

## Rethinking gentrification in India: displacement, dispossession and the spectre of development

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### Introduction

Over the last decade, a surge in scholarship on the displacement of the urban poor in Indian cities has highlighted the need for post-colonial engagement with theories of gentrification. While urban projects and *en masse* displacement warrant the kind of political concern that a globally minded gentrification studies offers (see Smith, 2002), this chapter follows others (see Lees, 2012) in arguing for the need to push the boundaries of theories derived from political-economic processes in Euro-American cities. Although some studies demonstrate the existence of rent gaps (Whitehead and More, 2007) and post-industrial gentrification processes that resemble Northern urban processes (Harris, 2008), most elite usurpations of land in Indian cities have unfolded through a set of market and extra-economic processes and conditions that require distinct if complementary framings. Indeed, the term 'gentrification' is rarely used in vernacular speech and academic writing, which refer instead to slum demolition and resettlement, peri-urban land grabs, and state-led development. Factors influencing urban change in India include informal practices of land settlement and governance, legal and extra-legal modes of land and resource enclosure, and developmentalist interventions of the Indian state, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and transnational agencies. Some scholars have used the rubric of 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey, 2003; Banerjee-Guha, 2010) or the notion of 'enclosure' of various kinds of 'urban commons' (Gidwani and Baviskar, 2011) as an alternative way to conceptualise the extra-economic mechanisms of displacement and dispossession. Another similar perspective posits the Lefebvrian notion of 'urban revolution' as a more appropriate framework than gentrification, because the latter presumes the transformation of already capitalised spaces whereas most newly developing areas of Indian cities are undergoing first-time spatial privatisation (Ghertner, 2014). I stress the need to think of such concepts as complementary to (rather than interchangeable with) gentrification as there is a danger of subsuming process to outcome when deploying any singular framework.

Processual analysis is also especially necessary for understanding the political opportunities and limits circumscribed by complex and uneven forms of displacement and dispossession in Indian cities. Elite-biased urban development is often enacted and negotiated through illegible, illiberal and flexible means (Hansen and Stepputat, 2006; Roy, 2009). Through a variety of development interventions and opaque planning processes in peri-urban and central city areas, slum residents, farmers and informal business-owners experience state and non-state force in different ways and engage with authorities and intermediaries on highly uneven terms. Furthermore, hybrid state agencies and NGOs displace and compensate groups differently based on ambiguous and politicised tenure regularisation regimes, as well as ethnicity, caste, language, gender and location. These distinctions shape how subaltern groups mobilise to contest, advance or rework urban transformation – a scenario that I have elsewhere called ‘accumulation by differentiated displacement’ (Doshi, 2013a). In this way, Indian cities highlight the blurring of political-economic aspects of urban development and governance with meaning-making socio-spatial practices normally analysed under the separate domain of cultural politics.

Developmentalist, speculative and legal displacement mechanisms, and informal modalities of land occupation and governance manifest in geographically distinct ways across urban India. The following sections engage city-specific literatures to highlight five factors shaping unequal urban transformations: (1) developmentalist urban policies; (2) informal regimes of land development, settlement and governance; (3) new state formations consolidating urban elite and middle-class power; (4) contradictory desires and fragmented experiences and subjectivities shaping subaltern claims to space; and (5) identity-based violence and exclusion in displacement processes. The first section surveys the major development agents and national policies that have advanced a financialised form of urbanisation, causing large-scale displacement in and around cities. The second discusses how informality and ambiguity operates as a system for governing cities that offers states the flexibility to allow *de facto* tenure and compensation to the urban poor while also facilitating slum clearances for (often illegal) world-city development projects. The third section examines how changing articulations of elite and middle-class mobilisation and participation infuse governing regimes with new mechanisms and logics of enclosure. The next section follows De Angelis’s (2004) proposition that social mobilisations to counter or mitigate the effects of dispossession are part and parcel of the ongoing character of primitive accumulation. Here, I address how diverse subaltern mobilisations and desires and uneven accommodations made by states and other entities play a critical role in trajectories of urban transformation. Finally, I examine the ways that xenophobic identity politics and social differentiation among the poor serve to legitimise and enable the most severe forms of displacement and dispossession. Vasudevan, McFarlane and Jeffrey’s (2008) ‘spaces of enclosure’ framework is useful for understanding all of these aspects of urbanisation by shifting the focus from systemic over-accumulation, crisis and dispossession to ‘the multiple ways in which “enclosure” has been and continues

to be implemented and resisted' (Vasudevan et al, 2008, p 1642). This attention to the relationship between dispossession and subjectification makes visible the 'differential consequences of enclosure for different social groups' (Vasudevan et al, 2008, p 1643), as well as the critical new convergences of governance, territoriality and subjectivity that shape urban transformation in India.

### Urban policy: post-colonial developmentalism and financialisation

In the domain of recent national policy, urban developmentalism – much like rural interventions – operates through large-scale projects that are increasingly debt-financed. For instance, the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), inaugurated by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in 2005, aimed to leverage billions of dollars in public and private finance to help Indian cities modernise their urban infrastructure to world-class standards. JNNURM introduced an urban territorial dimension to the economic liberalisation policies launched in the early 1990s. Through JNNURM, the World Bank and other international finance institutions and firms provided supplemental financing of over USD11 billion to over USD20 billion in central government funding. Such high-priority, debt-financed projects often entail large-scale displacements of subaltern groups in order to beautify cities and make room for infrastructure and land uses geared to the elites and upper-middle classes. They have supported a broad range of 'world-class' city building ambitions aimed at promoting key globally connected industries, elite recreation and consumption centres, high-end commercial and residential real estate, and the infrastructural services (roads, airports, water, power, etc) to support them (Baindur and Kamath, 2009). This national agenda for urban development has had different trajectories and political lives across Indian cities.

For instance, in India's densely populated finance capital, Mumbai, world-class roads and bridges, railways, clustered and piecemeal slum redevelopment projects, and environmental preservation schemes mean big business in a city known for extremely expensive and volatile land markets. Here, slum occupants, developers, international finance institutions, corporations, NGOs and a variety of state agents both struggle and collaborate with each other, leading to highly uneven trajectories of development, displacement and dispossession. In Bangalore, as Goldman (2011) has argued, world-city projects amount to a frenzy of state-supported speculative activity entailing the displacement of large numbers of rural inhabitants who cannot prove clear ownership or are pressured to sell their land for a small fraction of its market value. As India's self-proclaimed 'Silicon Valley', Bangalore's information technology (IT) industry has served as the main impetus and justification for government land acquisition in the rural periphery (Nair, 2005; Goldman, 2011). Ironically, Bangalore's IT-focused world-city development projects have also undercut a vast informal economy (including food processing, textiles, manufacturing and services) that employs the majority of the city's population and provides 50–75% of its gross domestic product (GDP) (Benjamin,

2000, 2004). Calcutta and medium-sized cities like Chennai have also adopted mini-Silicon Valley ambitions that have justified peri-urban land grabs. Urban transformation in and around Delhi includes lucrative sprawling developments of business complexes and high-class residential and consumption spaces, as well as special priority projects like those linked to the Commonwealth Games (Dupont, 2011). However, world-class city-making in Delhi also confounds economic readings of urban change by advancing displacement-inducing projects that do not accrue direct gains for specific groups (Dupont, 2008), but rather support an elite-biased world-class urban aesthetic (Ghertner, 2010).

Aside from direct state-backed land usurpation, there are a number of other indirect ways that investment (and speculation) on infrastructure and real estate can cause the displacement of lower-income groups. For instance, many projects (whether financed through public or private sources) have accompanied mandatory liberalisation reforms that have dovetailed with and reinforced long-standing recommendations and loan conditionalities made by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank (Baindur and Kamath, 2009). Although the emphasis of restructuring and reform has varied across cities, they have broadly included the liberalisation of land markets through the rollback of laws controlling rent and concentration of land ownership, public-private partnerships, property tax reform, and the aggressive leveraging of private finance. These reforms have unleashed formal and informal land and housing markets in ways that threaten lower-income groups' capacity to stay in their neighbourhoods. Another indirect means of displacement that resembles gentrification is ironically through slum upgrading and the provision of basic services and infrastructure for low-income residents. While these meagre pro-poor urban programmes are much needed, Desai and Loftus (2013) remind us of the dangers of 'speculating on slums' and the under-studied phenomenon of informal renting and landlordism. They argue that infrastructural improvements in slums may cause the displacement of the poorest renters, who are squeezed out by relatively better-off lower-middle-class residents offering higher rents or purchasing prices for housing in physically improved settlements. As the first phase of JNNURM comes to a close, a number of new national initiatives are under way that promise both urban services and housing for the poor and world-class infrastructure and commercial and residential development for wealthier classes – a flip-flopping paradigm of 'deliberate policy confusion' according to Mahadevia (2011). In this way, development institutions and policies have been refashioned in the service of capital accumulation in Indian cities but also remain flexible enough to meet political pressures across class constituencies. Such political scenarios suggest the need to go beyond formal policy to address the crucial role of informality and flexible governance as key constitutive elements of development and displacement.

### Informality and flexible governance

In Indian cities, like in post-colonial cities around the world, urban neighbourhoods are settled informally and recognised and administered through hybrid, contradictory and ambiguous sets of legal mechanisms and state practices. Informal slum settlement is most often understood to originate with development-induced poverty and migration from the countryside to peripheral urban lands. Residents make incremental improvements to their neighbourhoods through their own investments and through political arrangements with local officials. Slum residents obtain informal and formal access to vital services, as well as temporary *de facto* tenure arrangements that are, of course, never completely guaranteed. The politics of negotiating needs and contesting evictions in informal settlements has produced strong neighbourhood-based movements and organisations. However, it is a mistake to see informality as limited to spaces occupied by the poor or as a simple vestige of inefficiency that might be overturned by formalisation and titling, as scholars like De Soto (2003) have famously argued. Rather, Roy and Alsayyad (2004) posit that informality is better understood as a 'way of life' – a zone of flexibility and negotiation (especially in terms of land use and access) for all classes, albeit on unequal terms. Developers, elite and middle-class groups, and even state agencies have been known to subvert existing laws to build illegal structures that are subsequently regularised by authorities. Indeed, in the arena of urban redevelopment, wealthier classes have claimed and developed lands with the tacit approval and active assistance of state agents, often breaking zoning regulations with impunity (Ghertner, 2008). State agents and developers also often undertake projects with the support of organised crime syndicates (Weinstein, 2008).

These complex cross-class politics are the focus of several theories of flexible urban governance and critiques of the rubric of 'planning' that are relevant to understanding elite-biased urban transformations in India. For instance, Gururani's (2013) study of the city of Gurgaon, a business and elite enclave on the outskirts of Delhi, reveals the ways that planners and power brokers engage in sanctioned illegality to create bourgeois (neo)liberal urban space in India. Focusing on the dubious processes of land acquisition for development, she writes:

flexible planning encompasses a range of political techniques through which exemptions are routinely made, plans redrawn, compromises made, and brute force executed. It is not a random act but has a cultural logic that offers access to material and discursive maneuvers of state power, legal and extra-legal networks, and relations of influence. (Gururani, 2013, p 121)

Similarly, Nair (2013) shows how the 'pliability of law' has meant that political struggles to 'regularise' extra-legally settled areas is a principal, albeit contradictory, job of planning authorities in Bangalore. This work refutes the culturalist cliché that India is somehow incapable of 'getting it right' in relation to planning.



Rather, these examples corroborate Roy's (2009) contention that planning is structurally impossible because informality operates as a deregulated – rather than an unregulated – system. Here, ambiguous and shifting land tenure arrangements allow for a flexible 'mode of regulation' through which, for example, state authorities tacitly encourage squatting in exchange for electoral support and also usurp land for developmental purposes. Thus, informality is not simply an exploitative or a subversive domain inhabited and suffered by the urban poor. Rather, states and elites participate and make use of informal land systems for their own developmental agendas, what Roy calls 'informality from above' (Roy, 2009, p 84). This does not mean that all groups experience informality on the same terms. To the extent that informality is an arena of negotiated livelihood and social reproduction, it is also fundamentally constitutive of class and other axes of differentiation, dispossession and marginalisation in Indian cities. The terms of engaging informal systems are shaped by the relative political and economic capacity to legitimate competing land claims under both the law and extra-legal domains. This means that sometimes developmentalist projects are also thwarted by a variety of mobilisations in popular neighbourhoods. In other words, urban power relations are ultimately expressed through uneven positionings within a political terrain contoured by informal property and labour regimes, but not categorically defined by them. Thus, while governments, international development agents and slum residents themselves espouse formalised housing, legal strategies may not actually solve the problem of marginalisation and may, in fact, deepen inequalities across and within classes. In this way, deregulated governance is one important key to understanding how elite and middle-class power to usurp urban space is secured in and beyond the state, a topic to which I will now turn.

### World-class cities, upper-class states

A number of studies on Indian cities indicate that the character of local governance has shifted as state agencies facilitate world-city projects and land enclosures. Avenues for elite and middle-class participation have increased alongside the declining power of locally elected municipal bodies, which the working classes primarily utilise to access their needs. Indian urban politics has long corroborated Castells's (1983) classic theory on struggles for 'collective consumption', which demarcated how the urban poor living in informal settlements in Latin American cities negotiated for state provision of temporary tenure security and services in exchange for *en masse* vote delivery. Such patronage-based relationships between local officials and the urban poor enabled working-class influence in urban governance, albeit on less than democratic terms. In recent years, however, these arenas of popular participation have been sidelined by a number of hybrid elite-driven institutions and mechanisms for redevelopment. Modalities of gentrified governance vary across and within Indian cities, ranging from new legal mechanisms and fast-track access to state bodies for developers, corporate and financial elites, and middle-class residential groups to highly centralised

bureaucratic urban development agencies. They represent a convergence of two processes: (1) a neoliberal state developmentalism geared towards promoting cities as globally integrated 'growth engines' of the nation (as addressed in the previous section); and (2) new citizen demands to improve urban environments through the enclosing of public lands and removing of the urban poor. The later phenomenon is rooted in the rising power of India's 'new middle classes', who continue to benefit from the economic liberalisation policies launched in the 1990s (Corbridge and Harriss, 2000). These urban consumer-citizens have attained visibility in both national and local political discourse as vanguards of a liberalising India, often positioning themselves as the new 'common man' in opposition to the kind of populist politics associated with post-independence development (Fernandes, 2004; Ray and Katzenstein, 2005). Along with non-resident Indians (NRIs) living abroad, they have fuelled urban real estate development through demands for world-class infrastructure and recreational, residential and consumption spaces. Elite and middle-class power in the state is manifest through a number of different mechanisms.

For instance, in Delhi, the juridical arm of the state has superseded planning agencies and municipal bodies by increasingly ruling in favour of upper-class demands for slum clearance in recent years. One lynchpin legal mechanism that has translated upper- and middle-class interests into court rulings is the Public Interest Litigation (PIL). Bhan (2009, p 133, emphasis added) argues that:

PILs opened up the door to 'ordinary citizens' to approach the highest courts of the land in matters of public interest either to '... espouse the cause of the poor and oppressed (*representative standing*) or to [*seek*] enforce[ment] [*of*] performance of public duties (*citizen standing*)'.

Despite the gesture to empower 'poor and oppressed' groups, it is middle-class residents' associations that have filed the vast majority of such litigations. Middle-class activism and desires for 'green and slum-free' cities constitute what Baviskar (2003) has called 'bourgeois environmentalism'. Courts have followed suit in upholding their demands for rapid and large-scale slum clearance on grounds of environmental pollution and nuisance (Ghertner, 2008). Throughout Indian cities, including Chennai, Mumbai and Ahmedabad, judicial bodies and other state agencies have also ordered slum clearances along urban waterways and river basins based on dubious environmental logics (Coelho and Raman, 2010; Desai, 2012a; Doshi, 2013b). These forms of juridified slum clearance have eroded meagre protections for slum residents exemplified by the *Olga Tellis vs Bombay Municipal Corporation* case of 1985. In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that slum demolitions infringed the fundamental right to life protected by the Indian constitution because people lived in slums in order to be near their livelihoods.

Enclosure has also been facilitated by newly empowered 'parastatal' agencies that have taken up the helm of eminent domain for various world-city schemes. Harkening back to expert-driven developmental state bureaucracies, parastatals are

quasi-public agencies made up of planning, engineering or finance professionals who have been appointed by state government ministers to raise capital and implement major urban infrastructure projects. Parastatals retain the privilege of being shielded from the vagaries of electoral politics because their heads are directly appointed by state-level ministers for high-priority urban projects. Parastatal entities' increasing involvement in urban real estate and development processes has marginalised elected bodies and other relatively more accountable forms of local government. For instance, in Bangalore, powerful internationally and nationally financed parastatal agencies represent the prime movers and shakers overseeing the city's 'Comprehensive Development Plan' and negotiating land acquisitions for projects. This extra-democratic power is evidenced by the fact that even as Bangalore's city limits have tripled to include seven peripheral towns and 103 villages, municipal elections were suspended between 2006 and 2010 (Goldman, 2011). Other institutions bestowed with the privilege of bypassing the electoral system in Bangalore include expert commissions and taskforces made up of representatives from middle-class citizen action groups, chief executive officers (CEOs) from IT and biotech industries, NGO leaders, and senior government officials. Such groups privilege the upper classes with fast-tracked, exclusive access to key state agents in the planning and implementation process to ensure that projects meet their needs.

In Mumbai, the governing structures of redevelopment projects are similarly designed to bypass political obstacles posed by the urban poor through delimiting the role of the municipal corporation. For instance, Dharavi – a vast area of prime real estate in Mumbai infamously known as 'Asia's largest slum' – has been designated as a high-priority 'clustered redevelopment' project and relegated to an entirely separate governance structure under the auspices of a Mumbai-born developer residing in Long Island, New York. Furthermore, groups like 'Bombay First' – a city-boosting advocacy group made up of Mumbai's top corporate leaders and developers – attained exclusive influence in state planning processes by contracting the transnational consulting firm McKinsey to produce a comprehensive city development plan called 'Vision Mumbai' (Bombay First and McKinsey, 2003). This remarkably thin document introduced little new to the development agenda but was nonetheless adopted in its entirety by the state of Maharashtra as the new city development plan in 2004. In so doing, the state legitimated the role of such groups in urban planning. Elite narratives praise this manner of halting 'vote bank politics', which is despised for delaying and thwarting world-city projects. Even as the channels of the state are increasingly usurped by privileged classes in these ways, subaltern groups have also mobilised through NGOs, social movements and lower-level state agents to resist, negotiate or accommodate to developmental urban transformations, with highly uneven outcomes.

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### The politics of the displaced

Questions about the agency of the urban poor in the space of informal slum settlements are the subject of a rich and influential body of work in Indian city contexts. By demanding paradigm shifts in understandings of urban democracy and popular politics, studies of subaltern mobilisation are significant to the post-colonial analysis of Indian urbanisation. These analyses go beyond simplistic understandings of resistance against displacement and dispossession to explore less overt 'everyday' forms of negotiation and subversion, as well as thorny questions of desire, accommodation and consent to uneven development. Two authors drawing on Foucaultian framings, Appadurai (2001) and Chatterjee (2004), demonstrate how groups of slum residents and their representatives deploy governmental categories and technologies to access critical needs, including resettlement compensation. Chatterjee has coined the term 'political society' to demarcate these kinds of relationships among states, NGOs and slum dwellers in gentrifying Calcutta. The 'politics of the governed', Chatterjee cautions us, operates very differently from bourgeois-dominated civil society. The property-less urban poor, he argues, do not make claims to land and resources as rights-bearing citizens of a modern nation because they live outside of the purview of the law in informal settlements. Therefore, they must access needs by leveraging informal relationships, creating community solidarity and making moral appeals to development and welfare agencies. The urban poor draw on variety of categories – slum dweller, project affected person and so on – that demarcate them as governable 'vulnerable populations' rather than as citizens. He argues that these 'rumblings of the street' fuse the 'demands of electoral mobilization, on the one hand, and the logic of welfare distribution, on the other' (Chatterjee, 2004, p 135). Thus, these mobilisations of slum residents facing eviction are political, according to Chatterjee, but not in the same way as bourgeois civil society actions (including PLIs) because they do not originate from modern rights claims. Numerous studies of mobilisation in Indian cities corroborate and challenge the political society framework for understanding popular urban politics. For instance, some scholars critique the idea that subaltern subjects necessarily practise a singular politics shaped solely by their illegal conditions of life, while others point to the myriad ways that the ostensibly 'civil' bourgeoisie regularly violate laws and use political networks to accomplish their goals (see Baviskar and Sundar, 2008). Research on slum redevelopment in Mumbai reveals how slum residents have acquiesced and sometimes even embraced slum clearance in exchange for the promise of improved living and legitimacy offered by resettlement into formalised tenements. These studies indicate the need to rework Chatterjee's framework to address the diverse 'bourgeois-like' aspirations and modalities of the politics of subaltern groups and their representatives (Anand and Rademacher, 2011; Doshi, 2013a).

In this regard, Appadurai (2001) celebrates social mobilisations in Mumbai that have gone beyond limited patron-client relations with political parties to offer concrete 'bottom-up' solutions for and by the poor. Appadurai examines

the work of the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC) Alliance – a world-renowned group consisting of an NGO and two grassroots organisations of current and former slum-dwelling women and men – through the optimistic lens of ‘deep democracy’ and governmentality ‘from below’. He argues that SPARC has produced long-lasting and substantive changes through a slow and steady approach of non-confrontational participation – what he calls ‘the politics of patience’ – to counter the processes of invisibilisation, party-based clientelism and eviction. These organised groups of slum residents are characterised by the active and extensive participation of women. They work with middle-class NGO staff to collect data about slums through self-enumeration and participatory mapping activities to ensure that state agencies meet their needs for slum-based amenities and resettlement. SPARC leaders have also forged transnational linkages with both development agencies and shack dwellers’ groups around the world, which Appadurai (2001) interprets as a horizontal form of globalisation. Despite their differences, both Chatterjee and Appadurai posit that subaltern engagement with governmental welfare and development institutions operates most effectively through intermediaries with close organic ties in morally constituted communities of slum dwellers. Yet, such practices of mobilisation and accommodation have also allowed for a deeper penetration of market forces, as neoliberal slum redevelopment policies and partnerships have yielded substantially to the interests of developers and financiers.

Furthermore, as I have argued elsewhere (Doshi, 2012, 2013a), such contradictions of market-based inclusion reveal a blind spot in both Chatterjee’s and Appadurai’s readings of slum mobilisations and governance that has to do with a lack of sufficient critical attention to the neoliberal development politics of gendered and identity-based difference. In Mumbai, for instance, women’s participation in SPARC Alliance resettlement activities has drawn on naturalised roles of women as non-confrontational community caretakers – based on both feminised participatory development discourse and cultural ideals of womanhood linked to their social reproductive roles as ‘mothers’ and ‘housewives’. These forms of gendered neoliberal participation have silenced men and women slum dwellers’ discontent and dissent in relation to difficult off-site resettlement. Ironically, while women have benefitted from resettlement housing and sanitation, those who must work outside of the home have suffered the serious repercussions of increasing commute times and job loss. Thus, while Appadurai (2001) celebrates the role of women as the ‘moral core’ of the ‘politics of patience’, it is also true that such practices have facilitated cooperation with elite-biased development and obscured deepening class-, gender- and identity-based inequalities and exclusions embedded in market-oriented processes. Partial and feminised notions of women’s needs and participation and gendered disciplining have resulted in new forms of dispossession throughout the urban landscape (Doshi, 2012, 2013a). Such processes indicate the need to link urban studies in India to post-colonial development literatures that have critiqued strategies of empowerment through gendered participation. A number of other conflicts have exposed similar contradictions of market-oriented

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practices of ostensibly inclusionary development and compensation. For instance, efforts to turn the famed Dharavi slum into an upscale residential and commercial complex in the heart of Mumbai have been vigorously contested due to the project's lack of attention to working-class livelihood concerns and the problem of uneven or inadequate compensation (Weinstein, 2009).

Even in less outwardly participatory state-driven slum clearance and development projects, the politics of the displaced remains a significant, though problematic, force. For instance, in Ahmedabad, as Desai (2012a) explains, a river basin slum clearance project was advanced through a 'politics of cooptation by inclusion' (Desai, 2012a, p 52), whereby state agents advanced an elite-biased project while also accommodating the needs of some affected slum residents through flexible governing mechanisms. Although the project began with promises of environmental improvements and protection from flooding through resettlement for all displaced groups, it ended up benefitting only a portion of project-affected people with onsite resettlement compensation. Key to the process was a flexible governing regime characterised by multiple and shifting terrains of compensation, fragmentary evictions, and piecemeal resettlement. 'In this manner', Desai (2012a, p 55) argues, 'state authorities pursued an ambivalent approach vis-à-vis the urban poor, engaging in multiple and competing practices as well as shifting practices according to their own changing calculations and in response to changing external pressures'.

Benjamin (2008) offers yet another alternative rubric, which he calls 'occupancy urbanism', to address the less visible ways that the urban poor challenge displacement. Occupancy urbanism is defined as a mode of subaltern politics that subverts developmental state programmes that delimit poverty alleviation to 'basic needs' in order to secure elite-biased projects through the depoliticised permissible spaces of inclusion demarcated by NGOs. He takes issue with positions that dismiss 'vote bank' politics – practices ill-defined as 'patron-clientelism' through which poor groups lay 'claim to public investments in basic infrastructure and services via a ground-up process focused on land and economy in return for guaranteed access to voter lists in municipal elections' (Benjamin, 2008, p 719). Benjamin argues that, instead, occupancy urbanism places ethnographic focus on land as an arena of 'stealth-like and quiet, but extensive forms of political consciousness' (Benjamin, 2008, p 720). Drawing on specific land histories from Mumbai, Delhi and Bangalore, Benjamin (2008) argues that elite development projects are consistently subverted as subaltern groups forge connections with state agents (police, middle- and lower-level bureaucrats, municipal politicians, etc) to encroach on land designated for 'world-class' projects, going as far as to reoccupy eviction sites. In this way, occupancy urbanism eschews the notion that gentrified urban developmentalism is a foregone conclusion.

Goldman (2011) offers an additional, less hopeful, concept of speculative citizenship emerging as (soon-to-be) displaced slum residents, farmers and other groups in Bangalore are forced to wager on when and how to sell their land to a flurry of brokers offering meagre resettlement packages or lower-than-market

value for their property. Similarly, in Mumbai, redevelopment schemes have brought developers and elected officials (acting as brokers) into negotiations with slum leaders to relinquish their homes in exchange for high-rise resettlement compensation (sometimes on-site for the lucky few, but most often in distant peripheral localities). The privileging of market imperatives has meant that slums must go, but only some displaced slum dwellers gain access to adequate, nearby resettlement. Such forms of speculative citizenship mean that slum dwellers live in state of anxiety, not knowing whether brokers will deliver on the benefits they promise or if they will be swindled. As skewed as this power dynamic of 'public-private partnerships' is (slum dwellers are regularly strong-armed into signing consent forms), those receiving compensation are relatively privileged over the many thousands of evictees excluded via eligibility criteria, loopholes and discriminatory practices embedded within policy frameworks and in everyday city life. Thus, although the category of slum dwellers demarcates class-based spatial differentiation, subaltern groups do not experience and engage with urban transformation homogeneously. The (imperfect) promise of inclusive development is also undergirded by a more sinister politics of community marked by identity-based violence and xenophobic exclusion.

### Dispossession through difference

Urban transformation in India has been characterised by the convergence of political-economic processes of development and the cultural politics of identity-based violence, dispossession and socio-spatial marginalisation. Although modern South Asian history has long been marked by elite Hindu movements, economic liberalisation in the 1990s has been associated with an eruption of Hindu nationalist politics and increasing ethno-religious communal tensions in cities throughout India (Corbridge and Harriss, 2000). In the early 1990s, a slew of urban riots were set off by events in the distant northern Indian town of Ayodhya, where militant Hindu nationalist groups embarked on the demolition of the famed Babri mosque in an effort to reclaim the supposed birth site of a Hindu god. The event articulated with already-existing communal tensions, as well as pressures to reclaim land for world-city projects, resulting in large-scale damage and suffering, particularly in low-income Muslim neighbourhoods. Thousands were killed and raped and many more were displaced by the destruction of businesses and residential property. Since then, enduring discrimination, periodic riots and targeted evictions in minority communities has compounded ethno-religious segregation across Indian cities in a number of ways. Muslims throughout Indian cities have especially faced formidable challenges in finding both housing and employment. They routinely experience housing discrimination in desirable central city locations due to a variety of barriers, ranging from linguistic restrictions to false-pretence vegetarian-only mandates imposed by Hindu-majority housing societies. With successive bouts of rioting, Muslim residents have also voluntarily moved into ethnic enclave neighbourhoods as a measure of

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In Mumbai, th liberalisation and to produce both th ethnic North Ind grassroots region: defies simple char riots that led to th and Muslim neig Mehta, 2007). A specific form power through t the invader, the campaigns to ne spin-off parties predatory invad both supple and audiences (Mas urban struggles imaginary, the e city. Elsewhere housing strugg of ethno-natio



protection. Self-selected segregation is especially prevalent in slum resettlement colonies where formerly diverse neighbourhoods have chosen to sort themselves into buildings by religion and caste (Gupte, 2012). Ghettoised neighbourhoods have, in turn, experienced even greater vulnerability to disinvestment and neglect by government authorities that represent ethno-religious or linguistic majorities. Regionalist, ethnic and Hindu nationalist politics have territorialised in distinct ways throughout Indian cities, as I discuss later.

In Ahmedabad, the state-sanctioned anti-Muslim pogroms of 2002 and their aftermaths have reconfigured the city and given way to a new Hindu nationalist, regionalist and developmental urban imaginary. Desai's (2012b) discussion of the emergence of entrepreneurial strategies of city imaginering and place-making in Ahmedabad illustrates how boosters have attempted to distance the city from its reputation as a violent and unsafe place. These projects of redevelopment and rehabilitation of the region have drawn on majority citizens' sentiments of Hindu identity, nationalism and Gujarati and civic urban pride to bolster a sense of economic and cultural vibrancy. A flurry of unleashed projects has caused extensive material dispossession and displacement of Muslims from coveted central city spaces. The symbolic erasure of the presence of the Muslim body in the new urban imaginary of Ahmedabad has gone hand in hand with material dispossession and displacement. These processes have also served to legitimate the very dictatorial regime that has perpetuated past and ongoing anti-Muslim violence and exclusion.

In Mumbai, the political economy of urban deindustrialisation, economic liberalisation and redevelopment has also articulated with xenophobic violence to produce both the symbolic and material erasure of Muslim (and, more recently, ethnic North Indian) bodies from urban space. In particular, the Shiv Sena – a grassroots regionalist and Hindu nationalist movement cum political party that defies simple characterisation – played a central role in Mumbai's 1993 communal riots that led to the loss of thousands of lives and untold economic damage in poor and Muslim neighbourhoods throughout the city (Hansen, 2001; Chatterji and Mehta, 2007). Appadurai (2000) has cogently argued that the Shiv Sena 'sutured a specific form of regional chauvinism 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' (Appadurai, 2000, p 646). From media campaigns to neighbourhood-based organising, the Shiv Sena and more recent spin-off parties regularly conflate Muslims, North Indians and slum dwellers as predatory invaders. These violent discourses of scapegoating outsiders have been both supple and powerful enough to rally hegemonic support among diverse audiences (Masselos and Patel, 2005). The work of Shiv Sena has been to rewrite urban struggles over space and the city itself as a Hindu nationalist geographical imaginary, the ethnically cleansed dream space of a global India writ large on the city. Elsewhere, I have argued (Doshi, 2013a) that this articulation of land and housing struggles with xenophobic identity politics has entailed the embedding of ethno-nationalist ideologies of belonging into neoliberal slum redevelopment



policy and practice. This is markedly evident in the implementation of market-based resettlement projects based on a seemingly 'win-win' model, where developers provide resettlement high-rise flats in exchange for rights to build commercial-rate residences on prime real estate. However, compensation eligibility is restricted through policy mechanisms such as the 'cut-off date' – which in the case of Mumbai excludes 'illegal' slum residents and structures that cannot furnish proof of existence prior to 1 January 1995. The cut-off date invokes a practically useful and symbolically powerful distinction between legal and illegal (read: legitimate and illegitimate) slums, allowing states and developers to evade the responsibility for compensating all who are displaced by redevelopment projects. Although exclusions are linked to a variety of factors beyond ethno-religious identity, the logics of rightful belonging to the space of the city *qua* nation has served to justify both targeted evictions in minority settlements and unevenly distributed resettlement compensation.

Even in Calcutta – long thought of as a secular city in which Hindus and Muslims live in relative harmony – aspects of communalism also shape access to urban space. Sanyal (2014) describes a scenario of 'Hindu hegemony' in Calcutta, whereby Hindus drawing on simplified narratives of migration linked to the post-independence partition of India and East and West Pakistan imagine having rights to Muslim-occupied spaces in the city. She argues that 'emptying areas of Muslim inhabitants meant that those who were being displaced by incoming refugees had to go "elsewhere"' (Sanyal, 2014). This process constitutes a scenario of 'double displacement', where those who are displaced go on to displace others. Such battles over citizenship and space complicate singular class-based analyses and suggest the need to attend to the cultural politics and fragmented subjectivities that shape and challenge efforts to advance more just cities.

### Conclusion: whither the 'right to the city'?

This chapter has offered a complement to theories of gentrification through the prism of Indian cities by focusing on distinct processes of development, displacement and dispossession. Examples from scholarship on Indian cities show how post-colonial modalities of urban rule and subjectivity shape capitalist accumulation and displacement. In particular, they reveal how developmentalism, informality and flexible governance, elite power in state apparatuses, subaltern desires and political participation, and xenophobic politics fundamentally contour processes of urban transformation. In this way, I have argued that understanding socio-spatial transformation in Indian cities requires a processual analysis of *how* public space is enclosed rather than simply the outcome of class-based displacement. Indeed, most studies of urban transformation in India use concepts other than 'gentrification' because urban transformation in India has advanced through a different set of extra-economic processes and conditions. As such, this chapter endeavours to address dispossessing urbanisation and displacement in Indian cities without offering a new Indian ideal-type of gentrification. Resisting

the notion of an Indian-style gentrification is crucial not only for more accurate analyses, but also for effective political practice. In post-colonial India, the 'right to the city' may not adequately serve as a universal rallying cry because of the complex and uneven political entanglements of elite world-class city-making practices and the politics of subaltern groups who embrace, resist and rework projects in diverse ways. Here, the (often broken) promise of development and enduring 'will to improve' (Li, 2007) maintains a political stronghold across class. For instance, some groups aspiring to more than 'the right to the slum' wager on the risky possibility of improved living through resettlement, despite the unequal and elite-biased terms upon which such compensation may be delivered. In this way, subaltern claims may target the 'right to benefit from city development plans' (Arputham and Patel, 2010) rather than an anti-capitalist 'right to the city'. These contradictory mobilisations complicate notions of resistance and suggest that insurgency does not necessarily lead to more just cities (Roy, 2009), as many continue to be severely excluded and dispossessed by violent state and non-state forces. Nonetheless, in response to popular discontent over the vastly inadequate government attention to affordable urban housing, a new national policy, the Rajiv Awas Yojana, promises to channel resources for services, resettlement and *in situ* slum-upgrading projects. Despite these pro-poor gestures, there remains the danger that concessions like resettlement or slum 'regularisation' (a recognition of settlements that allows legal access to services and compensation) 'constantly appear as a favor bestowed on violators rather than as a right demanded from the state' (Nair, 2013, p 54). Thus, the accommodation politics of the poor and their representatives may support and perpetuate dispossessing regimes of rule and enduring inequalities. Under these conditions, questions remain as to how extensively new governmental programmes targeting the poor will deliver on progressive urban change.

The aspects of urban transformation outlined in this chapter can also serve to re-engage with (and rethink) the more-than-economic aspects of gentrification in the Global North. For instance, my discussion of dispossession through difference in Indian cities demonstrates outcomes similar to whitening or even the incidence of 'marginal gentrifiers' (see Lees et al, 2010), even if they operate through different modalities of extra-economic force and formal and informal sovereignty (Hansen and Stepputat, 2006) in India. Indeed, the post-colonial politics of nation and belonging are as alive and well in London's redevelopment as they are in Mumbai's, as Jacobs (2002) reminds us. Recent work on redevelopment in US cities, in turn, points to new ways of conceiving 'race-class' (Brahinsky, 2013) as co-constitutive processes that may prove useful to scholarship on urban India. The flexible and ambiguous regimes of governance characteristic of Indian cities can also speak to the contradictory and opaque strategies of both encouraging and persecuting undocumented labour forces deemed as illegal. That these groups are attacked in and displaced from their residences and other spaces of social reproduction present key concerns to theories of gentrification and rights to the city (see Varsanyi, 2008). Furthermore, and finally, much like the participatory speculative

development schemes of the South (Goldman, 2011; Doshi, 2013a), the sub-prime mortgage crisis in the US attests to how the enrolment of lower-income groups and people of colour into neoliberal housing markets can deepen and expand inequality and dispossession (Wyly et al, 2006).

There is also a need for further research into some under-studied aspects of unequal urbanisation within India. For instance, most of the scholarly literature is on India's mega-cities but emerging demographic dynamics point to the need for more attention to rapidly growing small- and medium-sized cities and towns. These urban spaces often have less capacity to generate development support funds from government sources like JNNURM and continue to have high levels of poverty (Kundu and Sarangi, 2007). Studies of Indian urbanisation and urbanism must also connect more intensively to questions of employment as world-class city-building, the destruction not only of centrally located housing, but also vital economic activities that provide livelihoods and low-cost goods and services for working-class urban citizens. This happens through the criminalisation of informal street vendors (Anjaria, 2009), as well as through slum clearances that demolish the factories and micro-businesses that serve and employ the urban poor in informal settlements (Benjamin, 2000). Struggles over livelihoods and the need to nurture pro-poor economies represent an important silence in programmes that focus only on housing and services for the poor. These are some of the contentious fault lines that will likely push the 'right to benefit from city development plans' into new and hopefully more just and emancipatory terrains.

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