recyclers, and other merchants and small-scale industry owners. A group of shop owners whose structures were demolished filed a counter petition against the head of the newly created Mithi River Development and Protection Authority (MRDPA). Besides drawing attention to the failure of state agencies to follow due legal processes by demolishing structures before providing rehabilitation, the petitioners exposed the government's violations of its own zoning and environmental protection legislation. The petition asserted that the proposed resettlement plot was located on the periphery of Mankhurd in an area zoned for no-development and coastal regulation because of its location on ecologically sensitive marshland.[3]

This brief overview of the Mithi River evictions is a product more of secondary sources and interviews with affiliated activists rather than ethnographic data collected from evictees. Nonetheless, the eviction processes, legal responses, and strategies of evictees reveal much about the multiple possibilities of environmental citizenship. Mithi River evictees' resistance to resettlement was primarily due to the large distance they would have to travel to the relocation site and the corresponding loss of income and social networks (Faleiro 2006). The response of these evictees is not unique. Later evictees of projects such as the MUTP also contested relocation to Mankhurd because of distance and loss of income. But the ecological reasoning of their claims to the city is a significant change in recent years. Raj Awasthi, a neighborhood shop owner and the main activist lawyer involved in the anti-eviction and anti-resettlement petitions for both the Mithi River and the MUTP residents, also saw these actions as an important frontline in the battle against what he called the "corrupt land-grabbing" (fieldwork interview, May 23, 2007) practices undertaken by developers in collusion with state officials. He admitted that some of those resisting resettlement were materially better off than many other evicted slum-dwellers. Nonetheless, oppression is relative in a city where powerful economic interests increasingly dominate central urban space. The environmental and social contradictions of these processes continue to fuel conflicts shaping the rocky trajectory of Mumbai's redevelopment.

In highlighting such contradictions, another important aspect of the Mithi River clean-up deserves attention. Announcements about plans to remove slums along the river occurred in the same month as another violent demolition in Mandala, a slum located on the swampy eastern periphery of Mankhurd. The Mandala plot was to serve as the commercial resettlement area for displaced shop owners from the centrally located Mithi River. Though presented as empty resettlement space, Mandala was in fact already occupied by at least 3,500 homes. Mandala slum-dwellers were, however, deemed illegal in accordance with cutoff date laws, and were therefore more vulnerable to evictions and ineligible for resettlement compensation. In a macabre political ecology, Mandala homes were violently demolished, and debris from the Mithi River basin was transplanted across the city to the site in truckloads to both "clean up" the river and to solidify land for developing the commercial resettlement center. Mithi River shop owners, whose material and political power was strong enough to continue legal battles, were ultimately able to negotiate a more desirable, closer resettlement site. Many of them also continued to remain on-site at the river (Faleiro 2006). Mandala evictees persist in struggles and negotiations with officials to re-occupy their land. Understanding how and why Mandala slum evictees were positioned differently from other resettled groups requires analysis of the politics of recent demolition drives and new social movements in the city.

The Politics of 'Empty' Space: Eviction and Land Struggle in Mandala

In December 2004, bulldozers descended upon 45,000 to 90,000 informal structures[4] deemed illegal by the state, leaving over 300,000 people in Mumbai homeless. The demolitions inaugurated the launching of the Vision Mumbai plan by the newly elected Congress Party government in the state of Maharashtra. In a campaign to clear the city of all illegal slum dwellings, the state proceeded to enforce cutoff date laws with special emphasis on slums settled on no-development zones after 1995. The demolitions were a shock to the evictees as the party's campaign promises to slum-dwellers included regularization and resettlement for all structures existing before 2000. The demolitions also stunned housing activists and NGOs, many of whom had been working within the parameters of resettlement implementation. The demolition drive came to be known as a 'tsunami' in some of the local media

for it displaced as many people as that natural disaster which occurred in the same month. Still others in the media applauded the government for aggressively following through with efforts to clean up the city.

Although officials underscored the goal of making Mumbai 'slum free,' not all slums were razed equally. According to housing rights activists and my own observations, the demolition drive focused on illegal slums with a majority of Muslim and North Indian residents. Officials of the Congress Party, normally seen as more tolerant of diversity and secular politics, invoked the rhetoric of ethnic cleansing and security against illegal migrants. For instance, the newly elected chief minister of the state of Maharashtra defended the demolition drive by asserting that the city had no other choice but to "take action against illegal Bangladeshis." It has become commonplace in Indian cities to decry the elusive "illegal Bangladeshis," though rarely have evictees proven to be from anywhere other than India. The identity and class-based constitution of evictees also elicited the approval of Shiv Sena party politicos; in fact the opposition party's leaders, Bal and Udhav Thackeray, praised the actions of their political rivals to rid the city of encroaching slums.[5] Several activists have thus speculated that ethnic targeting helped to make such a large-scale demolition sweep politically feasible (D'Souza et al. 2005).

Evicted residents confirmed ethnic discrimination in their lived experiences as well. For instance, one resident of Mandala slum expressed with frustration, "This would not have happened to us if we were Maharashtrians" (fieldwork, December 9, 2007).The exclusionary discourses that define rightful belonging to the space of the city in terms of class, regional, and ethno-religious identity—and that have animated official justifications of the Vision Mumbai demolitions—raise vexing questions about the possibilities of political action among the evicted. How and to whom have these evictees defended their access to urban space? Have evicted groups mounted counterclaims to legitimacy and belonging? What are the idioms through which legitimate belonging gets reworked? Slum-dwellers evicted during the Vision Mumbai demolitions have undertaken multiple and sometimes contradictory strategies for reclaiming their homes. Although many neighborhood leaders initially engaged in organized protests, several slums were reclaimed by their original inhabitants soon after the demolitions. Residents stealthily re-occupied the land through leveraging contacts and allies in the state, in a process that Solly Benjamin has called "occupancy

urbanism" (Benjamin 2008). However, the trajectory of the Mandala slum in Mankhurd was markedly different.

Six months after being evicted in the Vision Mumbai sweep, Mandala's slum-dwellers took the opportunity of the state of emergency caused by flooding in July 2005 to re-occupy the plot. However, the area would be demolished again the following year when it was redesignated for resettling shop owners located on the banks of the Mithi River. The second demolition spurred a violent clash between residents and police, including several cases of police brutality and arson. Since the second eviction, the area remains guarded and fenced; it is used by neighboring residents only for urination and defecation. Currently, neighborhood leaders and some residents remain in informal rental housing along the perimeter of the area; they continue to try to negotiate legal re-occupation and on-site resettlement. They have maintained a close working relationship with a coalition of anti-displacement of groups, the National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM). The trajectory of Mandala has much to do with its relationship with this activist organization, which has introduced an important voice critical of neoliberal development, exclusionary identity politics, and state land usurpation in urban and rural areas. A brief overview of NAPM will help to situate its role in the Mandala resettlement process.

While housing NGOs denounced the Vision Mumbai demolitions, the most powerful groups engaged in implementing slum rehabilitation contracts with the state fell short of consolidating a collective response to the evictions. Instead NAPM, a group with little prior experience in Mumbai's slum politics, galvanized anti-eviction protests. Led by Medha Patkar, the world-renowned leader of the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA, the Movement to Save the Narmada River), NAPM mobilized and coordinated dispersed evicted slum-dwellers and other city groups critical of the state's actions. The coalition deployed a variety of Gandhi-inspired tactics of civil disobedience and coalition building. The movement's framings and idioms of struggle reveal a legacy derived from its roots in the anti-displacement struggles of the Narmada Valley. The antecedent anti-dam movement sutured a strategic, though somewhat romanticized, notion of indigeneity, capitalizing on tribal Adivasis' purportedly traditionally sustainable relationship to the environment, regardless of whether their livelihood practices and circumstances actually corroborated this image (Baviskar 2005). Notwithstanding the cooperation of the SPARC Alliance with the

MUTP in resettlement, slum-dwellers have typically had markedly less access to the kind of cultural capital and claims to authentic legitimacy that often animates environmental politics in rural areas.

Nonetheless, the NAPM leadership has attempted to counteract the socio-ecological vilification of slum-dwellers with notions of sustainability and justice for excluded working-class citizens. The movement has argued that low-rise so-called slum housing is actually more sustainable compared to resource-consuming high-rises and gated communities built by developers. Invoking the history of anti-colonial struggle, NAPM activists have further highlighted the plight of slum-dwellers as excluded and exploited workers, criticizing both state oppression and neoliberal development as forms of neocolonialism. In rallies held at symbolic city places like Azaad Maidan (a park dedicated to the martyrs of Indian independence struggles), activists and displaced residents have given emotionally charged speeches on displacement and development as a violation of the rights of the people. In these and other spaces, NAPM's condemnation of both Hindu nationalist politics and evictions as exclusions of poor Indians from the spaces of the nation has emphasized both class- and identity-based dispossession. Through these idioms NAPM has vociferously protested redevelopment efforts for their biases towards elites, especially real estate capitalists, and instead advocated more decentralized, small-scale forms of development with an "eco-socialist" political ideology.[6] In the urban realm, this stance has ideally meant support for on-site slum improvement and low-rise structures built under the control of residents, who are given tenure security and the financial support of the state. In this manner, NAPM has differed from NGOs like the SPARC Alliance that have supported public–private partnerships in slum redevelopment and high-rise resettlement colonies. Similar to the SPARC Alliance, NAPM leadership has also encouraged women's participation and leadership in mobilization. But the group's discursive practices around poor women's participation highlight women's working class experience (gendered as it may be) rather than their roles as housewives and mothers.

Thus NAPM's discourse of mobilization addresses the processes of exclusion and dispossession that have harmed the urban poor, like the residents of Mandala, who have faced some of the most severe forms of sovereign violence. Yet movement mediation has been limited in its ability to represent all slum-dwellers' views. While neighborhood-based leadership has produced an ideological position similar to that of the NAPM activists,

ethnographic participant observation reveals more complex perspectives among residents. For instance, the Mandala slum-dwellers I spoke with during research in 2007 discussed their deliberations and conflicts over how to strategically proceed with attempts to regain their land. Some neighborhood leaders and residents wanted to illegally re-occupy the land by leveraging their contacts in the local police and other state agencies. Others believed that since the first re-occupation ended in a second demolition, the group should follow a more official course of action. Residents ultimately chose the latter approach, but many continue to express concern that official government channels will delay action interminably. Several neighborhood leaders disagreed with eschewal of the developer-led, high-rise resettlement model. As one NAPM activist admitted, "Some of the people do not always agree with the movement's core principles, though they always maintain the necessary image of solidarity" (communication with author).

In its efforts to build strong alliances within the city, NAPM has supported a broad range of anti-eviction struggles including those surrounding the Mithi River cleanup, the MUTP, and other off-site resettlement projects. However, efforts to build solidarity have often elided significant material and political differences among movement members. The majority of Mandala evictees were clearly more vulnerable than the Mithi River evictees in terms of class and the legal status of their slum. While solidarity may be a form of politically "strategic essentialism," following Spivak's (1988) use of the phrase, there has also been a sense of uneasiness among groups with different concerns.

It is also true, however, that the movement leadership has shown significant flexibility in the face of political constraints. For instance, Mandala and NAPM leaders have drawn up a compromise for the 50-acre Mandala plot. In the proposal, which is still under negotiation, Mandala slum-dwellers would agree to resettlement in taller buildings on 15 acres of the site while the remaining 35 acres would remain in the control of the central government. The compromise falls short of the movement's ideal of small-scale, low-rise, low-environmental-impact forms of slum rehabilitation. However, through the strategy of negotiating with the central government's urban development department, the movement has been able to bypass the state of Maharashtra's exclusionary cutoff date laws, thereby giving all of the Mandala evictees access to some form of compensation. It remains to be seen whether and how the resolution will materialize for Mandala residents who

have remained in housing limbo for over five years. Delay and uncertainty may indeed be the price for slum-dwellers asserting their rights as working-class citizens through official and legal channels rather than seeking the undercover approval of what Solomon Benjamin has called the "porous state" (2000).

Conclusion: Frontiers of Differentiated Environmental Citizenship

In this chapter, I have attempted to show how neoliberal redevelopment has accompanied diverse and often volatile conflicts over the urban environment. Elite projects to clear slum space for higher-value, globally-inclined real estate and infrastructure development have not simply unfolded as an inexorable and uniform force for demolitions; they have been bound up with simultaneously inclusionary and exclusionary practices and discourses. Market-based resettlement compensation policies engaging the participation of the evicted in the redevelopment process have tempered state and bourgeois forms of urban environmentalism. In privileging market-oriented land use, however, such policies have led to both developmental expansion into the urban periphery and compensation practices that inherently fall short of providing appropriate housing for all of the displaced.

Moreover, resettlement schemes have been forged through re-workings of public imaginaries regarding who among the slum-dwelling poor should legitimately inhabit the space of the city. Such differentiations are inextricably linked to class-and identity-based politics of belonging shaped by periods of sharpening social inequality, neoliberal urbanization, and xenophobic party politics. To the extent that compensatory resettlement is constructed through market-based policies inflected with such exclusionary politics, it is fundamentally constitutive of more severe and violent forms of displacement and dispossession of people ineligible for appropriate resettlement. While off-site resettlement has (more or less convincingly) been framed as an economic and environmentally sustainable solution for Mumbai's housing problems, that framing has been reshaped, appropriated, and contested in diverse ways by evictees and their representatives.

This chapter focused on environmental politics in the eastern fringe neighborhood of Mankhurd, which has emerged as a spatio-political frontier not only for urban accumulation but also for material and symbolic struggles

over belonging in the city. The three cases presented here, all located in or relating to the Mankhurd periphery, illustrate how displaced citizens were positioned differently in relation to state redevelopment practices and how mediating agents and slum-residents engaged in or countered elite narratives about slums and urban environmental sustainability. These cases suggest the need to approach redevelopment and environmental politics as embodied politics and to conceive of urban peripheries as productive sites of contradictory and differentiated forms of citizenship and environmental subjectivity.

In the MUTP railways resettlement case, state agents, non-governmental groups, and residents arrived at a market-based, participatory resettlement that was framed as an environmental solution for both slum-dwellers—especially women—and the city. Gendered environmental subjectivity among evictees—cultivated by an NGO and a slum-dwellers' group—highlighted women's embodied social reproductive roles and experiences in the home and community while eliding issues facing residents and women as laborers outside of home. In the second Mithi River eviction case, evictees successfully countered elite environmentalism and distant resettlement on ecological and social grounds. In the third case of violent eviction in Mandala, evictees doubly marginalized along axes of class and ethnicity have attempted to counter a planning imaginary that saw the frontier as empty space for resettling eligible slum-residents to the exclusion of ineligible (and ostensibly undeserving) evictees. Through the mediation of a movement and its eco-socialist inspired ideology, evictees in this case have attempted to assert counterclaims of legitimate belonging in the city and nation. These cases thus demonstrate that the political ecology of eviction and resettlement relies simultaneously on voicing and inclusion, and on the silencing and exclusion of slum-dwellers as subjects of urban environmental transformation. The cases are certainly not exhaustive with respect to the experience of redevelopment, eviction, and resettlement in Mumbai. Nor is the comparative case structure used here meant to demarcate 'better' or 'worse' framings in a political sense, as those involved in each experienced distinct circumstances and histories. Rather, this study demonstrates how the spatial and relational production of environmental subjectivity among evicted slum-dwellers is key to urban spatial transformation and possibilities for social justice.

Notes

1. This was a marked shift from the original members engaged in anti-eviction negotiations on the pavements in Mumbai in the 1980s who had few such resources. Even among the original women members and leaders, it has been mainly those who no longer need to work outside of the home or who have attained some source of income through their involvement in paid SPARC exchanges and training work that have remained active members in the organization over the last twenty years.
2. Times News Network, Along Came Some Turbulence. *Times of India*, May 14, 2007.
3. Kalina Merchant Welfare Association V. T. Chandrashekhar And Ors (Mumbai High Court 2006).
4. Official and activist estimates vary.
5. Times News Network, Demolition of Slums Has Sonia's Nod Says CM. *Times of India*, April 17, 2005.
6. National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM). 2010. http://napm-india.org, accessed February 15, 2010.

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10
Nuisance Talk: Middle-Class Discourses of a Slum-Free Delhi*

D. Asher Ghertner

Introductory Boundaries

"Slums are the culmination of unwanted elements," the secretary of a resident welfare association (RWA)[1] told me in perhaps the most concise statement of the middle-class "theory of the slum" I encountered during my fieldwork in Delhi in 2006–2007. In this chapter, I set out to trace how everyday depictions of slums as dirty, uncivil, and out of place—what I will call 'nuisance talk'—travel into and gain legitimacy in popular representations and state visions of urban space. While scholars have been attentive to the juridical and institutional transformations that have facilitated the rise of middle-class power and the concomitant demolition of slums, removal of hawkers, and broader bourgeoisification of Indian cities (see Baviskar 2003; Chatterjee 2004; Fernandes 2006; Ghertner 2008; Nair 2005), there has been minimal focus on how the mundane, often place-specific constructions of civility of the middle class gain traction in state policy and the popular urban imaginary.[2] This chapter addresses this question by analyzing the cultural politics of Delhi's world-class redevelopment. Following Moore, Kosek, and Pandian, I take cultural politics to mean the processes by which "people and nature are positioned as out of place, disturbing the natural and social order" (2003, 44) and the various forms of "boundary work" through which geographies of inclusion and exclusion, purity and pollution are constituted. Such boundary work creates a bar against which social order can be evaluated, rendering that which falls below/outside the bar visibly deviant and in need of improvement or removal.

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