11

Rule by Aesthetics: World-Class City Making in Delhi

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Planning without Plans

From 2003 to 2007, news headlines in Delhi closely followed a story pitting a local environmental group against seven of India's top land developers. In 2003, the Ridge Bachao Andolan (Save the Ridge Movement) submitted a petition to the Supreme Court of India challenging the construction of India's largest shopping mall complex for being built on Delhi's southern ridge, a protected green space, in the up-and-coming South Delhi colony of Vasant Kunj. This constituted a land-use violation of the statutorily binding Delhi Master Plan. Expert testimony by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) – the agency that drafts and is legally bound to implement the Master Plan – defended the project in the Court for being "planned" and thus legal because of the involvement of professional builders, its high-quality construction, and its strategic function in boosting Delhi's architectural profile. Showing architectural blueprints and artistic renderings of the proposed development (see Figure 11.1), emphasizing the project's US$300 million price tag, and describing the mall as a "world-class" commercial complex, the DDA suggested that the visual appearance of the future mall was in itself enough to confirm the project's planned-ness.[1] How could a project of such strategic importance in Delhi's effort to become a world-class consumer destination *not* be planned, the DDA's lawyer argued. Even after its own "Expert Committee" found the complex in "flagrant violation" of planning law,[2] the Court concurred in early 2007, allowing construction to go forward based on the mall's capital-intensiveness and associated world-class appearance.[3]

During the course of the mall proceedings in the Supreme Court, an adjacent multigenerational slum settlement in conformance with the land-use

Figure 11.1   An artistic rendering of the DLF Emporio, one of the seven malls in the Vasant Kunj shopping mall complex
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designation listed in the Master Plan was declared "unplanned" and illegal by the DDA for being a "nuisance" to the neighboring middle-class residential colonies. Based on a set of photographs showing the "unsightly" conditions in the slum, and despite the absence of a survey or scientific evaluation of its so-called "nuisance-causing activities," the DDA demolished the settlement without compensation, an action upheld by the Court.[4]

In these two examples, "planned-ness," an attribute of urban space key to the determination of legality, was defined as that which looks planned, regardless of its formal standing in planning law or any correspondence between actually existing urban development and expert paper representations of the city (e.g., the Master Plan).[5] According to this aesthetic mode of governing, which I will show to be widespread in Delhi today, if a development project looks "world-class," then it is most often declared planned; if a settlement looks polluting, it is sanctioned as unplanned and illegal.

In preparation for Delhi's hosting of the 2010 Commonwealth Games and as part of the government's officially declared plan to make Delhi into a "world-class city" (see DDA 2007), public finances in the early 2000s were gradually shifted away from education, public housing, health care, and food subsidies toward large, highly visible, and "modern" infrastructure developments such as the Delhi Metro Rail, more than twenty-five new flyovers, two new toll roads to Delhi's posh, satellite cities, and the Commonwealth Games Village – prestige projects built "to dispel most visitors' first impression that India is a country soaked in poverty" (Ramesh 2008). In the late 1990s, the DDA also began aggressively privatizing the approximately 35 percent of Delhi's land that had been public, much of which had been acquired for, but never developed as, low-income housing.[6]

While these changes in Delhi's regulatory landscape and public policy priorities have been central to recent transformations of Delhi's physical landscape, I argue here that the making of world-class cities is not instantiated solely (or even primarily) through an economic calculus of cost–benefit or through a juridical redefinition of property; rather, it also takes shape through the dissemination of a compelling vision of the future – what I will here call a world-class aesthetic – and the cultivation of a popular desire for such a future – the making of world-class subjects.

This chapter examines this process in two parts. In the first two sections, I look at how a world-class aesthetic – a distinct observational grid used for making normative assessments of urban space – has been codified through law in Indian cities, making aesthetic judgments such as that in the Vasant Kunj case increasingly central to the delineation of state policy and practice. My analysis here draws from three data sources: orders, judgments, and petitions filed in the Delhi High Court and Supreme Court of India; observations of court hearings in the Delhi High Court; and newspaper and television reports on land-use and slum-related matters. In the next two sections, I examine how slum residents – those being displaced from public land and thus those with seemingly the least to gain from the world-class redevelopment of Delhi – both oppose and take up the vision of the world-class city, advancing the dream of a privatized city at the same time as they posit their own claims to the global future. Based on extended ethnographic research in a single slum settlement, I consider how the vision of the world-class city establishes clear aesthetic criteria for self-evaluation; that is, how a socially produced aesthetic – which I define, following Ranciere (2004), as "a distribution of the sensible" that lays down boundaries between the beautiful/ugly, visible/invisible, legal/illegal – operates as a normalizing urban quality, inducing a form of self-government among those who identify with the desirability of world-class urban improvements. Through a discussion of the decorative posters that residents hang on their walls and the stories of city and self they convey through them, I show, specifically, how residents of this slum have begun to adopt world-class aesthetics as a basis for both locating themselves in the changing city and for framing their own world-class aspirations.

While this world-class aesthetic does offer particular "norm(aliz)ed interpellations through which urban subjects come to inhabit space" (Ananya Roy, Conclusion, this volume), so too does it operate as a contested arena, allowing those subjects to fashion new political demands and visions. Just as the urban elite launches ambitious experiments to advance new norms and forms of the urban, so too do the informal poor engage in cross-class appropriations, stepping inside these norms and forms to try to leverage, negotiate, or happen upon improved life prospects. In attempting to carve out a space for the expression of their individual and collective desires – be

it by centering the slum as a space of hope or by celebrating their potential to become property owners – these residents too engage in worlding practices. Thus, in contrast to Davis's (2006: 201) assessment of global slums as mere containers for "warehousing this century's surplus humanity," I show slum residents to be integral vectors in Delhi's worlding efforts, their aspirations central to both the material and symbolic transformation of the cityscape.

Taken together, the two parts of this chapter examine the world-class aesthetic as a form of governmental legibility that: (i) provides "an overall, aggregate, synoptic view of a selective reality" (Scott 1998: 11), enabling state intervention into an otherwise ungovernable terrain; and (ii) is deployed via governmental programs to guide "the population's" conduct toward certain "suitable ends" (Foucault 2007: 96) – in this case, a system of private property and a world-class visual landscape. But, rather than reading the world-class aesthetic as either producing or not producing "governable subjects" – that is, rather than seeing slum residents' appropriation of world-class aesthetics as consent or resistance – I want, in line with a broader argument of this book, to "trouble the subject-power of the subaltern" (Ananya Roy, Conclusion, this volume) by considering the contradictory ways in which subjects participate in the world-class city making project. Insisting that slum residents' desires are simultaneously a constitutive part and an effect of this project, I locate their political agency at the intersection of how they partake in both ruling and being ruled (Ranciere 2001). This means asking how the world-class aesthetic is made sensible to slum residents – how they step into its field of vision and take up the aspirations it sets before them – but also how they might mobilize that aesthetic for different ends.

Calculative Deficiencies and the Turn to Aesthetic Norms

By the late 1990s, state officials and politicians in Delhi had begun to articulate the goal of turning Delhi into a "slum free city," giving it a "world-class" look, promoting an efficient land market, and converting the "under-utilized" public land occupied by slum-dwellers into commercially exploitable private property (DDA 1997). These were all part of the policies of economic liberalization initiated by the Finance Ministry in 1991 and concretely implemented in Delhi in the late 1990s (Jain 2003; Ghertner 2005). But despite the clear mandate from above to remove slums, the practical means of doing so were limited. Through the 1990s, for example, various programs were launched to upgrade or relocate slums, but the slum population nonetheless increased from 260,000 to 480,000 families between 1990 and 1998 (MCD 2002).

During this period, the decision to remove a slum lay almost entirely in the hands of the state agencies upon whose land slums were settled. Thus, if a slum on DDA land was to be removed, for example, the DDA was charged with notifying the slum residents, surveying the households to determine resettlement eligibility, collecting fees from those offered resettlement, purchasing and/or allocating the necessary land for establishing a resettlement colony, obtaining support from the police for protection during the demolition, hiring the demolition team for the appropriate day, and coordinating the resettlement exercise with the Slum Wing of the Municipal Corporation. Not only was each of these steps bureaucratically challenging, but the elaborate patronage relations extending from slums into the lower bureaucracy, what Benjamin (2004) calls India's "porous bureaucracy," made the assembly of accurate survey registers – a requirement before a demolition could be carried out at the time – nearly impossible. Surveys were tampered with, false names were appended, and between the time when the survey was completed and when the agency obtained the necessary clearances and land appropriations (usually years), the number of people residing in the slum had changed, thus demanding a new survey and setting much of the same process in motion again (cf., Hull 2008). Furthermore, through the 1990s, the cost of obtaining and preparing land for resettlement colonies escalated (DDA 1997), creating a strong disincentive for land-owning agencies to remove slums in the first place. In addition, the legal status of most slum settlements was ambiguous, with various forms of *de facto* regularization over the years (e.g., state-issued ration and voting cards, state-funded infrastructure improvements, the presence of government-run schools) making slum removal a charged political issue. In short, the procedure for removing slums was costly, slow, and contentious.

In the early 2000s, however, there was a huge increase in public interest litigations (PILs) filed against slums by resident welfare associations (RWAs) (Chakrabarti 2008) – property owners' associations mobilized around quality of life and neighborhood security issues. Combined with the 2003 announcement of Delhi's successful bid to host the 2010 Commonwealth Games, this placed the state and municipal governments under increasing pressure from both above and below to "clean up" the city. In the late 1990s, the courts had increasingly begun to take notice of "the dismal and gloomy picture of such jhuggi/jhopries [slum huts] coming up regularly"[7] and in 2002 observed that "it would require 272 years to resettle the slum dwellers" according to existing procedures and that the "acquisition cost … of land … and development … would be Rs.4,20,00,00,000/– [~ US$100 million]."[8] This set of conditions was incompatible with Delhi's imagined world-class future, so the courts, in response to the PILs filed by RWAs, began intervening in slum matters and increasingly rebuked the DDA and other land-owning agencies for failing to address the "menace of illegal

encroachment" and slums.[9] However, when the courts pushed these agencies to act more aggressively to clear slums, judges were befuddled by messy ground realities, missing government records, ambiguous tenure statuses, and incomplete surveys. The courts found themselves in a position where they were unable to even assess the size of the problem, not to mention issuing informed action orders. For example, in a case against a slum in South Delhi, the High Court stated, "There are several controversies, claims and counter claims made by the learned counsel for the parties. The records are, however, scanty and the said claims and counter claims cannot be decided on the basis of existing material and documents on records."[10]

Such an absence of cadastral precision is widespread in slum-related cases, which led to the absence of a synoptic vision by which upper-level bureaucrats and the courts could "survey a large territory at a glance" (Scott 1998: 45) and "govern from a distance" (Rose 1999). For Latour (1987), such "action at a distance" relies on a "cascade" or relay of measurements and inscriptions (e.g., survey registers) that can be combined and simplified into more generalizable and thus legible representations of the territory (e.g., maps and statistical tables) as they move up the chain of administrative command to "centers of calculation," such as courtrooms and centralized government offices. The absence of accurate baseline surveys in Delhi, however, broke this cascade, rendering knowledge of slum space highly localized rather than abstractly knowable and manipulable from above. As a result, land-owning agencies could easily delay slum-related court decisions for years by postponing court hearings in order to survey and reassess the ground situation. Until accurate visual simplifications of slum space were secured (i.e., until the "cascade" of inscriptions was complete), bureaucrats sitting in state offices and judges in courtrooms had their hands tied, or so it seemed.

In many instances, the ownership of the land occupied by slums was itself ambiguous, putting the court in the strange position of being prepared to order a slum demolition, but not knowing which agency was obligated to carry out the order. In a case that ultimately resulted in more than 2,800 homes being razed in 2006, one party claimed that the land in question belonged to the Municipal Corporation, but "Thereafter it was difficult to find out as to who was [*sic*] the owner of the land as all the land-owning agencies abdicated their responsibilities and none was prepared to own the land."[11] This recalls Roy's (2002, 2004) discussion of the "unmapping" of Calcutta and the regulatory ambiguity/informality to which it gave rise. But, whereas the absence of maps and numbers in the Calcutta context increased the state's ability to arbitrarily and selectively deploy power, distribute benefits, and dodge previous duties and promises, in Delhi such a calculative deficit or absence of map-based legibility rendered slums ungovernable, for it limited both the court and the upper-level bureaucracy's

ability to see and manage slum space, and left the implementation of court orders and state mandates to the "porous" lower-level bureaucracy that slum residents have historically been able to "work" through cultural and political ties (Kaviraj 1991; Benjamin 2008).[12]

The ambiguity in property records in Delhi is even more complicated by the fact that, according to the Municipal Corporation, 70 percent of Delhi is "unauthorized," meaning that it violates land-use codes or building bye-laws in some way or another.[13] What is more, as the former Commissioner of the Slum Wing of the Municipal Corporation told me, "the rich have unauthorizedly grabbed far more land in Delhi than the poor. The total land under squatters and slum-dwellers is far less than the illegal land held by the rich and famous, it's just that nobody sees those violations."[14] If the court were to begin removing all unauthorized land uses, most of Delhi would have to be razed, including those developments central to Delhi's worlding strategy – for example, the Vasant Kunj shopping mall complex discussed in the introduction. Thus, strict enforcement of the Master Plan or development codes, which had been avoided for almost 50 years since the first Master Plan was implemented in 1962, would lead not just to a "slum-free" city, but also a business-, mall-, and industry-free city. Recognizing this dilemma, the Municipal Corporation submitted in the High Court that the problem of unauthorized constructions and slums is "mammoth in nature – and cannot be controlled by simply dealing under the existing laws or under the provisions of [Delhi's] master plan" (Biswas 2006).[15] That is, it called upon the judiciary to exceed existing law – that is, to exercise the rule of exception (Schmitt 2006) – in carrying forward what had become the agreed-upon *telos* of Delhi's development: a world-class future.

The courts did so by abandoning the previous bureaucratic and statutory requirement that land-owning agencies create calculative, map- and survey-based simplifications of slum space. Through the 1990s, government surveys were conducted to summarize slums according to the duration of the slum population's occupation of the land in question, residents' eligibility for resettlement, the land-use category of the occupied land, and the density and size of the population settled thereupon. Only then would summary statistical tables and maps that simplified messy ground realities into com-pact "planes of reality" (Rose 1991: 676) be relayed up the bureaucratic chain so that state decision-makers and judges could assess their legality. But, as shown above, assembling such calculative and "scientific" simplifica-tions was slow, inefficient, and contentious. So instead of requiring these complex calculative procedures, the courts started using a surrogate indica-tor to identify illegality: the "look" or visual appearance of space. In lieu of accurately assessing (i.e., creating paper representations that correspond to) physical space, a set of visual determinants began to be used to render slums legible and locatable within the new, predominantly aesthetic "grid of

norms" (Rose 1991). How was this transition from a calculative to a more aesthetic regime for evaluating physical space carried out?

World-Class Aesthetics and the Nuisance of Slums

In the early 2000s, the courts began making widespread mention of Delhi as a "showpiece," "world-class," "heritage," and "capital" city. In a land-mark judgment from 2000, the Supreme Court stated,

> In Delhi, which is the capital of the country and which should be its showpiece, no effective initiative of any kind has been taken by the numerous governmental agencies operating there in cleaning up the city … Instead of "slum clearance" there is "slum creation" in Delhi. This in turn gives rise to domestic waste being strewn on open land in and around the slums. This can best be controlled … by preventing the growth of slums.[16]

The court thus established the presence of slums as the clearest obstacle to Delhi becoming a clean, showpiece, or world-class, city, a link made even clearer when the Delhi High Court noted that at the current pace, it would "require 1,263 years to demolish the illegal constructions carried out over the last 50 years, and convert Delhi into a world-class city."

Court documents from this period show that the growing concern for the city's world-class appearance increasingly came to be expressed through an environmental discourse of cleanliness and pollution (cf., Baviskar 2003). Popularized through the phrase and public campaign launched by the Delhi Government called "Clean Delhi, Green Delhi," this discourse tied deficiencies in environmental well-being and appearance to the presence of slums, largely through the legal category of "nuisance." For example, in 2001, the Delhi High Court stated: "Delhi being the capital city of the country, is a show window to the world of our culture, heritage, traditions and way of life. A city like Delhi must act as a catalyst for building modern India. It cannot be allowed to degenerate and decay. Defecation and urination cannot be allowed to take place in open at places which are not meant for these purposes."[17] Before 2000, nuisance-causing activities such as open defecation or unhygienic living conditions did not provide sufficient justification for demolishing a slum. Unsanitary conditions in slums and general slum-related public nuisances were legally considered the responsibility and fault of the municipal authorities through the 1980s and 1990s: slums were dirty because the state did not provide them with basic services.[18]

However, as I have argued elsewhere (see Ghertner 2008), the early 2000s introduced a new legal discourse of nuisance that reconfigured the parameters and mechanisms by which slum-related nuisances were to be remedied.

The juridical category of "nuisance" is broadly considered any "offense to the sense of sight, smell, or hearing" (Jain 2005: 97) and is as such directly linked with aesthetic norms. In Indian law, nuisances are of two types, public and private, where the former is an "unreasonable interference with a right common to the general public" and the latter is a "substantial and unreasonable interference with the use or enjoyment of land" (Jain 2005: 97). Because slums are almost entirely settled on public land, slum-related nuisances have always been addressed through public nuisance procedures. The definition of public nuisance, according to statute and precedent, had until this time included only particular *objects possessed* or *actions performed* by individuals or groups that interfered with a public right. Aesthetically displeasing, annoying, or dangerous actions or objects could only be addressed by improving municipal services or fining individuals for their violation.[19]

The inability of the DDA and Municipal Corporation to improve, clean up, or remove slums, as well as the court's failure to efficiently provide order to the city by removing slums through existing statutes, led to two gradual shifts in how public nuisance was interpreted in the early 2000s. First, the courts increasingly began accepting petitions under *public* interest litigation from *private* parties (mostly RWAs, but also hotel and business owners) claiming that neighboring slums were interfering with their quality of life and security. That is, concerns of a distinctly *private* nature were granted legal standing as matters of *public* purpose or, as Anderson (1992: 15–17) noted of colonial jurisprudence in India: "Propertied groups were able in many instances to invoke public nuisance provisions against anyone threatening the value of their property," making nuisance "the coercive arm of property rights." This elevation of the concerns of propertied residents, or blurring of public and private nuisance, was based on the High Court's 2002 distinction between "those who have scant respect for law and unauthorisedly squat on public land" and "citizens who have paid for the land."[20] This ruling established land-ownership as the basis of citizenship as such, thus rendering the preservation and security of private property a public priority and setting the conditions for a broader reworking of nuisance law.

The second shift in the interpretation of public nuisance made the *appearance* of filth or unruliness in and of itself a legitimate basis for demolishing a slum. This change took place by redefining the categories of nuisance such that not only *objects* or *actions*, but also *individuals* and *groups* themselves could be declared nuisances, a shift carried out by equating slum-related nuisances with slums themselves (see Ghertner 2008) – that is, slums do not just improperly dispose of "matter" (e.g., trash, sewage), but are themselves "matter out of place" (Douglas 1966). This vastly expanded the range of procedures that could be administered to remove nuisance: no longer by stopping nuisances through imposing fines and penalties, but by displacing entire populations.

Once the interpretation of nuisance was expanded to include categories of people or entire population groups, the legal (and calculative) basis for slum demolition was simplified. Demolition orders no longer require complex mapping and survey exercises to determine the nature of land use or demand even the confirmation of land-ownership in slum cases. Today, courts ask for little more than the demonstration by a petitioner (who is usually a neighboring RWA) that the slum in question is (i) on public land (which is the definition of "slum" and has never been a sufficient condition for demolition orders in the past) and (ii) a nuisance. Evidentially, this is most commonly and effectively done by furnishing photographs that show the slum's "dirty" look and poor environmental conditions: open defecation, overcrowded living conditions, children playing in and "taking over" the street, stagnant water, municipal waste, and so on.[21] Since approximately 2002, the courts have considered such photographs sufficient evidence to confirm that the slum in question does not conform to the aesthetic and civic codes deemed "normal" in Delhi and have, in the majority of such cases, issued demolition orders. For example, in a case in South Delhi, an RWA pleaded to the High Court "for better civic amenities and for nuisance caused by open wide drain [*sic*]" without making a single mention of the neighboring slum in its petition. Only in the petition's annexures containing photos with such captions as "Jhuggi [slum] dwellers defecate in nallah [drain]" was it revealed that a slum existed beside the drain. Nonetheless, the court observed that "Photographs were filed of the area showing the filth at site and encroachments in and around the nallah" and ordered that "The area should also be cleaned and the encroachments removed."[22] Without initiating an inquiry into the settlement's size, location, history, or legal basis – not to mention the settlement's contribution to water pollution in the drain – the court ordered the slum's demolition.

Over the past 10 years, close to a million slum-dwellers have been displaced in Delhi[23], the vast majority thanks to court orders equating slum clearance with environmental and visual clean-up (Ramanathan 2006; Ghertner 2008). This new aesthetic ordering of the city, in which the legality and essential features of space can be determined entirely from a distance and without requiring accurate survey or assessment, marks a clear shift away from the previous approach to carefully surveying, monitoring, and assessing the land-use status of areas under question. In this new, more aesthetic framework, the law crafts fields of intelligibility by disseminating standardized aesthetic norms. Spaces are known to be illegal or legal, deficient or normal, based on their outer characteristics. A shopping mall, even if in violation of planning law, is legal because it looks legal. A slum, even if its residents have been formalized at their current location, is illegal because it looks like a nuisance. Here, the visuality of urban space itself is a way of knowing its essential features and natural standing within the "grid of norms"

on which government can operate. The ability to look at a building, plot of land, or population and immediately locate it within such a grid is an entirely different way of knowing and evaluating urban space than the calculative, inscriptive approach typified in much of the governmentality literature. This more aesthetic approach allows government to overcome the (political and bureaucratic) difficulty of translating messy "reality out there" (e.g., population densities, land-use designations, territorial area, settlement history, etc.) into a numeric or cartographic legibility. Thus, instead of having to inscribe the population and its complex relation with things into standardized, abstractable forms that can be aggregated, compiled, assorted, and then calculated,[24] this "aesthetic governmentality" (Ghertner 2010), or rule by aesthetics, works to ascribe an aesthetic sense of what ought to be improved and what ends achieved. Governmental legibility is achieved today, then, not by (statistically) simplifying territory into easily intelligible representations, but rather the reverse: it takes an idealized vision of the world-class city gleaned from refracted images and circulating models of other world-class cities (a little Singapore here, a little London there) and asks if existing territorial arrangements conform to this vision. But, while world-class aesthetics effectively establish norms for urban life and order, these norms are only effective (under a consent-based and not purely coercive form of rule) to the extent that they produce corresponding desires and subjectivities for directing Delhi residents to "do as they ought" (Scott 1995: 202, citing Bentham). It is to this domain of the everyday experience of world-class aesthetic discourse that I now turn.

Slum Surveys and Aesthetic Training

Due to the scale of slum demolitions today, the avenues by which slum-dwellers can remain and participate in the city are dwindling. As the government auctions off public land for private real-estate development, occupation of public land has become increasingly precarious. Thus, slum residents' primary means to retain access to land today is to earn government resettlement. This means that after a family's home is demolished, it is offered a resettlement plot – undeveloped, usually with minimal service provision and transportation options – somewhere on the outskirts of the city. While less than a third of displaced households end up receiving resettlement plots (Leena 2007), this does not prevent the government from depicting resettlement as a pathway to improvement. The Delhi Government frequently announces new housing schemes for the poor – advertised through images of serviced flats in multi-storey apartment buildings – few of which are ever implemented. In addition, a wide range of popular stories about successful slum relocation programs in the 1970s and 1980s, when land and

resources were more widely available, mythologize resettlement plots as equal in standing to private plots. Furthermore, the DDA and Municipal Corporation run slum surveys prior to removing a slum to establish resettlement eligibility, which, in addition to enumerating and registering slum households, construct a compelling image of resettlement colonies as fully serviced, permanent, and integrated residential spaces, something akin to a private plot.

While attending three of these slum survey exercises implemented by field engineers and surveyors in the DDA, I observed how the survey process trains slum residents to see the city through the lens of world-class aesthetics – to see themselves as "illegal" for being outside the "normal" visual order. Over the course of these multi-day exercises, surveyors constantly narrate – both in their formal introduction to the survey process and in informal interactions with residents – the aesthetic impropriety of the slum and reference slum deficiencies to the aesthetic norm established by nuisance law and the repertoire of media and government representations of world-class urbanism. For example, one surveyor told an angry resident, "In the whole world, no settlement that looks like this is legal," and suggested that the resident's demand to remain settled at his current location is at odds with the interests of the rest of the city. "Can't you see that nobody wants this type of slum? … You bother [*pareshan*] these people," he said with a gesture toward the neighboring middle-class colony. The slum's physical conditions thus get tied to a notion of illegality and are, in part, the deficiencies of the population that must be corrected: as another surveyor said to a group of residents, "once this place is cleared, the whole area will improve, and so will you." These deficiencies, surveyors either directly stated or indirectly intimated, include overcrowding, congestion, unhygienic living conditions, lack of property ownership, and other presumed environmental and public health risks.[25]

A clear effect of the slum survey is that it makes use of what slum-dwellers already know about the slum – that it is dirty, congested, *kachcha* (constructed in a "temporary" fashion), unserviced, on public land – to produce a vision of slum space as illegal and lacking the characteristics necessary for "normal" citizenship. Spaces that look like slums, that look dirty and overcrowded, are learned to be illegal, despite their far more complex political, residential, and legal histories. Thus, participants in the slum survey learn a way of seeing and identifying the essential traits of urban space and are, in the process, trained to conceptually link locations in the city that share these same traits. That is, "slum space" across the city, as a category, is rendered imaginable and intelligible through the survey. The slum survey thus operates as one of many[26] "technologies of perception" (Rajagopal 2001) to redistribute the aesthetico-political field of possibility – in this case, to make the division laid down by nuisance law between clean/polluting, private/

public, legal/illegal *sensible* in the sense of both (i) easily perceptible and (ii) logical, sensible, and natural (see Ranciere 2004). A key effect of the survey, then, is to recruit slum residents into the new visual regime premised on world-class aesthetics.

By offering resettlement in conjunction with disseminating this vision of slum space, the survey shows slum-dwellers that the government is attempting to improve this category of space; that individual slum-dwellers are part of a larger deficient population whose improvement is necessary for the city's improvement; and that it is in their interest to cooperate with this process so as to gain resettlement-cum-private property. That is, unlike previous uses of the survey oriented toward assessing the legality of slum residents (discussed in the second section), the survey today is used to construct the slum-dweller not just as an "illegal," but also as a subject eligible for improvement, resettlement, and thus propertied citizenship. Thus, the slum population's identity itself becomes a key target of governmental practice. While such governmental efforts at "refashioning the human subject from the inside, informing its subtlest affections and bodily responses" (Eagleton 1990: 43) are never complete, as I will now examine through a case from West Delhi, the relationship between slum-dwellers' sense of self and their urban imaginary powerfully shapes how they engage in the "art of being global" and the futures they anticipate.

Shiv Camp: Picturing Private Property

I first entered Shiv Camp shortly after the Municipal Corporation razed about a third of its huts. The demolition, however, stopped before the demolished homes could be fully cleared, because an infant was crushed under a hut as it was toppled by a bulldozer. The residents subsequently rebuilt their brick huts, but the Municipal Corporation returned four months into my research to again demolish the same homes, this time permanently.[27] I thus had an occasion to study the lead-up to and aftermath of the demolition, in addition to the two-day demolition exercise itself.

My research in Shiv Camp began by asking residents why they thought their settlement was being demolished. What seemed to me to be a straightforward line of questioning ended up producing extremely contradictory responses. On the one hand, residents expressed anger and sadness that their houses (or those of their neighbors) were being destroyed. Most of the homes were multigenerational, with the earliest residents having arrived in 1968 as government labor contractors. Dislocation therefore threatened not only their livelihood, but also their social networks, family history, and sense of belonging. On the other hand, they understood that the government and local RWAs were trying to improve the city's image by removing slums; and

that the preparations for the 2010 Commonwealth Games, when tens of thousands of foreign tourists would arrive in Delhi, required an urban facelift. Therefore, when I asked residents why the government had demolished part of their settlement, the most common responses I heard were "because slums are dirty," "because slums spread filth," or, as one man put it, "Because we are dirty and make the city look bad … Nobody wants to step out of his home and see us washing in the open or see our kids shitting."

To be sure, residents did not want to be displaced, but most understood and many even empathized with those who wanted them removed. One woman named Kishani, for example, stated: "I have lived here for 30 years. This is my home. It is wrong to remove us from here," expressing a clear opposition to slum demolition. However, when I asked her what she thought Delhi would look like in 10 years, she calmly and without sarcasm said, "Delhi will be a beautiful city, totally neat and clean. All the slums will be removed and there will only be rich people." Shiv Camp residents often expressed such a desire for Delhi to become "neat and clean," despite their knowledge that this would require removing "dirty and polluting spaces" such as slums. When I pushed residents to clarify how they could want a world-class city even if it required their displacement, I noticed that we often reached a point at which my interlocutor would, almost in exasperation, talk about slums in a different voice. If she earlier described her experience in slums in the first-person voice, as when Kishani told me, "After we built our huts, we thought the land was our own," or in second-person voice, as when she said, "When you are given a ration card, you become a permanent resident of Delhi," she would shift and start talking about slums "in general." Thus, while Kishani had earlier been describing her personal hardships in Shiv Camp, when I asked why slums are being demolished, she said, "Slums are dirty. They aren't permanent. Slum-dwellers don't live on their own land." Where is the subject located in this third-person description? From where does this omniscient, distant voice depicting "dirty slums" come?

One day, upon entering Shiv Camp, I met Shambu, who called me to his house, as he had many times before. Shambu, a 50-year-old Rajasthani man who was a construction worker until he fell ill, was one of the first residents of Shiv Camp to invite me into his home for regular conversations about his life and city. Our previous talks over *chai* and a *bidi* had followed a familiar script, which we quickly settled into again on this occasion. I asked some variation of the question, "Do you think your slum will be demolished?" And he responded, "Look, one day we're going to have to leave this place. Such slums have no place in Delhi. Our future isn't here." Shambu built his one-room, brick hut (see Figure 11.2) in Shiv Camp 25 years ago, before his children were born and married, and well before residence in a slum was considered illegal. Even though this hut nurtured his family and livelihood,

Figure 11.2 "Our future isn't here," February 2007
Source: photograph by Asher Ghertner, 2007.

he now anticipates the day when it will be razed to the ground, sending him in search of "his future."

Shambu was describing here what I had heard other residents of Shiv Camp articulate dozens of times before: the inevitability of slum demolition.[28] On this particular day though, when Shambu said "Our future isn't here," I pressed him, asking: "If your future isn't this hut, then what is it?" Sipping his *chai*, and perhaps sensing that I wanted something more concrete this time, he said, "Only God knows, but we hope it will be like this," as he turned to the back corner of his hut and pointed to a small paper poster nailed to the wall (see Figure 11.3). The poster shows a house, unlike any

Figure 11.3   "It is a proper house," February 2007
Source: photograph by Asher Ghertner, 2007.

I have seen in India, nestled in a surreal landscape. Although it looked photographic at first, it is actually a computer-generated collage, with an enhanced, orange sunset-like skyline, a cartoonish foreground of landscaped trees, flowers, and a pond, and something of a hybrid American ranch and Swiss chalet styled home depicted as the image's central object. In the backdrop to the left, a second house is shown, making it clear that the main house is just one within a larger terrain of private, plotted homes. After asking Shambu what the poster shows, he replied, "it is a beautiful place. There is no noise or filth there. It is a proper [*sahi*] house." I sought clarification on what the word "proper" meant to him, and he said it: "It is one's own [*khud ka*] house. A private [*niji*] house."

I had noticed the decorative posters in Shiv Camp homes before. How couldn't you? They adorn the walls of most huts, with some enthusiastic interior decorators hanging more than a dozen in their small, usually one-room, homes. But, the significance of the images displayed had never struck me. When Shambu indicated that his aesthetic choice to hang a poster of a house was linked to his desire for private property, I realized that these

posters might provide a useful device for talking with residents about their future, both imagined and feared.

Devotional posters depicting deities, typically amidst lush pastoral landscapes, have been long-standing decorative and functional fixtures of slum residents' huts. Christopher Pinney's (2004) study of the production and politics of Indian poster art describes the engrossing quality of such Hindu devotional pictures, through which the beholder is enlisted to partake in the scene. These images' "fecund claustrophobia," compressed depth of field, "increased stress on the surface," and frontal religious figures produce a relationship between viewer and viewed in which "The viewer is immediately hailed by his [the god's] gaze" and "commanded to reciprocate" (96). As ritual objects, popular devotional posters have a *darshan*[29] function, permitting mutual recognition and affection between divine and devotee. The gods in these images, then, are not placed within a surrounding landscape (foreground and background). Instead, that landscape and everything shown in the image is aligned to the god. Beyond their functional utility, Pinney argues that this aesthetic renders the images' central religious figures as the source of the religio-national landscape, constructing India as the divine territory of the gods.[30] The lush, pastoral aesthetic found in these posters, he goes on to suggest, lead viewers during the nationalist movement to imagine the utopian space of the nation as springing directly from the divinity shown and experienced within the image. In Shambu's poster, the river Ganga flows from the locks of Shiv, producing the nation's territory as Hindu territory. Pinney (1995: 96–9) elsewhere suggests that non-religious Indian calendar art too is typified by a pictorial style in which the landscape emanates from the central figure, as if the presence of the object shown carries with it the power to transform or produce surrounding social and physical space.

In Shiv Camp, posters of gods remain the focal point of people's homes, especially as personal temples. But, in addition to these "photos of gods," a large number of the homes are also dressed in what are popularly called "house posters." House posters retain the rich, pastoral landscapes found in devotional posters: both are characterized by vivid colors, overly floral foregrounds, shimmering water, anachronistic and lush foliage, and radiant skylines.[31] Yet, these posters replace the central figure of a deity with a private, bungalow-style house. Are these private homes – like gods – similarly seen as productive of the surrounding landscape, exuding goodness outwardly and ordering social space?

After Shambu's description of his house poster, I made sure to ask about such posters whenever I encountered them in Shiv Camp. This always surprised people. When I asked why they hung a particular poster, they would say, "I like it," "it is pretty," or "it is nice to look at." These seemed to them to be obvious answers to a stupid question. This was not the response they gave, however, when I asked about devotional posters, or even film posters.

If I asked why they hung a poster of Shiv, for example, their reply was a description of who Shiv is, when they pray to him, and why he is important. In the case of Shambu, whose poster of Shiv we saw above, his son makes an annual pilgrimage to the mountains near Haridwar to pray to Shiv, thus the poster in his house. Similarly, when I asked about a poster of Shah Rukh Khan, India's most popular film star, I was led into a discussion of King Khan's greatest movie hits: "you haven't seen *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge*?!" When it came to house posters though, residents did not know what I was asking. House posters are thus less indexical and more context specific than these other images; interpreting them and giving them meaning is more contingent on the viewer. Viewing them does not index an already determined referent – as in the identification of an object shown in the image, but rather evokes an individual and aesthetic response – as when Shambu said, "It is nice to look at." Shiv Camp residents thus view the image as beautiful, without interpreting or disclosing the origin of its beauty. Consuming these posters, then, represents more a way of looking, or a particular perspective; the posters do not have a strong narrative or expositional function. In fact, without my prompting, residents rarely referred to the houses that visually dominate the posters.

Therefore, in order to understand what the posters meant to residents, I had to pose more specific questions, such as "What is shown in that picture?" or "Why is the house beautiful?" Only then would residents (usually reluctantly) state the basis on which they considered pictures of private homes aesthetically pleasing. One man who had purchased a vacant plot of land in an unauthorized colony, but had not yet built a house on it, said the poster represented what he hoped his home would one day become when he had enough money to begin construction. A woman stated, as she nodded toward her poster, "Rich people live in these houses. We also hope to live like that one day." Another man said, "It is our dream to someday have a private house. If we live there, all our problems will go away. You can live cleanly there." Kishani (who we met above) said, while turning between me and her poster, "All these slums, they're going away. The Delhi Government is cleaning everything.[32] It is making Delhi beautiful. If you want to stay here, you have to own such a house."

Like Shambu, most people with house posters read them as private property,[33] drawing a clear distinction between these big, private, rich houses, on the one hand, and the small huts on public land in which they live, on the other. Upon this visual distinction residents read a further moral distinction, connoting the private with the clean, legal, and worthy and the public with the dirty, illegal, and disreputable. Residents' aesthetic response to the posters, then, implicitly drew upon this moral connotation. That is, while residents did not see the need to explain the basis of the beauty of their house posters, this beauty nonetheless had a basis in an already existing
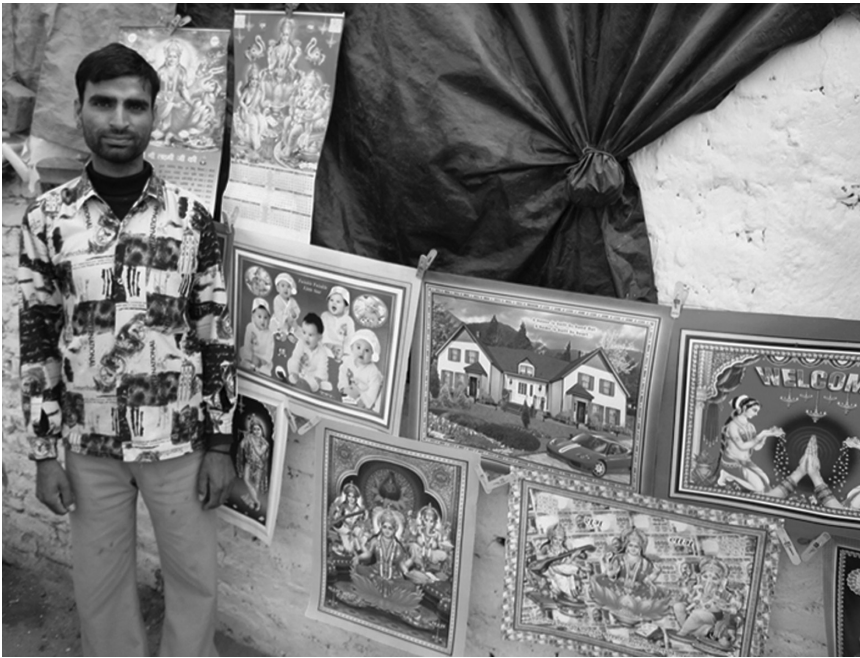
Figure 11.4 "It's like a dream for them" – house posters abut devotional imagery at a salesman's poster display in Shiv Camp before Diwali, November 2007
Source: photograph by Asher Ghertner, 2007.

system of signification, one which I argue draws from world-class aesthetics and the moralist discourse of nuisance and property-based citizenship to which it is linked.

During my inquiries into poster art, I determined that house posters are a relatively new phenomenon in Shiv Camp. Poster sellers and consumers there confirmed that five years ago, very few if any residents had such posters hanging in their homes. As a poster salesman in Shiv Camp said on the day before Diwali, the Hindu festival of light, when most poster purchasing and hanging (both religious and decorative) takes place in Hindu homes (see Figure 11.4): "Today, after photos of gods, photos of houses sell the most … When I started doing this [2001], they weren't so popular." This, of course, was the precise moment when RWAs across Delhi (including near Shiv Camp) began winning court cases against slums via nuisance law; that is, by arguing that behavior they consider distinctly "private" – for example, washing, bathing, drinking, and defecating – is unpleasant, morally degrading, and harmful when conducted in public. As one young man relayed to me, "People now like the idea of someday having a big home. It's like a dream

Figure 11.5   "We hope to live like that one day" – a freshly hung house poster in Shiv Camp on Diwali, November 2007
Source: photograph by Asher Ghertner, 2007.

for them." When I asked why this dream had only now started, he indicated that such a desire was part of a deepening consumerist aspiration: "… when people come straight from the village, they don't want such things. But with time the new generations see these things and begin to want them."

In most of these posters, the large houses appear as nothing but a façade, an exterior inside of which private life takes place (see Figure 11.5). There are no people, the windows are opaque, and the viewer is positioned from a lower viewing angle, as if on the road looking up. This is, indeed, the manner in which slum residents see most private homes in Delhi: from the outside, looking up, seeing people only enter and exit, and imagining a domestic space similar to those seen in the incredibly popular Hindi soap operas. Indeed, the subjunctive imaginary solicited by these posters – for example, the statement "we hope to live like that one day" – was sometimes linked to viewers' understanding of *koti* (bungalow) life gleaned from these

upper middle class melodramas. This was especially the case with the youth, many of whom had never been in a *koti* before, and whose easy transition from my poster questions into soap opera talk indicated the shared imaginary of which both posters and soap operas were a part. Rarely depicted from the outside and never situated within the geographic context of a specific city or neighborhood, soap operas show the interior space of private homes from which Shiv Camp residents were cut off.

In Delhi today, few large slums remain, leaving scattered slum "clusters," as they are called by the government, tucked along railroad tracks, wedged between government-approved residential colonies, and dotted across the now rapidly expanding periphery. Shiv Camp is one such colony, surrounded on three sides by imposing, three-four storey middle class *koti*s, each with small gardens, boundary walls, and driveways on their street side. Over the course of my fieldwork, two neighboring *koti*s underwent external sty-listic work (the addition of fake columns, decorative arches, or vaulted windows – part of a new middle-class trend in exterior façade and home redesign) and one was rebuilt from the ground up. In contrast, Shiv Camp looks much like it did 10 years ago, contributing to the sense among resi-dents that they are anachronistic: remnants of the past, clinging to their place, outsiders in a city that has been home for decades. This experience of stasis in a sea of change, of a proleptic anticipation of a future "slum-free" city, is enhanced by the absence of the hundred or so homes that were razed in 2007 during my fieldwork, as well as the demolition of two nearby slums in 2006. Further, there are three archetypical world-class monuments – the Delhi Metro, a five-star hotel, and a twelve-storey shopping mall – each recently built or under construction within a half kilometer of Shiv Camp. The sheen of these structures' excessive mirrored glass and polished steel testifies to their material modern-ness, making the brick, tin, and tarp of Shiv Camp huts incongruous blotches on the landscape. The look of the area's world-class buildings, as well as that of the corporate-branded consumer-subjects who occupy them, evinces a deeper economic rift that marks capitalized from under-capitalized spaces: private versus public land, "planned" houses versus slums, "big people" versus "little people," binary terms that Shiv Camp residents increasingly use to describe their city today.

In contrast to the private houses shown in posters, much of slum life is lived outside, in the open, and on display. In consuming these posters and in ascribing private homes iconic status as "beautiful," residents were negatively defining their current living conditions against private property. That is, the (bourgeois) aesthetic conveyed by house posters appealed to slum-dwellers, who, in hanging the posters on their walls, appropriated the implicit concept contained in them – that is, private property – and inserted themselves into a social imaginary founded on it. The consumption of house

posters in Shiv Camp, then, is part of an aspirational strategy of projecting oneself as a potential world-class citizen. Residents' reference to the "slum" in the third-person voice and use of middle-class aesthetic discourse to characterize "dirty slums," as discussed above, is part of a similar effort to show that they can occupy the middle-class slot, to suggest that they are "improvable," or to confirm their belief in *vikas* (development). In other words, as the world-class aesthetic becomes increasingly hegemonic, slum residents register the sharp binary it produces between public nuisance and private citizen; the decision to hang a house poster thus represents an effort to reinscribe or reimagine the self on the positive side of this binary – to prepare oneself for the future city.

Conclusion

This chapter shows how Delhi's contemporary "worlding" experiment is carried out at least in part by enlisting slum residents into the image of the world-class city, by making "sensible" a world-class aesthetic, and by advancing a myth of private property and the "good life" associated with it. And, if as Barthes says, myth is "an untiring solicitation," an "insidious and inflexible demand that all men [*sic*] recognize themselves in its image" (1972: 155), then house posters in Shiv Camp show that residents have indeed begun to recognize and place themselves in the image of a world-class city. That is, slum residents seem motivated to no longer be slum residents: to end slum life – a contradictory moment in which "displacement collides with the dream of a better life" (Baviskar 2003: 97).

Is this the "cultural reproduction" of bourgeois visual ideology, the working poor's adoption of an aesthetic unconscious that reproduces the conditions of their own domination (Willis 1981)? The sudden appearance of perhaps the most powerful and enduring (post)colonial symbol of private property – the bungalow – in the homes of those being criminalized for their lack of property ownership would seem to suggest such a reading. As Anthony King writes (1984: 160), "[A]s a symbol of private property the detached and territorially separate bungalow – the irreducible minimum of a house within its own grounds – was patently second to none." House posters and the narratives of self and city that Shiv Camp residents conveyed through them often did convey faith that acquiring a private home, even if through violent displacement, would bring with it the attributes of world-class citizenship: a sense of belonging and a visible place within the ongoing production of the urban.

Yet, residents also used house posters to enter a more speculative register, expressing desires enunciated on the terms of world-class aesthetic discourse, but in ways that sometimes exceeded its imaginative limits. As one man told

me, pointing to his house poster: "This is what government has promised us. This is what we should get. Maybe not this much [referring to the grand bungalow in his poster], but we need proper homes." On first glance, his statement can be read as an effect of governmental efforts to cultivate a popular desire for resettlement, to democratize aspiration through the promise of a plot and state sanction – a promise that everyone can become world-class. Yet, inherent in this man's expressed desire for resettlement was also a *demand* for inclusion and self-improvement. While his interests only become intelligible through the discourse of resettlement, they simultaneously push that discourse to new ends. As neighboring slums are demolished without compensation, as resettlement colonies are moved further and further out of the city, and as the promise of property comes at the expense of a (sense of) place in the city, slum residents see that Delhi's current worlding strategies – premised as they are on speculative land development and mass displacement – offer them few benefits. It is in this light that Shiv Camp residents' display of house posters is also a subaltern aesthetic practice: an effort to appropriate the promise of bourgeois civility on their own terms: to pursue not wasteland on the outskirts of the city, but bungalows and farmhouses, just like those desired by the elite. As both adoption and appropriation, then, residents' display of house posters is part of an effort to latch onto and redirect world-class aesthetics so as to fashion the slum itself as a "milieu of experimentations for making a new kind of future" (Aihwa Ong, Introduction, this volume) – that is, to "world from below," to convert a prolonged moment of danger into a moment of opportunity, to step inside the discourse of world-class city making, but to seize its categories and turn them in another direction.

The world-class city is a utopian image, part of the "irreducibly utopian" practice of government (Dean 1999: 33) that presupposes a better society and improved future. And, if the world-class city-building project depends on this utopian vision, this wish-image, then it is equally prone to slum residents' reimaginings of the urban and reinterpretation of this vision. As residents increasingly tune their aspirational strategies to the image of the world-class city, so too do they accept (feign?) the promise that such a city will provide them with a world-class lifestyle – be it quality education for their children, secure employment, or, as we saw in Shiv Camp, private property. As this expectation of improvement deepens, it can crystallize into new demands and points of politics, threatening to turn the promise of the world-class city into a political demand for world-class citizenship. How long can the vision of the world-class city, premised on the democratization of aspiration, endure without a democratization of rights, a democratization of space? Is Delhi's worlding strategy headed for a collective refusal, a blockade (see Ananya Roy, Chapter 10, this volume), or will new urban visions emerge in response to slum-dwellers' efforts to "world from below"?

Notes

1 The DLF Emporio, as of June 2010, is the most expensive mall in India (see *Economic Times* 2007).

2 See *The Hindu* (2006). For a description of the relationship between the Delhi Master Plan, the DDA, and planning law, see Verma (2002).

3 See T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad vs. Union of India and Ors. ((2006)10 SCC 490), paragraph 8.

4 Jagdish & Ors. vs. DDA, CWP 5007/2002 (Delhi High Court).

5 In this way, both the mall and slum can be seen as zones of legal exception, territories regulated outside statutory law that break from precedent to "create new economic possibilities, spaces, and techniques for governing the population" (Ong 2007: 7).

6 Verma (2002) shows how the number of slum households in Delhi almost exactly equals the quantity of low-income housing units the DDA was required to build according to the Master Plan, but which it failed to complete. She therefore calls Delhi's slum population "Master Plan implementation backlog," meaning that slum residents have an unfulfilled legal entitlement to housing.

7 Pitampura Sudhar Samiti vs. Government of India, CWP 4215/1995, order dated May 26, 1997.

8 Okhla Factory Owners' Association vs. GNCTD (108 (2002) DLT 517), paragraph 22.

9 Affidavit filed by Mr. Satish Kumar, Under Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development & Poverty Alleviation (Delhi High Court), CWP 2253/2001.

10 Resident Welfare Association vs. DDA and Ors. (Delhi High Court), CWP 6324/2003, order dated August 29, 2007.

11 Hem Raj vs. Commissioner of Police (Delhi High Court) CWP 3419/1999, order dated March 1, 2006.

12 This difference is no doubt a reflection of the two cities' different administrative structures and planning histories. As India's capital, all land in Delhi is managed by the DDA, which is part of the central government and thus has no direct ties to city-level electoral politics. This leads to a wider disconnect between official plans and their implementation than that in other Indian cities, making the regulation of what Roy (2004) calls "territorialized flexibility" largely beyond the reach of planners in Delhi.

13 See Municipal Corporation of Delhi affidavit filed in 2006 in Kalyan Sansthan vs. GNCTD (Delhi High Court), CWP 4582/2003.

14 Interview with Mr. Manjit Singh, May 11, 2006. See also Verma (2002).

15 In fact, the Municipal Corporation confronted this dilemma after the Supreme Court had ordered it to close and seal all commercial establishments operating in residential zones of the city in late 2005. This led to the sealing of thousands of businesses, with tens of thousands more threatened, citywide protests by traders leading to the death of three young men, the demolition or partial demolition of hundreds of private residences not conforming to building codes as well as a shopping mall under construction in South Delhi, and a political nightmare for the ruling Congress Party. In 2006, the Lower House (Lok Sabha) of the Indian Parliament

passed a legislative act postponing all demolitions and sealing drives in Delhi for one year. While this act also included slums, the courts did not acknowledge their protected status and continued with slum clearance apace. The DDA finally modified the Master Plan *ex post facto* to regularize Delhi's commercial land-use violations in 2007 (DDA 2007).

16 Almrita Patel vs. Union of India (2000 SCC (2): 679).

17 CWP 6553/2000 (Delhi High Court), order dated February 16, 2001.

18 See, for example, Ratlam Municipal Council vs. Vardichan (AIR 1980 SC 1622) and Dr. K.C. Malhotra vs. State of M.P. (M.P. High Court), CA 1019/1992.

19 See The Indian Code of Criminal Procedure (1973), Section 133, the primary statute dealing with public nuisance and a key component of environmental law.

20 Okhla Factory Owner's Association vs. GNCTD, (108(2002) DLT 517). The judgment goes on to say that the former occupy areas of land adjacent to the latter, making the latter "inconvenienced": "An unhygienic condition is created causing pollution and ecological problems. It has resulted in almost collapse of Municipal services."

21 Because I was only able to obtain low-resolution photocopies of the photographs submitted in court, their quality is too poor to reproduce here.

22 CWP 1869/2003 (Delhi High Court), order dated November 14, 2003.

23 Combined demolitions (notoriously under-)reported by the DDA and Slum and JJ Wing of the Municipal Corporation from 1997 to 2007 lead to the conservative estimate of 710,000 displaced residents. *The City Development Plan of Delhi*, prepared by private consultants, on the other hand, estimates that 1.8 million residents were displaced in 1997–2001 alone. Conservative estimates suggest at least a tripling in the pre-2000 demolition pace.

24 For a discussion of the linked processes of "abstraction" and "assortment" necessary to arrange grids of intelligibility for effective governmental intervention, see Hannah (2000). My argument here is that aesthetic norms can achieve these two steps just as easily as those cartographic and statistical techniques discussed by Hannah as well as many scholars of urban government (e.g., Joyce 2003; Legg 2006; Chatterjee 2008).

25 For further details on the implementation and reception of these surveys, see Ghertner (2010), where I describe the conditions that led them to take on the more governmental function I discuss here (rather than the more strictly juridical function of assessing land uses and recording legal standing that they had in the past).

26 Other examples include media representations, television programs, government advertisements and statements, and corporate branding strategies (see Dupont 2006). While much attention has been paid to how "the intensified circulation of images of global cities through cinema, television, and the internet" (Chatterjee 2004: 143) has contributed to the collective reimagining of the Indian city, my attention here is to specific micro-technologies through which new urban visions circulate and are received.

27 This section is based on field research conducted in West Delhi for twelve months in 2007–8. At the time of writing, the remaining two-thirds of Shiv Camp remain intact, although a court case filed against it by a neighboring RWA is pending.

28 For example, in a fifty-one person, in-depth survey I conducted during fieldwork in 2007, forty respondents agreed with the statement "In ten years Delhi will have no slums."

29 *Darhshan* means "sight" in Hindi and Sanskrit, but in religious usage more accurately connotes divine sight or the emanation of divinity from religious figures (people, shrines, images). Its verb form is to "take" or "receive" *darshan. Darshan* is always reciprocated; it is a mutual exchange of sight that draws the devotee into the divine presence of the *darshan* giver. See also Eck (1998).

30 This reading of "India" is not the product of the image alone, but also of the mode of the image's consumption. The mass production and consumption of these images created an inter-ocular field of shared tropes and visual cues. The ubiquitous appearance of the same images gave viewers everywhere a sense that they were collectively imagining the same landscape (Pinney 2004, 98).

31 Poster design and publishing in India has been dominated by a handful of publishers whose origins lie in devotional imagery (see Pinney 2004; Jain 2007). The fact that house posters (most of which are produced by these same publishers) draw from the aesthetic milieu of devotional posters is, therefore, not surprising, although an influx of low-cost posters imported from China has begun to expand their aesthetic repertoire.

32 The verb she used was *saf karna* (to clean), which can also mean "to clear." Cleaning and clearing everything had the same implications to Kishani: removing slums.

33 Shiv Camp residents regularly expressed a desire for private property in conversation. House posters were but one, more aesthetic (and less frequent), expression of this desire. In an open question in my survey, for example, twenty-eight of forty-nine respondents said their greatest dream was "a private house," two said "government resettlement," seven said "a permanent home," and four said a middle-class lifestyle. The number of responses related to "home" (thirty-seven) shows the predominance of tenure and land concerns in residents' lives. Other responses had to do with employment, their children's education/marriage, or other domains of life. "Private house" indicated responses where the respondent made explicit mention of land title, private property, or the ability to buy and sell the plot. "Permanent house" indicated a desire for tenure security without explicit preference for ownership. Ten of the fifty-one respondents stated that they owned property elsewhere in Delhi: seven in unauthorized (i.e., "non-planned") colonies, and three in resettlement colonies. All three "owners" of resettlement plots made their purchases (which are not recognized by the state) in 2007 after the demolition in Shiv Camp.

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