Planning the Millennium City: The Politics of Place-making in Gurgaon, India

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Abstract

Since India's economic liberalization in the 1990s, real estate speculation and rising costs in urban centers have pushed growth centrifugally to the peripheries of mega-cities. The territory on which these new towns emerge is not a tabula rasa, but often bears a long history of village life and land tenure, even as the political-economy of real estate begins to assert alternative identities on such places. This paper explores the politics of place-making, using the case of Gurgaon, one of Delhi's burgeoning satellites. With its first mayoral election in 2011, Gurgaon's growth has taken place largely in a vacuum of municipal city planning. Its boosters have drawn on popular imaginaries of both the West and East Asia, branding it the "millennium city."

Rather than the outcome of a state-sponsored mega-project, Gurgaon appears to be the sum of hundreds of private land deals, with a pixelated built environment of affluent gated enclaves, villages, and pockets of underdevelopment. Many former farmers have become landlords, enriched and active in the speculation game (government actors have labeled them "colonists"), while others have been less fortunate, yet little scholarship has focused on the interactions between residents of different communities, and the process of social and cultural capital formation that under girds place-making or multi-scalar attempts to resolve planning issues. What possibilities exist in the post-liberalization Indian city for residents to forge a coherent sense of place or plan within the piecemeal?

This chapter begins with an historical overview of the region, and the political context that allowed for Gurgaon's transformation. Although economic liberalization is used as a heuristic for thinking about the emergence of new urban geographies in India, interpretive analysis of key terms and planning concepts link Gurgaon with colonial and post-colonial planning. In particular, I draw on Hull's (2011) example of post partition Delhi, where US inspired master-plans were designed, though ultimately failed, to foster community solidarity via proximity within housing colonies. Only an hour's drive from Delhi, Gurgaon epitomizes the state's stepping away from the nationalist mega-projects of the 20th century, and illustrates a new faith in the market to supply the actors who might execute them. Drawing on interviews with residents, urban villagers, domestic staff, planners and developers, I argue the politics of place-making in Gurgaon constitutes a form of planning in its own right, as actors at various levels of agency and relative influence, attempt to solidify claims associated with residency and take up many of the responsibilities of formal planning institutions. Their activities go beyond standard definitions of "participatory planning"and begin to offer opportunities for remaking some of the conceptual tools and vocabularies we use to explain the nature of community and place-making in and around new towns and mega-projects on already inhabited landscapes.

Introduction

The following paper presents the historical and conceptual background for ongoing qualitative research on the politics of place-making in Gurgaon, India, the "Millennium city". Roughly, 30 km from the center of Delhi in the National Capital Region (NCR), Gurgaon was, and remains, one of the largest single real estate "mega-projects" in India. In the 1970s, the Delhi Land and Finance Corporation (DLF) assembled nearly 3,500 acres of former farmland, while the company's chief executives battled with state governments to change the land ceiling laws that initially prevented large scale real estate development. Since then, other corporations, including New York based IREO and Unitech, as well as a cottage industry of builders (labeled "colonists" by government actors) have followed suit, joining the real estate speculation game.

While Gurgaon is a media favorite, headlining with stories such as "Gurgaon: How not to Build a City" (Forbes India 2012), its exponential growth illustrates its desirability despite the bad press. Rising land costs in Delhi have pushed urbanization centrifugally to the periphery, where Gurgaon offers not only real estate, but employment opportunities. Many executives and young professionals have grudgingly moved for work, and found reasons to stay. Not a mere bedroom community, Gurgaon has become a destination in its own right. In the absence of a strong government planning presence, Gurgaon has ballooned to a city of nearly 2 million in a few short decades. Meanwhile, the city's Municipal Corporation (MC) was established as recently as 2008 and held its first elections in 2011. Now one of the wealthiest suburbs in India, Gurgaon brings roughly 45% of the state of Haryana's property related revenue, yet most of the city's functioning amenities are privately operated through developers, leaving huge gaps in service and infrastructure provision.

This research explores what becomes of diverse resident groups as they navigate conflicting narratives of failure and hope, of the old and new Gurgaon, in order to establish a sense of place within the piecemeal of a privatized, post-liberalization, Indian city. The first section lays out some working concepts, exploring why the notions of "place-making" and "place-based community" need to be revisited in thinking about what planning is or could mean in the context of of rapid urbanization on already inhabited, formerly rural, landscapes. The relationship between community and place, particularly in new urban space in India, is not a straightforward one, and requires some unpacking. I lay out some of past challenges of tacking these terms onto planning interventions for Indian cities,

notably Hull's example of post-partition Delhi's interim master-plans. The second section provides a brief history of planning around mega-projects, as a state-sponsored enterprises, and traces planning's crises and re-imaginings in the global North as well as in India. The third section delves into Gurgaon's history and links to these overarching narratives. Post 1990s liberalization becomes a heuristic for thinking about a new wave of city and place-making for urban India, where private actors attempt their own form of mega-project planning. The final section begins to address early findings on the politics and evidence of place-making among local groups in Gurgaon.

Initial interviews reveal a complex micro-politics of place in which residents are beginning to take on many of the advocacy and communicative tasks of that contemporary planning theory champions. While some would argue the increased role of the private sector constitutes a lack of faith in the public realm to execute large-scale urban projects, it remains to be seen whether a private model can produce enduring and functioning urban places. The case of Gurgaon offers an opportunity to interrogate what the practice of planning could mean if it is to remain relevant to urban India in the 21st century.

Concepts

Planning and Place-Making

For the purposes of this paper, *planning* refers to procedural practices or a set of technologies and the institutions that implement them, such as government agencies, private firms, NGOs, civil society groups, and citizen planners. *Place-making* enters planning as a process or set of processes, such as design intervention or community development work and activism, that range from deliberate programs and activities to the seemingly organic ways in which individuals and groups form coherent narratives and attachments to space, transforming it, through imagination, common assets, and sentiment into *places* of meaning and value.

Place-Based Community

The idea of *place-based* community, in planning theory, implies that the physical location of one's domicile, and its social context, generate connections and social attachments within a neighborhood unit or geographically defined area (Manzo & Perkins 2006). Acts of place-making

inscribe it with social and cultural meaning (Pellow & Lawrence-Zuniga 2008). Space within and surrounding geographically located communities is not an inert container, but is shaped by co-generative social and labor practices over time (Goswami 2004). Scholars argue that space and place can be treated as distinct and abstract objects. However, for the purposes of this research, place refers to empirical or physical space of the city. It is through this kind of space that we inevitably converge with "...the fullness and emotional richness of the synaesthetic relations of these places with our bodies which encounter them"(Tilley 2006).

The use of c*ommunity,* as a planning term, always ambiguous and open to interpretation, is consistently problematic in India, where it has myriad religious and caste group or sub-caste (jati) associations. Granted, community has much broader connotations than the relationships that exist between neighbors. We can easily speak of community without place, such as linguistic and national groups that are linked in the abstract or over vast and disparate geographical areas (Anderson 1992).

In planning practice, place and community are often lumped together, or assumed to coincide; circumscribed and enumerated by the state (the census) rather than by residents themselves. The limitations of data collection often reinforce these units (the household, the census tract or common interest development) as proxies for community or neighborhood, where exact boundaries cannot otherwise be drawn. In other words, it is easier to group a collection of households living in proximity to one another under one civic unit than untangle whether and what sort of communal bonds exist. This is not to argue that individuals do not feel a connectedness to place even without close ties to neighbors or civil groups. Studies conducted in the US have found that the financial responsibilities of home-ownership can shape attitudes about one's neighborhood in positive ways (Fischel 2009). Further, Holston (2007), speaking of Brazil, highlights the ways in which it is through propertied citizenship and the domicile that one achieves a right to the city via membership within neighborhood groups and homeowner's associations.

From the early 20th century in India, cultural belonging has played a role even within ostensibly secular community associations. Membership within property based organizations, such as a Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs), housing societies, or panchayats (village councils) can tacitly or overtly involve ethnic or religious networks and affiliations, for example, the early South Indian housing societies in Mumbai's suburbs (Rao 2014). Therefore, the distinction Hull (2011) makes

between "communities of place" and "communities of kind," is useful in qualifying what we mean by the term, particularly in dealing with urban India.

Hull (2011) uses post-partition Delhi as an example of a misapplication of place-based community as a normative tool for planning in India. The Ford Foundation, advised by urban ecologists from the Chicago school, worked with the Indian planners in Delhi's interim planning agency, eventually the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), on the city's first master-plan of 1962. Physical plans for new colonies to house an exploding population, due to the influx of Hindu and Sikh refugees post-partition, were designed with the intention of fostering democratic citizenship at the urban/neighborhood level. At this critical moment, Delhi took on the double task of accommodating its burgeoning population while setting a civic agenda as the seat of a new nation. The push to build housing was paired with a pedagogical mission to foster a democratic ethos among a population that was also newly urbanized.

Hull uses the phrase "communities of place, not kind" to highlight the dilemma produced by adherence to the the Chicago school's neighborhood unit idea. American planner Clarence Perry, who coined the phrase, thought of the neighborhood as a place of affinity groups, yet the plans for Delhi's colonies were initially rejected by their intended beneficiaries for pushing solidarity and neighborliness through the forced integration of culturally heterogeneous caste and religious communities. This aspect of the plans was then revised to suit the demand for a certain kind of self-segregation or desired insularity. This episode is one of many in which planning ideas, developed in the US and Western Europe, have been misapplied through a distorted reasoning of how local context would adapt or could be deliberately shaped by the built environment in India or the global South more broadly.

The next section begins to describe the internal roots of planning as a discipline and social science seemingly in crisis since its conception. Many have argued planning theory generated in the global North is inadequate to deal with the challenges of cities in the global South (Yiftachel 1998, Watson 2009). However, planning as an institution and professional practice in India has evolved contemporaneously with the US and Europe. While many of the demographic challenges of US sub-urbanization shaped the discourse and trajectory of cities and urban policy locally, a different institutional environment and the unique circumstances of India's independence have also shaped the

practice in India. In the post WWII period, dozens of new nations came into existence, in some ways spurring the US's climb to the top of the world economy and its own middle class boom (Beauregard 1996). Shortly after partition, India began dismantling some aspects of colonial planning apparatuses and retaining others, though planning (as a discipline) was already entrenched and codified in the minds of its British trained Indian planners. Since the late 1980s, changing political ideologies have impacted policy and approaches to the state as an agent of planning in both the global North and South.

Since India's independence in the middle of 20th century, the notion of planning, as a state-sponsored enterprise of large public works, mega-projects and interventions, has experienced a series of setbacks that altered the profession in important ways (Fainstein 1996). Early planning theory drew on 19th century social science (Comte, Saint-Simone) in response to the problems of rapid industrialization, poverty, crime, and disease in European cities (Hall 1982). In the aftermath of WWII, the US middle class's exodus to the suburbs, combined with the loss of tax revenue in urban areas, led to blight and the perceived deterioration of central cities (Frug 1999). By the 1960s and 1970s, large-scale urban renewal projects did little to ameliorate, and often exacerbated, the socioeconomic ills of urban minority populations and the poor (Clavel 1986). The failures of US-based planning opened up the discipline to other ways of conceiving the role of a "planner": someone who could facilitate community development and social learning, or mediate public disputes (Friedmann 1987, Marris 1987). Alongside the communicative turn in planning, the financial crises of the 1970s and 1980s forced entries for a neoliberal agenda, visible in state-initiated processes of devolution, privatization, corporatization, in the US and abroad.

Close to debt default in the late 1980s, India, like many developing countries, adopted liberalization policies as part of an IMF led restructuring program, loosening tariffs and duties on exports and the flow of foreign capital. This allowed for foreign direct investment and the boom of a real estate market, which came on the tails of a century of tremendous instability and change. India went from being a semi-unified colony to an independent nation, whose early policies and projects as a democratic state were highly insular, import-substitution focused and state-based. The impacts of liberalization, in contrast, generated the conditions for a wave of land market deregulation and private-sector led urbanization.

Planning in India

India's colonial legacy and the traumas of partition complicate the ways in which planning institutions were formed and operate, including how certain forms of cultural identity and community were codified by the state. For example, the British census identified caste groups and helped reinforce and legitimate them under colonial law (Cohn 1987), a system that the new nation state retained and tried to ameliorate to some extent via affirmative action and quota systems.

Throughout the late 19th and early 20th century, under the British, planning interventions transformed the built fabric cities to demonstrate state power, foster civic pride, or mold urban citizenship, for example, in the building of Lutyen's New Delhi. However, the latter was more of an aspiration or even nostalgic statement than a reflection of Britain's bright future with empire. Contrary to narratives of colonial governmentality (Legg 2007), the outcomes of such projects were difficult to predict or control for actors around the globe, not limited to the auspices of a colonial planning authority. India, like many nations, saw its independence in the post-WWII period (1947). What followed, in the partition of India and Pakistan, was one of the most devastating transitions in its history (there are estimates that over a million died in the shift). In the post-partition period, an ideologically driven administration asserted its legitimacy as a planner for the nation, taking a semi-socialist stance. Five year plans, borrowed from the soviet model, became the new norm for the institution of planning. Under the leadership of Nehru, India embarked on many state-sponsored mega-projects, among them the steel towns of the 1950s (Roy 2007). However, as Hull (2011) suggests, planning, as an implement of state intervention for the public good, could only reproduce the strategies of colonial bureaucracy or look to outside influences for solutions. During the emergency period in the 1970s, attempts at population control through slum clearance and relocation and family planning schemes (sterilization) displaced large populations in Delhi in an effort to clean up the city (Tarlo 2003). A confused, parental dynamic evolved between the state, as planner, and its subjects, the objects of planning.

Scholarship on human settlements in India through the latter portion of the 20th century tends to take a developmentalist perspective. India's continued struggles with severe poverty, the clashes of modernity, traditional cultures, and capitalism, fueled debates about the nation's founding elites and

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the need to focus on subaltern subjectivity. For decades, it appeared the state was unable to re-mediate colonialism's impact on India's poor. Chatterjee (2001) describes civil society in India as a fundamentally elite and exclusionary construct, calling for a mediating middle (though actually lower) political society. The idea of civic governmentality or "governmentality from below" opened up discourse on the possibilities for non-state actors in planning processes, such as grassroots movements around tenure rights and urban service delivery (Roy 2009, Appadurai 2001).

Within this discussion, there has been a tendency to collapse actors into camps of elite vs. non-elite. Whereas elites are often characterized as "problem-solvers," the poor and slum-dwellers are often characterized as "fixers." That latter may not speak the language of technocratic planning or know how to deploy it, but come up with solutions through trial and error (Lemanski 2012). This hierarchy, within the notion of citizen planner, may reinforce unhelpful stereotypes and attitudes toward the knowledge and capacity of different groups. On the one end, there may be a tendency to romanticize the slum-dweller's "indigenous knowledge," or on the other, assume that elite-driven interventions have the weight of science behind them, when neither portrayal may be entirely accurate, and obscure the many in-between ways of being.

In the midst of India's urban civil society, the planning profession in India has remained highly specialized and state-based. Planners tend to have backgrounds in architecture and civil engineering, and work through government institutions and urban design firms (Kudva 2008). Formal planning, i.e. the development of comprehensive or master plans, occurs largely at the state level and within cities of a certain size, governed by municipal corporations.

Programs for innovating public participation have come about more recently. Since the 1980s and 1990s, the growing literature on governance in the face of perceived weakness of state capacity in planning has carved out a niche for residential citizen planning organizations such as common interest developments (CIDs). Since the 1950s, Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) in India have become active players in local urban governance, as subscription based housing societies that take up similar responsibilities as homeowner's associations. Since 2000, Delhi's award winning *Bhagidari* scheme (bhagidari is Hindi for participation) has worked primarily with RWAs in unauthorised colonies (UCs). However, Lemanski (2012) points out that Bhagidari has become a platform for the most wealthy to bend the ear of bureaucrats. Whereas Harriss (1995) has argued that procedural democracy is the

avenue through which India's poor do have a say in public decision making, Bhagidari skirts the ballot box, providing a direct and ongoing dialogue between government and residents; a further gentrification of the state (Ghertner 2014). An idea of inclusion, desirable in one light, can easily be distorted by the political culture and power structures in which it finds itself. This similarly speaks to one of the core criticisms of the communicative turn in the global North: participatory planning frequently underestimates or misunderstands the structures of power (Fainstein 1996). What I offer in the case of Gurgaon is a kind of participatory planning that relies not on the state to extend itself or accommodate the voices of community members, but a kind of participation that comes self-directed by the residents in search of state-based planning's oversight. These groups must take on many responsibilities as watchdogs, advocates and place-makers, although it remains to be seen if this can overcome some of the pitfalls of participatory planning more broadly.

A Brief History of the Millennium City

Since the mid 80s, India has undergone macro-level reforms that have changed the ways in which power is refracted through a web of actors and institutional structures down to the local level in urban centers. Scholars have debated the precise moment of liberalization, whether it occurred during Indira Gandhi's tenure (Rodrik 2004), or more recently (early 1990s), when the Indian government adhered to IMF debt restructuring terms, loosening tariffs and duties on exports and foreign direct investment. This narrative is complicated by the accounts of actors in the private sector who are likely to insist that the process was pushed through by their own efforts. While lobbying is technically illegal in India, a different set of processes took place, as high level executives, such as the DLF's K.P. Singh, fought to have Delhi's Land Ceiling acts repealed. In his autobiography, Singh describes how he networked and built relationships with those in power, such as his close ally, Rajiv Gandhi. Through influence and decades of pressure, as well as battles with chief commissioner of Haryana Urban Development Authority (HUDA), Singh was eventually able to get the permissions needed and the backing from industrialists in the US to push through DLF's projects.

From one perspective it seems as though geopolitical forces on a macro scale placed India in the position of accepting liberalization as an inevitability. Meanwhile, the micro-politics of Gurgaon highlight a different story of place-making, one that coalesces the aspirations of a number of

individuals, including corporate executives and the farmers they convinced to sell their land and invest in DLF.

In the late 1970s, when Singh began the project, obtaining mortgages and bank loans for real estate development was nearly impossible. The DLF not only pushed for government reforms, but also provided financial services and lending to the farmers whose land they had bought in order to use the capital to finance the costs of construction. Singh claims he went door to door convincing villagers to sell their plots to the company. He also convinced them to reinvest their compensation in exchange for 12% interest. "DLF needed money for developing land and the partnership mode was the best way forward. After handing over the money for their land, I would ask them if they needed all that money. Invariably, they said that they had never seen so much cash and did not need it for their kind of lifestyle. I then asked them to invest the money in DLF and become partners who would progress together with us. There were times when we bought land, handed over the money and then got them to give it back to us as investment in DLF on the very same day!" (Singh 2011).

A Prehistory of the Millennium City

Liberalization and the mega projects of the DLF and other developers marked a new chapter in the transformation of Gurgaon from a predominantly rural to urban place. However, the territory of Gurgaon, its arid plains skirted by the Aravalli hills, have a long history of place-hood, village life and land tenure. The earliest and most touted history of the region is that of the Harappan civilization. Several thousand years BCE, the Indus and Yamuna rivers were part of a mega-river system referred to in the vedas as "Saraswati". This made the alluvial plains of Haryana the breadbasket of Northern India before major tectonic shifts in the Himalayas determined the Ganges as the new mega river. When this shift took place, the region quickly dried out and became of less interest to agriculturalists (Jain & Dandona 2012). It is not surprising that Singh was eventually able to convince many farmers to give up their ancestral lands by suggesting they might use the funds to buy more verdant farmland elsewhere in Northern India.

Gurgaon is first mentioned in the Sanskrit epic, the *Mahabharata,* from where it takes its name. The land was supposedly a gift from the eldest of the Pandavas (princes) to his martial arts teacher, hence the name "guru gaon"/"guru gram" or teacher village. During Akbar's reign (middle of

the 16th to early 17th century) Gurgaon, composed of many dozens of villages and farming communities, grew crops and raised livestock under the jurisdiction of Delhi and Agra. Sparing between chiefs and the decline of the Mughal empire put Gurgaon into British control at the beginning of the 19th century. The land was then subdivided into parganas or administrative units, and distributed to various local chiefs (ibid).

After the uprising of 1857, Gurgaon was redistricted as part of Punjab by the British, although the state of Haryana was later carved out in the 1960s, with its capital, Chandigarh, shared by Punjab. The Delhi Land and Finance Corporation (DLF) a private, Indian-owned company founded in 1946, had previously bought up and divided large tracts of Delhi's land with the permission of the British planning authority. Post-partition, former land titles were revoked by the new government, and the DLF was exiled from the city, eventually winning the first rights to develop on what would become the city of Gurgaon. While the DLF had been active in the early years of independence in Delhi, the company was mostly defunct by the time K.P. Singh took control from its founder (his father in law) in the late 1970s (Singh 2011).

 In the 1990s, due in large part to Singh's relationship with executives of GE, Gurgaon was selected for the location of the company's Genpact headquarters in India, launching the first wave of industrial development to accompany the work of the DLF's residential enterprises (Donthi 2014). Just as civic assets in Delhi bear the names of founding figures i.e. Nehru and Gandhi, many of Gurgaon's housing developments, malls, office and industrial parks are named after the metronymic DLF (Sundaram 2011).

Citizen Planning and the Micro-politics of Place-making

Having laid out a brief history of Gurgaon, it becomes clear that the city's growth was made logistically possible because of India's liberalization. However, looking to the micro-politics of place highlights a more nuanced explanation for Gurgaon's take off as the millennium city. Individual actors in positions of power enabled the DLF to develop an unprecedented assemblage of land. Furthermore, the nature of this development, as a piecemeal collection of acres, resulted in a city pixelated by gated enclaves and urban villages, as well as a patchwork of working infrastructure, serviced by disparate companies and RWAs lobbying for support from their developers and the state.

This paper begins to address whether this governance structure, a private-sector led mega project, counter-intuitively encourages certain kinds of solidarities and communal relationships. As various actors begin to set roots or maintain them, they must establish new narratives, in consonance or conflict with the existing ones, in order to make meaning of the place in which they live in spite of perceived planning failures. I argue acts of place-making along these lines might constitute a form of planning in their own right, where the activities of public planning are seen as increasingly non-existent or ineffectual, and the private sector has little accountability without the continued ownership and self-advocacy of residents.

Gurgaon's residents, living within various discrete enclaves, have a personal as well as economic stake in the quality of life in the city, and must form attachments and allegiances to the assets (home or land) beyond the prospect of one day selling them. Polanyi (1944) argued land is not like other commodities. It is not reproducible, or divisible; it cannot be consumed, and every piece of land or property is unique. The Indian government describes land as "immovable property," yet it occupies a peculiar intersection of familial and communal life. One can choose to live in a certain part of the city, and the rest may be out of one's control and yet the location of one's domicile, the scholarship suggests, is an important factor in community formation. What the developers of Gurgaon have at stake is financial, yet the political of economy of land involves an emotional, social and cultural investment in the construction of place-hood. This raises a complex but unavoidable tension between the needs of residents as social beings as well as consumers of housing, services and public goods (Logan & Molotch 1987).

In terms of a government presence, Gurgaon falls into the jurisdiction of several planning agencies. The Haryana Urban Development Authority, (HUDA) and its Town and Country Planning department work from the state level. At the city level there is the Municipal Corporation (MC). The MC, which was established as recently as 2008, had its first elections in 2011. While there have been plans in the works to transition many of the responsibilities of the DLF developers to the MC, there is no set time-frame for when this will take place. In several interviews, the question of who the public planners of Gurgaon were was raised with no general consensus on the role of these institutions in the city or where their responsibilities lay. They appear to be overlapping, which has created governance challenges for residents and the developers seeking an accountable public agency to enforce disputes.

Ultimately, the state is most visible in the petition office and the courts.

For a sizable portion of Gurgaon's estimated 2 million residents, their immediate needs are serviced by the developers responsible for their properties. The middle class and affluent residents of Gurgaon live in either gated communities, mostly of apartment complexes, or on plotted areas (individual lots) and pay dues toward RWAs or developers for maintenance costs. Gurgaon boasts some of the largest RWAs in the country, for example, the DLF city RWA claims a membership of over 8,000 residents across the five phases of DLF developments.[1] Lower income residents in urban villages and plotted areas may also belong to RWAs, but the overall structure of the organization require membership dues which are costly for low income families. They may rely on different forms of social networking, kinship and employee relationships to advance their situation or have their needs met.

Within the typical gated development, the kinds of amenities offered usually fall in the realm of public goods and services. While the state does provide basic water, power, some waste management and roads, developers fill in the gaps to ensure 24 access to water and power. The services they provide include, but are not limited to, water backup, power backup, daily trash collection, security (in the form of guards), maintenance, possibly some green space or roads internal to the gated compound, even fire departments.

In addition to gated communities, there are also "plotted areas" or individual lots, many of which lie vacant. These are developed either by private owners, who self-build or by corporations such as DLF. In these cases, the services and amenities are fewer i.e. security, power and water backup are less reliable, and roads may be rutted or not properly finished. Nonetheless, many of these roads are also gated by an RWA, and take maintenance dues both within apartments and plotted areas. It is the RWA which acts as an interlocutor between residents and the developer or local government. While the terms of the arrangement between private developers and the MC has been one of temporary cohabitation and eventual transfer, it does not appear as though the MC is ready to accept responsibility for providing what the developers have put in place.

Where the accountability for major breakdowns in infrastructure becomes most ambiguous is between individual gated enclaves and plotted residential schemes. Road connectivity and mobility are some of the most visible examples of this breakdown, where a lack of overarching planning in the traffic and roadways of the city are the source of daily strife for residents interviewed. Arterial roads

1   Interview, Secretary General DLF City RWA June 2015

that go nowhere, or can only be driven one-way at certain times of day, can easily convert a 3 km journey, as the crow flies, into a 30 minute 5 km route mired by detours, u-turns and false starts, or major flooding when monsoon hits, boosting the average tariff for auto-rickshaws (the cheapest form of of private transport) by two to three times their cost in central Delhi.

Alongside the day-to-day maintenance and place-making activities of RWAs, a large space for NGOs has emerged in Gurgaon, targeting a range of urban improvement causes. Many address the visible lower income groups and migrant laborers who have set up in urban villagers or informal settlements as renters. There is also a sphere for city improvement initiatives, such as "I am Gurgaon", "We the People", and "Gurgaon First", that work to coalesce and incense residents to be more active in place-making, primarily through projects to improve and use public space.

The founders and volunteers within these organizations, as in the more affluent RWAs, represent a kind of community of well-educated, high earning, not necessarily elite, but solidly middle to upper middle class residents, often with international experience. These individuals constitute a highly networked group of citizen planners who tend not to wait for an invitation to participate, but launch their own social enterprises, network with the like-minded, and actively seek solutions to the problems and challenges they face. They are not timid about having their voices heard in the media, and are able to access a range of communicative tools to self-advocate or petition the government, working both with, but also beyond, the developers.

Middle class organization to improve the conditions of property and public space have also been critiqued as a kind of "bourgeois environmentalism" (Baviskar 2003). While many of Gurgaon's above-mentioned NGOs are ostensibly environmental organizations, bourgeois environmentalism distills class conflict over urban space under the guise of city beautification. Baviskar uses the example of Delhi, where a conscious push to bar certain kinds of livelihoods, such as cycle rickshaws or cattle from public roads, underscored a territorial battle between modern and traditional ways of life, between groups of different income, class, and caste backgrounds. This particular battle is not central to this paper, however, one of the larger aims of this research is to understand the heterogeneity of citizen planners or residents across range of socioeconomic and class backgrounds. It is also problematic to cast middle class residents as one group. By characterizing the politics of place-making through a binary opposition, between top and bottom, one can easily overshadow the nuances of

India's emerging middle classes, which Lemanski (2012) has argued upset tidy binaries between the rich and the poor, elite and non-elite, and raise questions about where participatory planning, in practice, occurs within a political culture.

Gurgaon's original villages (several dozen or so) have been largely subsumed into the urban fabric. Decoupled from agricultural activities, the internal built cores have become denser with the vertical extension of buildings, sub-divided into one room apartments. Many of the landlords, former agriculturalists, have used the proceeds from the sale of land to buy farmland in Rajasthan or reinvest in DLF (Donthi 2014). The opacity of the land market has perpetuated fears among farmers and villagers that the state will rezone their land, and sparked preemptive sales to private developers. In turn, the land grab and abuse of power cases brought to the state by villagers were the first wave of petitions, followed by the the growing litigation from established housing colonies among the middle classes (ibid).

Villages have become the sites of the lower-end rental market, hosting migrant workers from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal. Many renters in urban villagers are part of the domestic work force, earning wages as drivers, cooks, servants, and day laborers within Gurgaon's malls, office parks and gated communities. Lower down still are seasonal laborers in the construction industry. Auto-constructed shack settlements are also visible around construction sites and along roads under construction, as well as pavement dwellers under flyovers. Migrants clusters within the urban village among common linguistic groups suggest that proximity for some social networks seems to provide the necessary infrastructure for new groups to establish themselves in urban space (Simone 2004).

Certain kinds of affinity groups do live in proximity in Gurgaon, though they may not form strong in situ ties (on their block or with their neighbors directly). Initial surveys with over a dozen households revealed a common thread of communication technology governing behavior. Networks tended to be stronger in the cloud, through professional ties, university, family, social causes, children in a common school etc. While all interviewees had access to mobile phones, the range and sophistication of these devices, and therefore their capacity as a means of connecting, were directly related to income. Residents of lesser means, with little to no English language knowledge, appeared more reliant on face to face interaction, followed by cell phones, while more affluent residents tended to use smart phones and various social media sites to connect such as Facebook, twitter, blogging

sites, and email.

For staff and domestic works, relationships with family and employers were conducted primarily through face to face interaction or in quick phone conversations. While physically gated with visible security personnel, gated enclaves are, to a certain extent, porous to the support staff who have direct employer/employee relationships and often live with residents inside the gates. Most apartments and homes include some accommodation for servants, though the small size of high-rise apartments can make it impossible for a servant to bring their family to live, and therefore must commute to work. The relations between staff and their employers is an ever-present aspect of middle class life in India. For many households, there is a complex range of interaction, attitudes, and relationships beyond wages that extend the means and capacity of the families they employ, though there is reason to suggest growing ambivalence toward the closeness of these relationships among a younger generation of middle class Indians (Ray 2009).

Initial interviews yielded limited knowledge of Gurgaon's original or ancestral communities. A few respondents voiced concern over nouveau riche, the former farmers of Gurgaon who are perceived as unable to manage their wealth (Vasudevan 2013). One resident stated, "Gurgaon lacks a cultural umbilical cord," suggesting a vision of the city as a blank slate, with little connection to a greater history or sites of significance. For many newcomers, the history and culture of Gurgaon is either unrecognizable or inaccessible to their experience, and leaves almost no evidence in the built environment. Gated communities in particular offer counter narratives of the future or alternate pasts, drawing on a range of inspiration, from Western Europe and the US to Southeast Asia and Singapore, to a kind of pastiche of Indian modernism. Unlike the pioneers of gentrification in established or post-industrial cities, new residents of Gurgaon do not go in search of an authentic Gurgaon. They hope to build it for themselves.

Conclusion

This paper presented Gurgaon as an example of a new kind of city-making in post-liberalization India, in which the private sector performed the major responsibilities of city planning. Although the outcomes of this model have been often portrayed as planning failure, this paper argued the politics of place-making in Gurgaon constitute a kind of planning without planners.

Unprecedented in India, Gurgaon's relative youth and only recent entrance of MC level

government presents a drastically different paradigm than neighboring Delhi, where land is primarily controlled by a planning authority. In many ways Gurgaon was fueled by the relative restrictiveness of Delhi itself. Gurgaon became the stomping ground for the resuscitated DLF in the 1970s with the entrance of KP Singh. His travels and ideas about real estate and what a city ought to be helped shape the "millennium city" brand. His ground work to assemble thousands of acres of land from the region's existing agriculturalists, as well as his efforts to dismantle bureaucratic restrictions, enabled the first wave of real estate speculation. Since the early 1980s, the real estate boom in Gurgaon has taken off. While the professional practice and government institutional support are present in Gurgaon, their role is still quite limited.

As middle class residents lament the lack of adequate infrastructure and inconsistent provision of basic goods and services in their daily lives, there is a serious risk that this model of citizen planning and participation requires an unusual, unprecedented or unsustainable level of organization and energy to engage the developer as well as the state. Furthermore, one can easily misrepresent or romanticize the bonds, social capital, or the relational effects of the "neighborhood," as described in US based planning theory, in ways that are antithetical to the creation of livable or equitable cities by assuming connections exist where there are none, overlooking other sources or streams of interaction that are not static within a neighborhood.

Unlike migrant groups who are attracted to enclaves with similar regional and linguistic backgrounds, among the more affluent, proximity does not necessarily determine community or belonging in the neighborhood. Rather, it is through other forms of networking, social media, and professional connections, that the roles and responsibility of planners have been taken up by citizen groups both within particular residential areas under the auspices of RWAs, but also among NGOs with the objectives of fostering a clearer sense of place for residents of the city.

Further research will investigate the structure of spending, and the perspectives of town planners in Gurgaon more deeply to determine the overlaps and disconnects between the story told about public planning from outside the profession and among residents, and the obstacles and institutional culture of the planners themselves. If residents and developers believe they have taken on tremendous responsibilities as citizen and private planners, how does the planning profession aligned with the public sector remain relevant and continue to serve the public good?

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