

HOUSING AND URBAN PLANNING IN A GLOBALISING ECONOMY

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Abstract

The idea that housing is quite central to leading a good life is not a new one. It is perhaps the most dominant objective of city master plans throughout the developing world. There are different approaches to housing depending on the planning regime followed. For example, Delhi has a long tradition of master plans since 1960s, a comprehensive approach to landuse planning which other cities in India aspire to achieve. The growth rate of the Indian economy remained stuck at its low traditional point of 3 per cent a year for a very long time. When India liberalised its economic policies in the mid 1990s, the growth rate picked up as expected. India is now getting used to its much higher rate of growth, first around 6 per cent a year and now about 9 per cent, occasionally touching 9.5 per cent. Much of the growth is said to have benefitted the urban population.

It is relevant to investigate how the recent economic growth has facilitated the development of housing in Delhi, one of the largest cities in India with comprehensive land use planning in force. Delhi like other Indian cities have had its share of migration from country side and informal housing to a tune of about 40% until the 1990 which incidentally mark the beginning of economic liberalisation. A new master plan (Delhi 2021) has recently come into force wherein housing is again on the top of the agenda. This paper scrutinise the role of planning in promoting housing for all income groups including slums and informal settlements. It will also draw lessons of the impact of renewed economic growth and how best landuse planning can help achieve better quality of housing in cities in growing economies of developing countries.

Key words: Urban planning, Delhi, Housing, Informal settlements, Globalisation

1. Introduction

In most of developing countries housing shortage is persistent. The role of housing is central to leading a good life is not a new one. It is much invoked in the making of social and economic policies particularly in developed world. Cities in developing countries is often criticised for uncontrolled and often unplanned growth and insanitary housing conditions of millions people. It is often assumed decent housing cannot be provided to all when population growth is high and migration from country side to towns and cities go unabated. One of the problems that makes the task of the providing housing in developing countries is particularly difficult is the general sense of pessimism and defeatism that characterises so much of the discussion on poverty and housing in the modern world. While pictures of misery and slums of insanitary and overcrowded housing arouse sympathy and pity across the world, it is often taken for granted that nothing much can be done to remedy these desperate situations, at least in the short run.

India is a country of great diversity; different states have very unequal achievements in urbanization, industrialization, literacy, health care, and economic and social development. For instance, the state of Delhi, including its small number of villages, is relatively better off than many other states.

India is now getting used to its much higher rate of growth, first around 6 per cent a year and now about 8 per cent, occasionally touching 9 per cent. For the past ten years, India's economy has averaged nearly 8 percent of annual growth, second only to China. It is also remarkable that India's main success has come not in traditional areas of exports but largely on newer industries, with a large component of high technology industries and services, such as the information technology industry (IT), which has rapidly grown to be a giant from a very modest beginning. Delhi and surroundings Gurgaon is one of the major IT centres in India serving the global market (Anand and Sen, 2000; Srinivasan and Rogers, 2005).

From 1991 to 2001, Delhi's population went from 9.4 million to 13.8 million and the administration is struggling to provide adequate housing, infrastructure and other essential services to everyone. Poverty and slums with poor sanitation coexist with opulence, creating a city of contrast, typical of growing cities in India. Chennai is the fourth largest city in India growing at a rate comparable to other major cities in India. Chennai attracts substantial foreign direct investment (FDI) in manufacturing, automobile and information technology sectors.

Economic growth should not be judged merely by growth of GDP which hides enormous and increasing disparity across regions within India. Let alone the growing inequality between rich and poor the urban-rural contrast is equally glaring. Economic growth accelerated by the recent liberalisation of the economy should be harnessed to improve the well-being and quality of life of the broader community, in particular, improved economic opportunities, decent housing, and access to health and education facilities.

2. Population Growth and Urbanisation

India has the second largest population in the world. In 1991 it was 929 million (United Nations, 1998), which constituted nearly 15 percent of the world's population (Jain, 1989). The 1991 census showed that four Indian cities, namely Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Madras, ranked 6th, 10th, 18th and 27th respectively amongst the world's 34 largest cities (Devas and Rakodi, 1993). Growth of population in urban areas is about twice as fast as that of the total country. According to the 1991 census, the level of urbanisation¹ is higher in Delhi than in all other states of India, at nearly 60 per cent. Urban growth was slow during the first half of the present century, but has been more rapid since independence.

The population of the National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCTD), consisting of urban and rural Delhi, was 6.2 million in 1981, 9.4 million in 1991 and 13.8 million in 2001. This accounts for about 1 percent of the total population of India.

Delhi has been experiencing rapid population growth in the past few decades

¹ Level of urbanisation is defined as the percentage of urban population to the total population of the state.

because of its functional importance. In 1911 urban Delhi had a population of 0.25 million. It grew to 1.45 million by 1951, to 5.7 million by 1981, 8.4 million by 1991, and over 10 million in 2001 with a growth rate of 10.6 per cent per annum in the fifties, tapering down to 4.7 per cent in the eighties and more recently 3.87 per cent. The population growth rate has been declining over the years. The city still has the highest growth rate among the mega cities of India. During 1975-95 Delhi recorded a growth of 4.13% per annum and it is projected to decline to 2.67% per annum during 1995-2015 (UNCHS, 1997). Delhi's population is projected to be 16.86 million in 2015 (UNCHS, 1997), and 27 million by 2021 (Kumar, 1996). However, long term projections by various agencies differ significantly. DDA has initiated the preparation of Master Plan of Delhi 2001-2021 for a target population of 23 million.

In order to check the rapid and haphazard growth of Delhi, the Central Government appointed a committee that recommended a Single Planning and Controlling Authority for all urban areas of Delhi. In 1955, the Delhi Development (Provisional) Authority was constituted. It was recognised that there could be no piecemeal approach solution to the urban crisis and reconciled that it was necessary to plan and control the development. With the decision to prepare a Master Plan for Delhi, the DDPA was replaced by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) through promulgation of the Delhi Development Act, 1957 (GOI, 1957). The primary mandate of DDA is the planning and development of Delhi in accordance with a plan.

The consequences of rapid increase in population, urbanisation and changing socioeconomic patterns have included an acute shortage of housing and related infrastructure, especially in urban areas. The rate of production of housing is not keeping pace with the demand of a growing population. Lall (1996) observes that household size decreased over the period 1981 to 1991, but more important is the household formation rate, which has gone up from 4.0 per cent per 100 households in 1981 to 4.9 per cent in 1991. This has placed a high demand on land, infrastructure and services for urban development.

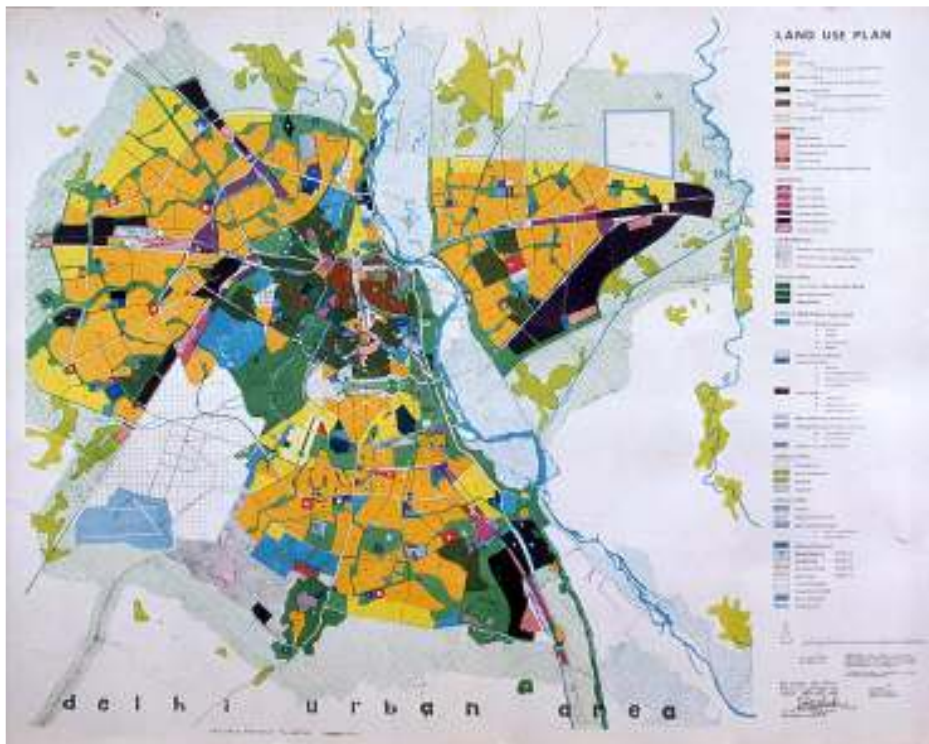
3. Planning in Delhi

Delhi is an example of textbook planning based on British traditions of land use planning in the 1950s. Before the independence of India in 1947, planning was a subservient process to housing. Outside the then New Delhi (Leutyen's Delhi), where a grand urban design was meticulously and authoritatively implemented by the colonial government, planning was synonymous with house building requiring merely approval of the layout plan by the Delhi Improvement Trust (DIT). It was a city of 0.70 million people in 1941.

In 1961, the Delhi Union Territory comprised of 160 sq. kms of urban area with 2.36 million people and 1323 sq. kms of rural area with 0.26 million

people in 315 revenue villages². In this period the Master Plan for Delhi 1962-1981 (MPD-62) was enforced with a twenty year perspective. The 160 sq. kms of urban Delhi was to have redevelopment prescriptions by holding population levels but having more compatible living. An equal number of people were to be in twice the land area (320 sq. kms) through planned development at medium densities all round the urban fence of 1962 (see Figure 1). This land was to be acquired in advance for the DDA, who were then to provide services and sell plots or space for different uses through a revolving fund policy for a combination of auction, allocation at different rates and even at subsidy and no cost for certain uses.

MPD-62 for all purposes was a promotional plan through predetermined orderly growth. Thus compulsory land acquisition was introduced for the first time for comprehensive urban development. The DD Act 1957 provided DDA with powers to plan, acquire land, develop, dispose to various uses on 99 year leasehold and enforce development control and building bye-laws. The intention was to control land speculation through state ownership of land and improve access to land for all income groups. This system was unique and perhaps Delhi is the only metropolis in India where such a planning process was adopted.



Source: Delhi Development Authority

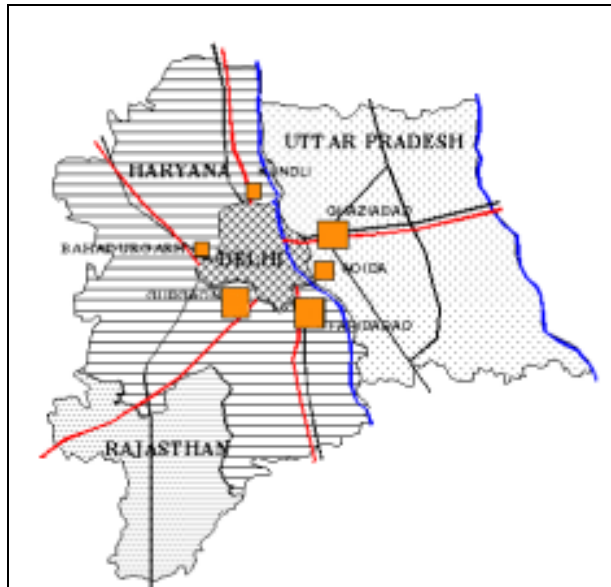
Figure 1: Master Plan for Delhi, 1962 (MPD-62).

² Revenue village is an administrative unit for fiscal and cadastre purposes. It may or may not include built up area (*adadi*). Nature of crops and productivity are recorded in every crop season that serves as a basis for land tax.

The last 40 years of urban planning and large-scale public land acquisition and development has not lived up to the original expectations. Billard (1993) and Pugh (1991) have critically examined the housing land policy in Delhi and concluded that it has not contributed to more efficient land markets. Monopolist ownership of land by government was (often) insensitive to market mechanisms. Also access to land by low and marginal income groups has not improved. The plan has been responsible for runaway population growth and with no defined roles for the community, private enterprises and stakeholders (UNCHS, 1999). The urban population grew to 5.77 million against 4.60 million as per the plan. Towns at the doorstep of Delhi grew much faster resulting in to a much larger contiguous urban agglomeration for Delhi.

4.1. National Capital Region (NCR)

MPD-62 did not contain detailed proposals for regional development as a means of deflecting the population to the larger region. Lately, in 1985, the National Capital Region Planning Board Act was legislated and the National Capital Region Planning Board was set up to integrate metropolitan planning and development with the rest of the region. As illustrated in Figure 2 the National Capital Region Plan (NCR) covers over 30,000 sq. kms of land. It incorporates the whole of Delhi state, about 60 % of the small state of Haryana, about 10 % of Uttar Pradesh and about half a district of Rajasthan. The NCR plan is a strategic plan and its implementation is proposed to reduce the growth rate in Delhi, and normalise the rate of growth in the NCR region while accelerating growth in counter-magnets (outside commuting distances from Delhi). Growth management of the NCR region was largely about the controlled growth of Delhi while deflecting growth to NCR towns. The role of the NCR Planning Board is consensus building through grants and fiscal instruments towards decentralised development to targeted centres. This requires cooperation by the states and Delhi where housing need is greatest. However, growth of towns in the NCR region at the doorstep of Delhi (towns in Delhi Metropolitan Area (DMA)) has been natural rather than due to decentralisation programs driven by the NCR spatial policy. National government through the NCR plan cannot achieve its growth management strategy without the cooperation of state governments and municipalities, for they have a large amount of formal autonomy in planning and land matters.



Source: Author

Figure 2: National Capital Region (NCR), a regional framework for metropolitan planning.

It has been observed that despite all the recommendations in this regard given by various plans from time to time (i.e. 1962 onwards), these have not been implemented in letter and spirit because of the lack of political will and administrative exigencies.

4.2. Master Plan for Delhi 1962

The planning process in Delhi has evolved through a succession of events since 1911, ending with the socialisation of land for urban development in 1957 through the promulgation of the Delhi Development Act (DD Act). In effect the DD Act restricted the private development of land. The Master Plan for Delhi 1962 (DDA, 1962), prepared with the assistance of the World Bank, with a 20 year perspective up to 1981, came into effect in September 1962 and virtually took control of urban development and zoning. Apart from being a land use plan, MPD-62 implied planned development of Delhi through compulsory land acquisition and development following zoning and development control. It relied on the existing Land Acquisition Act, 1894 for bulk acquisition of land for public purpose. The development model as postulated is depicted in Figure 3. Land development policy through land acquisition was not considered equitable by the agricultural landholders. Uniform compensation rates, irrespective of location, drew serious legal litigation.

Following the introduction of the MPD-62, the authority would estimate and declare its intention of acquiring land for urban development at a predetermined price. Land thus acquired would then be consolidated and developed with roads and infrastructure and subsequently sold or auctioned to individuals and cooperatives on a 99 year perpetual leasehold basis. Development control was enforced based on detailed development plans

(zonal plans).

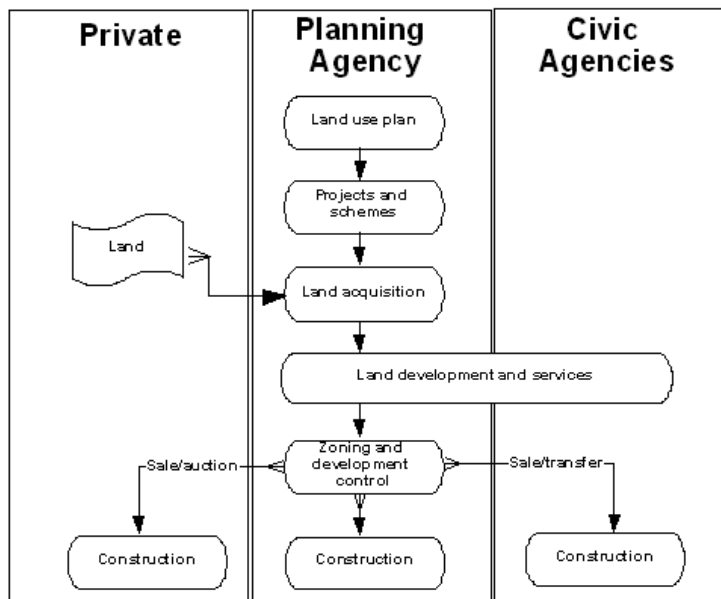


Figure 3: Typical urban development model followed in Delhi.

Thus MPD-62 drastically altered the private development of housing (Pugh, 1991) and it was for all purposes a promotional plan through predetermined orderly growth (UNCHS, 1999). It was also the first experiment of its kind in India. The plan eliminated private land development and kept the entire serviced land process within the government system. MPD-62 proposed extension of the urban area to the tune of 320 sq.km. to be developed at prescribed medium densities supported by an elaborate transport network. The plan was conceived in a regional context, with the city seen as the nucleus of a larger metropolitan region with a radius of 40 km from its urban core. The principles on which the Plan was based were:

- Functional balance: Provision of housing and community facilities near employment centres.
- Decongestion of the old city: Shifting of incompatible industries to other areas.
- Preservation of functional character as the national capital: selective industrialisation to support the existing role as a major centre of public employment.
- Regional approach: Development of 'ring towns' around urban Delhi to relieve the city of increasing number of migrants.

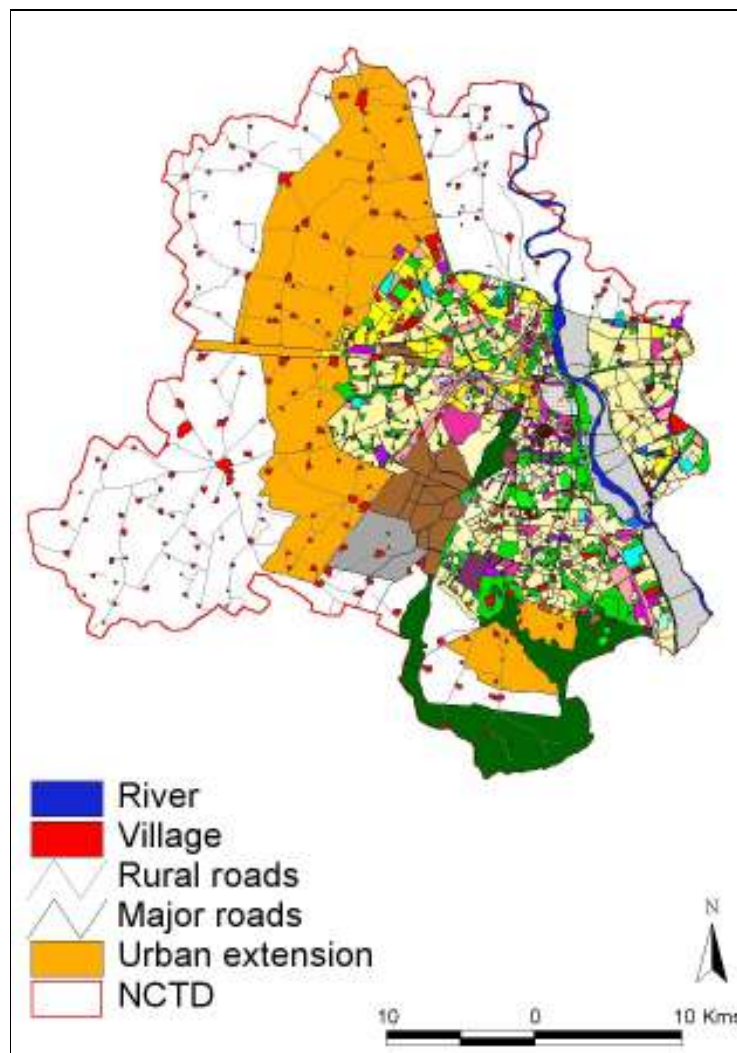
The overriding emphasis of MPD62 was protection of the character of the New Delhi as a National capital (Datta, 1983). The success of plan was partial: major transport networks were developed and selected open spaces were developed and maintained. On the housing front the plan failed to achieve its targets. The very intent of the plan did not pay due attention to low

and poor income households as the plan did not make concrete proposals for their housing needs. Low income housing was treated as residual to the overall planned development (Datta, 1983; Pugh, 1991). A corporate approach to land development marginalised the poor leaving them to fend for themselves as squatters in unsafe areas and unauthorised subdivisions in the urban periphery. The emphasis of plan implementation was almost exclusively limited to the end use requirements of a rigid statutory land use plan. One consistent criticism has been that the plan did not include any positive reference to the activities of the private sector in stimulating and encouraging private investment for plan implementation. Instead, the entire emphasis was on public action. Since 1957, the approach to urban development in Delhi and the tacit land policy has not changed. The planning process is devoid of any systematic policy analysis involving alternative courses of action based on a realistic assessment of implementation capacities.

The freezing of large tracts of land and the slow development and marketing of land by public agencies has raised the cost of land and shelter to unaffordable levels and has failed to achieve the objectives of increasing the supply of housing at reasonable prices for low income groups (Sundaram and Gambhir, 1989. p4). The Urban Land (Ceiling and Regulations) Act, 1976 (GOI, 1976) was introduced by the Central Government with a social objective of preventing concentration of urban property in the hands of a few and making land available for construction of houses for low income groups (Sivam, 2002; Sivam et al., 2001). It stipulated a maximum holding of 500 sq.m. in Delhi. Unfortunately, the act has failed to achieve the objective: out of 2,20,674 hectares of land declared surplus in the urban areas of the country only 19,020 hectares could be taken possession of by the government and the remaining were locked up in various litigations. This act was scrapped by the Urban Land (Ceiling and regulation) Repeal Act, 1999 (GOI, 1999).

4.3. Master Plan for Delhi 2001

Master Plan for Delhi 2001 (MPD 2001) is an extension to the MPD 62 to accommodate a projected population of 12.2 by the year 2001. The plan adopts a two prong spatial strategy: densifying the already urbanised area of 44,777 hectares to ideal medium densities accommodating 8.2 million people, and extension of urban limits to an additional 24,000 hectares to accommodate about 4 million people (refer Figure 4).



Source: Digitised by the author

Figure 4: Master Plan, Delhi 2001.

The extent of urban extension to house 4 million people is tentatively identified along the urban periphery. The emphasis of MPD 2001 has been on decentralisation of work places in organised district centres and community centres zoned in the plan with an extensive transport network interconnecting the existing urban area. The plan also includes an ambitious 200 km mass transit system supplementing the road and rail networks. Structural changes proposed for areas within the MPD 62 urban limits include a special area plan for the walled city and its extension, promotion of mixed land uses and decentralisation of employment activities to so far undeveloped district centres and community centres.

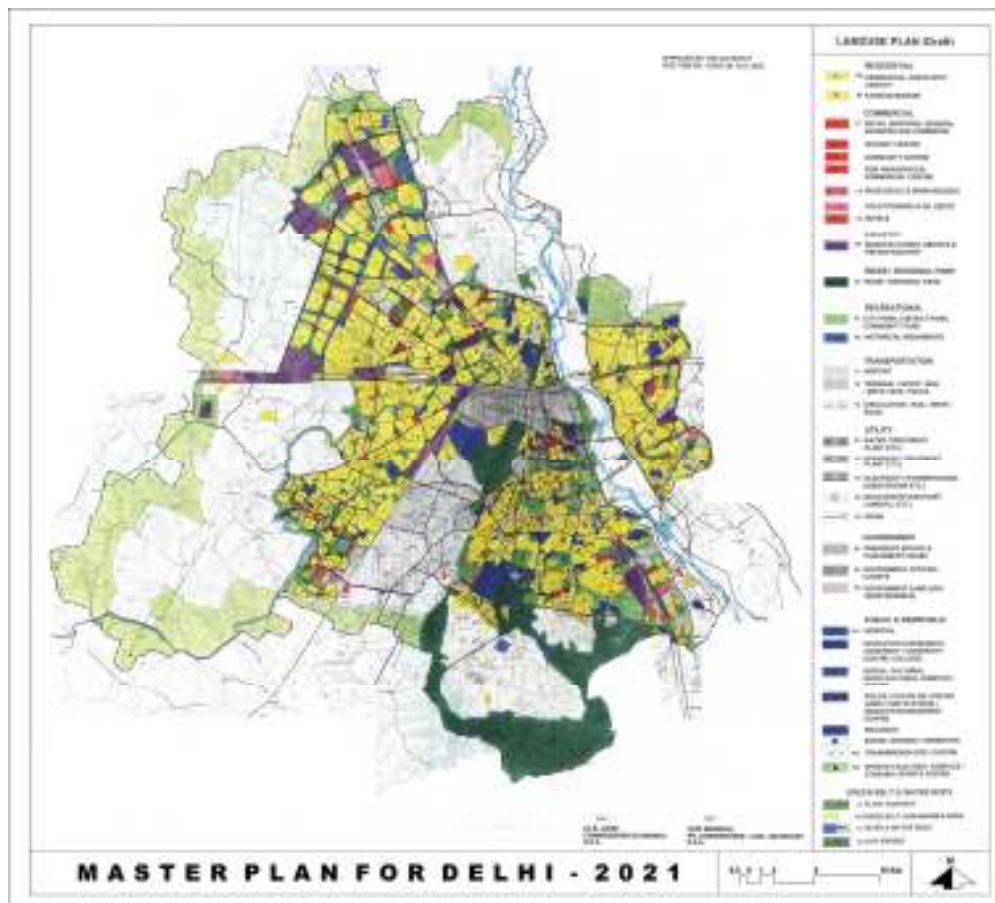
In 1999, nearly at the end of MPD 2001, the progress in the development of urban extension is partial: not even half of the 24,000 hectares of land

originally proposed for urban extension has been acquired. Not a single planned employment centre (district centre) has been developed. If one has to compare the plan against its actual implementation and meeting the development targets, MPD 2001 is a miserable failure. The DDA, since its inception in 1957 till 1994, has merely managed to provide housing to 1 million people in the form of built up flats and land allotments to cooperative housing societies.

Delhi is characterised by the fluidity of the planning environment – a phenomenal growth of population, low income levels for the majority of residents, deficiencies in infrastructure and civic facilities and services, inadequate allocation of land for low income housing, and the general failure of regulatory planning instruments to regulate urban development and achieve planned spatial distribution of activities.

4.4 Master Plan for Delhi 2021

Master Plan for Delhi 2021 (MPD-2021) is an extension of MPD-2001. Over the years the formal housing through institutional sector has provided only 53 per cent of housing while the remaining is through non-institutional sources including unauthorised colonies, squatter settlements and slum clusters (GOI, 2007). Delhi Development Authority (DDA) vested with planning and development responsibilities is also the major producer of housing through its variety of housing schemes on land acquired for urban development including urban extensions. Substantial increase in housing density is proposed in existing residential areas aimed to accommodate more housing. This is not necessarily a reflection of difficulties of acquiring land. As depicted in Figure 5 planned urban extensions have been proposed to house about 5 million people. It should be noted that only about half of planned urban extensions proposed in MPD 2001 was developed till the 2001 and Dwarka sub-city in southwest was the only large scale planned development successfully developed.



Source: Delhi Development Authority

Figure 5. Master Plan for Delhi, 2021.

The size standards of housing of various categories for low, middle and upper income groups have been marginally reduced in response to spiralling cost of land, construction and services. Since economic liberalisation started in the mid 1990s cost of land in almost all large cities in India has increased at an unprecedented rate. Efforts to decentralise some of the economic activities to the National Capital Region (NCR) so far has not been effective in reducing the growth pressures on Delhi. Even with declining rate of national population growth, Delhi and other metropolitan cities in India have continued to grow at faster rate.

5. Housing

Land acquisition is a vexed issue. Though Land Acquisition Act is one of the oldest legislation dating back to over 100 years widely used to acquire land for public purpose (urban development is one such public purpose). Recently there has been widespread disagreement with compulsory land acquisition for large scale industrialisation. Over the last five years, government of India has approved the creation of 250 Special Economic Zones (SEZs) across the country, some as large as 20,000 hectares. Inspired by similar zones

established in China, the tax-free enclaves are seen as a way to promote trade. Big companies and industries are among those keen for SEZs to go ahead. But farmers and landowners are not so enthusiastic, arguing that their land will be compulsorily bought at unfair prices. Debate about SEZs is heated in Maharashtra, West Bengal and other states. Nano small-car (\$1000 car) project planned in Singur, West Bengal by a well known industrial group, the Tatas, with the best record in India of good relations with workers and sensitivity to public concerns was abandoned as farmers were reluctant to spare their land which led to agitation, violence. Land acquisition for urban development, of course, is not the same as acquiring land for industries. Industries have the option to choose locations where land could be bought in open market or acquired with the help of government. Urban development requires undeveloped land closer to existing cities and towns and thus the option is limited.

When we see the enormous poverty, slums and deprivation, we tend to blame it on its government. While most governments have room to improve their performance, it would be wrong to overlook that how much control government has over housing depends in part on what happens in the rest of the economy. Greater legislative autonomy may well be compromised in effect by the limitations in policy space that occur through the increasing mobility of labour and capital that may happen naturally as technology makes travel, relocation and communication less onerous.

Regulatory planning combined with large-scale acquisition and development in Delhi largely caters to the housing requirements of middle and upper income groups. Nearly one third of households in Delhi live in squatter camps and informal settlements. Public authorities have resorted to selective demolition of squatter shacks on public land. In some instances resettlement plots were provided to displaced households situated at the periphery of the city away from major employment centres. From time to time unauthorised housing on private land have been regularised with services and sanitation facilities. However, this does not preclude the formation of new squatter settlements. Planning and housing policies in Delhi do not have a fully comprehensive set of objectives, which are oriented to the needs of low income groups. The city has always grown, from the pre-industrial age to the modern day, reflecting changing technology and culture.

Globalisation or the coupling of economy with global trade and exchange is bound to increase income inequality (Stiglitz, 2006). Some authors (example, Ravallion, 2005; Ravallion et al., 2007) have argued that priority should be placed on poverty reduction than reduction of income inequality. In Indian context, with all well intended policies, income inequality has accentuated in urban economy where the immediate effects of globalisation is felt. Some of the industries, like for example software industry which brings in large amount of business and foreign exchange does not appear to have spillover effects with other sectors predominately employing low and semi-skilled labour.

Housing should be viewed in much broader context of the economy. Slums

and informal settlements are not necessarily the failure of planning policies. Bulk of the immigrants to cities do not have the minimum purchasing power to acquire the basic minimum housing available in the formal housing market. Even after years of living and working in immigrants with fewer skills do not move up the economic ladder. Only long term human development through education and literacy could lift them out of poverty (Sen, 2005, 2007).

6. Conclusion

Globalising economy has enabled growth of export and gross domestic product at the national level. However, only a few sectors of the economy have benefitted through the expanded opportunities globalisation offer. In urban areas, in particular, large cities it has facilitated the expansion of middle and higher income groups. Low income groups and vulnerable immigrants to cities face the formidable task of acquiring basic minimum housing leading to formation of informal settlements. Informal settlements and slums in towns and cities are mere symptoms of the whole economy.

There is no immediate solution to the improvement of housing conditions of low income groups in Indian cities. However, at least government can provide basic services to mitigate the living conditions of millions of people living in slums and informal settlements. Provision of basic amenities such as water, sanitation and electricity to informal settlements can make substantial difference. Evidence suggests that it is slowly taking shape in cities.

Globalisation is pushing the poor out of the housing market because globalisation benefits affluent people more than the poor. Therefore it is imperative on the part of government to facilitate and protect the interest of the poor in achieving decent housing in towns and cities. This issue of policy concern is not yet fully understood and addressed by the government.

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