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Presentation at Penn Urban Studies Colloquium: Delhi, the Invisible City

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Delhi, the Invisible City: Work, Housing and Informality

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Work in India Today

Formal Sector Employment: 8%
Informal Sector Employment: 92%

How can 92% of anything be defined by what it is NOT?

(source: National Sample Survey data)
Delhi: Work and the Urban Economy

In the last 20 years, cities across India, including Delhi, India's capital, have de-industrialized with a demise of the factory form. Work has not been moving from agriculture to industry.

If most of India's economy is "Unorganized" or "Informal", those negatively-defined concepts consign the majority of economic activity to a conceptual void.

Vast areas of contemporary economic activity which happen in this void remain UNSEEN, because they fit no expected conceptual form.
Modernization Theory

People:
Migration from Village → City

Work:
Agriculture → Formal Industry (Big Factories, SEZ, Call Centers)

City:
Traditional Disorder (Old Delhi) → Planned Modern Order (New Delhi)
The Empirics:
Urbanization Yes, Industry and Planned Order No

- People: Moving to Cities. Villages also Urbanizing.
- Work: Deindustrialization across Metros; Growth in Informal Jobs
- City: Growth of the “Invisible City”
Work in Delhi: A Review

76% of Establishments are Informal

97.5% of Establishments employ less than 10 persons (only 0.5% are under the Factories Act)

96.8% of Establishments “Self-Financing” - use Informal Sources of Capital (NOT Financed by Banks, Govt, NGOs, Moneylender, etc.)

Source: Economic Census of Delhi (2005)
Delhi: The Planned City?

1995 Data:

Less than 12% of Residential Space is in Master Planned Areas

Less than 5% of firms in Delhi are in Master Planned areas.

(Source: Solomon Benjamin (2005))
Taimoor Nagar, New Delhi

Roughly 1 square mile area
Includes Four Types of Localities:
1. “Planned Colony”
2. “Urban Village”
3. “Jhuggi Jhonpri Cluster” (Squatter Colony)
4. “Unauthorized Colony”
As anthropologists, political theorists and architects, we felt that we needed new interdisciplinary ways of **looking** at empirics.

We attempted to examine how Economics, Politics and Space are connected.
WE ALL LIVE IN TAIMOOR NAGAR
The city outside of the Masterplan is very ‘invisible’ to the residents of the planned city, in representation by people like us. Sometimes this ‘invisibility’ of the subject is actually denial of the viewer. This workshop is about WAYS OF SEEING the city.

INVESTIGATION 1: ARCHITECTURE OF THE ORDINARY
INVESTIGATION 2: MAPPING THE INVISIBLE CITY
INVESTIGATION 2: MAPPING THE INVISIBLE CITY
NOT about MARGINALITY, EXCLUSIONS, DISORDER, EXCEPTIONS, POVERTY (of space & ideas), SLUMS, TRADITION or the ORGANIC.
INVESTIGATION 4: LANGUAGE OF THE INVISIBLE CITY
“We walked into taimoor nagar, as I introduce Manish to the familiar shops along the edge of the village. The edge that our hostel students frequent. Moti, Moti mobile, and our very own hair cut salon. We walk past the familiar sights of kabadi walas. All eyes go past us without taking much notice. We are still Part of the Fabric.

We turn left onto the road 2-3 meters in width, and immediately the variation in the housing typology catches our attention. A fancy modernist-ish looking house with glass doors and an attractive facade. A 'tasteful' color choice and wooden paneling along with granite floors and walls. All this right next a dingy moist and dark public school, a Salon and an internet cafe. All the shops are single window shops of 10 feet by 10 feet. The walls of most houses are plastered.

We turn right onto a road that we presumed would lead us to the naala. At the corner was a chowpal. We ask a kid what the chowpal was "mereko nahi pata" (I do not know) he said. An elderly lady rushes into our conversation and asks "kya puch rahe ho us se?" (what are you asking him?) After we explained that we were from the hostel itself, and that we were students, she went on to explain her idea of a chow pal. she explained that it was a place for tired people to rest and talk.

We catch a rickshaw at the mouth of the gully that opened to the naala, and rode and rode along the edge of taimoor nagar. The houses on the left were punctuated with electrical shops medical shops telecom shops eateries etc. All the buildings were raised on a plinth of at least 30". The filling of the potholes were done by the residents with construction waste, reports our rickshaw wala, commenting with regret how the rain washed it away...."
INVESTIGATION 5: ACCESS TO THE CITY
IT’S A WORK IN PROGRESS…
Access to the City
Four Types of Localities in Taimoor Nagar, New Delhi

1. “Planned Colony”
2. “Urban Village”
3. “Jhuggi Jhonpri Cluster” (Squatter Colony)
4. “Unauthorized Colony”
Religion and Caste by Locality

- Urban Village
- Colony
- JJ Cluster
- SPA Hostel

- No Response
- Sikh
- Muslim
- Other
- Upper Caste
- Other OBC
- Gujjar
- SC/ST
When I Came to Delhi

0
5
10
15
20
25

Spaces of Accommodation

- Delhi is now a city of Migrants: More migration to Delhi in last 20 years than to Bombay or any other Indian city
- Since First Master Plan (1961) 45% of all government housing was to be built for low-income groups. In reality only a fraction have been built in planned colonies.
- The Low-Income Housing that HAS been built by the state in Taimoor Nagar looks like this...
Sachets of Housing

- Most shampoo sales in India are in sachets, not bottles
- May be more costly per unit weight, but the Size is Right
- Rs 2000 ($35) for one-room rental units in Urban Village
- One building has up to 84 such units
Smart City?
Mode of transport used

- Walking: 60
- Motorbike/scooter: 10
- Bus: 10
- Auto: 5
- Cycle rickshaw: 5
- Metro: 5
- Car: 5

117 respondents
Own a Business
Work in Taimoor Nagar

Maid/Cook
Driver
Daily Wage Labourer
Kabadi/Sweeper
Lawyer
Handcart (Theli) Based Business
Stall-based business like tea stall, pan stall
Shop keeper (kirana, chemist etc)
Dairy farmer/milk seller
Tailor
Embroidery/Zardosi
Carpenter

Welder
Barber
Leather Stitching
Doctor
Tuitions
Karate Coach/Gym trainer
Student
Government Job
Private sector salaried job
Big Shop or other business
Landlord
Property Dealer
Is Your Business Formal?

- Yes
- No
Bribes: Formal vs Informal

Pay Bribe
Don't Bribe

Formal Business
Informal Business
Did you Vote in the Assembly Elections? (%)
Met MLA/Councilor to Get Work Done

- Voted
  - Met Rep. To Get Work Done
  - Didn't Meet to Get Work Done

- Didn't Vote
  - Did not meet to get work done
Local Democracy: A Cow Story

1. Govt acquires land from Dairy Farmers through Eminent Domain (for river channelization)
2. Land lies fallow. Dairy farmers continue grazing cattle there.
3. Farmer builds sheds for cattle
4. Local MLA arranges for water, electricity and road access to sheds for the cows.
Pay Attention to the Electric Pole
Cow Politics

Farmer builds a hut for overnight guard
→ Then converts part of sheds to rental housing for humans.
→ Plots the land and sells it also.
→ Unauthorized Colony of Cows becomes Unauthorized Colony of Humans
→ Cows move on to gentrify a new pasture
“Unauthorized Colony” Area
“Regularization” of Unauthorized Colonies

Five to Six million people – 30-35% – live in such over 1600 Unauthorized Colonies in Delhi

2012- Delhi govt approves 895 Unauthorized Colonies for Regularization, including Taimoor Nagar Extension.