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*Case Study Report*

# Marginal Urbanism

## Altering Socio-spatial divisions to contest Urban Marginality of People and Land: The Case of Delhi.

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### Abstract

*The wide disparity in living conditions as a result of acute categorisation of resources and economic ability as the only way to access decent liveability renders the 'unfortunate' as a rudimentary part of the city through systemic non-authorisation by state, market and policy. Such socio-spatial fragmentation has also led to the standardisation of practices to conserve ecological assets, that often result in falling apart of the whole system of socio-ecological interdependencies and hence affects human living conditions for the worse. This research by design envisions the city of Delhi as a collective of societally-upgraded and ecologically sensitive neighbourhoods where the human, ecological and economic prospects are brought under a mutually beneficial strategy. Deriving this upgrade, from the available local skills of the income-poor residents, the perceived role of the slum residents as mere 'city beneficiaries' changes to 'agents of city ecology upkeep', a shift from being 'rendered nobody' to the 'established primary'.*

*The demonstration site is a conglomeration of diverse social groups, city-scale economic activities, with approximately 25% of its total population living in inhuman conditions. The design augments seamless physical access as the fundamental tool to discontinue construction of socio-spatial divisions and then effectively structures infrastructure-led design solutions, starting from the necessities of housing and institutions that strengthens capacity building to neighbourhood level destinations and thoroughfares.*

### Keywords

*Slums of Delhi, Policy Framework, Livability, City Ecology*

## 1. Synthesising the case of Delhi

### 1.2. The concern and the argument

The socio-spatial morphology of Delhi is characterised with multi-faceted margins that view the income-poor residents as an unwanted accumulation and strips them of their rights as a primary contributor to the urban system of everyday functioning. In reality, slums are a symptom of systemic socio-political neglect that does not allow equitable dispersal of shelter-livelihood opportunities to the population who work with lower capitals. Such a polarised system of developmental policies impacts the social behaviour of the people living within towards those who come from outside.

Alongside, Delhi through its planning mechanisms has its ecological assets bounded, maintained by authorities giving restricted access to the city-dwellers, to protect them. It is a superficial safeguarding

measure that has made ecology management an issue of hierarchical authorities managing respective area-based divided ecological parcels, stripping away its productive potentials.

The paper argues that a mutually beneficial urban socio-ecological regeneration opportunity lies in combining developmental rehabilitation efforts for income-poor people and ecological potential in the city. It is possible to establish new inter-dependencies beyond the existing ones (See fig.), through an alternative systemic framework that allows for new socio-economic associations and identities to weave in. The new interdependencies stem from Need-Have-Lack modalities of the existing situation that integrates the ecological upliftment as a key factor in better live-work conditions which is the primary objective. The economic input is put forward by recognizing the objective potential of ecology in cities, where they change from gated ornamental aesthetics to self-sufficient productive assets.

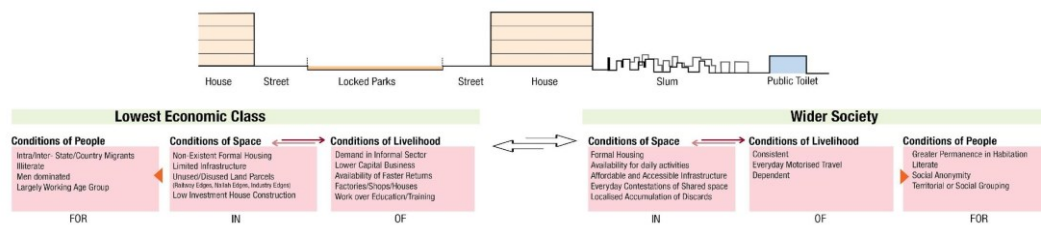


Figure 1: The disparity

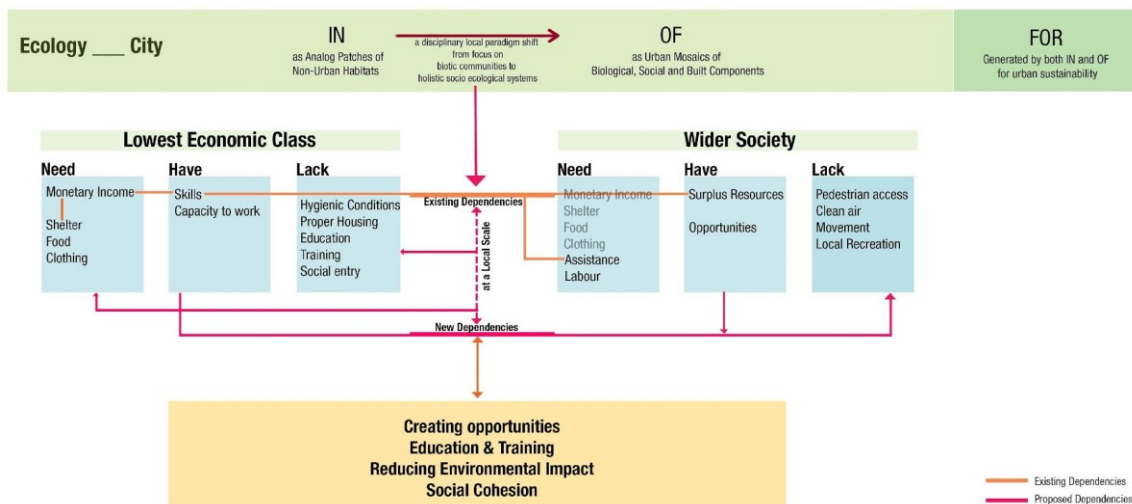


Figure 2: The new interdependencies within the existing Need-Have-Lack modalities

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1. Ecosystem Services and Sustainable Livelihood Framework

Ecosystem Services (ES) (DFID, 1999) is a framework that reinterprets the ecology as a socio-economic discourse rather than only recreational or ecological. In figure 3, a matrix weighs each of the ecosystem services against specific urban design components for depend-impact relationships in the context of Delhi. It establishes the need to orchestrate development in terms of a systems approach to ecology, such that the connection between ES source areas and end-users is minimised in distance and maximised in potential (Renner, 2018). An alternative that shifts the perception from *ecology in cities* to *ecology of cities*, such that we prepare the ground for *ecology for cities*; a minimum quantity of ecology that is necessary for a city to be considered liveable (Bueren, 2012)(ref fig 2).

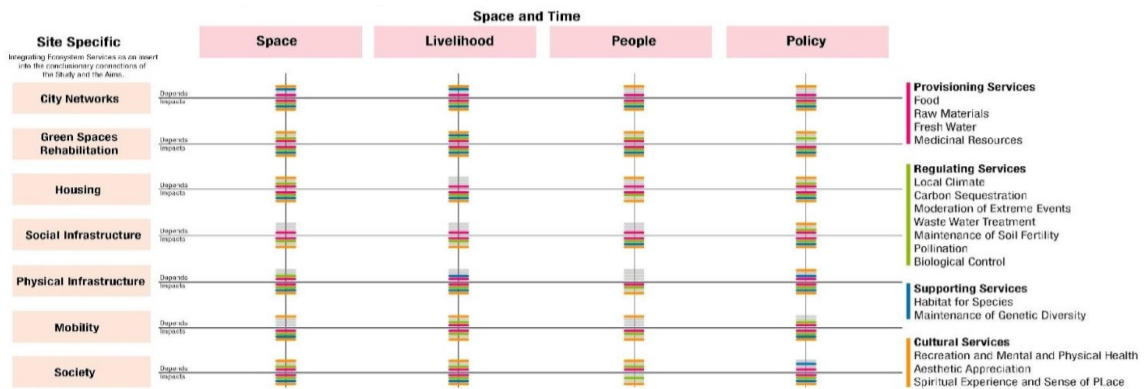


Figure 3: Relationship between ES and Urban Design. Source: Author

The Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) says that in any context, structures and processes of transformation and the vulnerability level are strongly interdependent on transformations in livelihoods and assets which impact livelihoods. These links are highly dynamic relationships that attempt to analyse a context with capitals - Natural, Human, Physical, Financial and Social. Thus, the SLF attempts to simplify the multi-dimensional reality of livelihoods by integrating four pillars of development (economic, social, institutional and environmental) to reduce poverty. Though a differentiated livelihood analysis needs time, financial and human resource and development projects tend to lack the time and effort to be holistic. However, the urban poor is crucial to enhancing ecosystem services as even a nominal increase in transformation effort results in substantial economic increase for them. Better management of and access to basic locally-produced ecosystem services can start a sustainable action from the first day and increase ecological sustenance in cities.

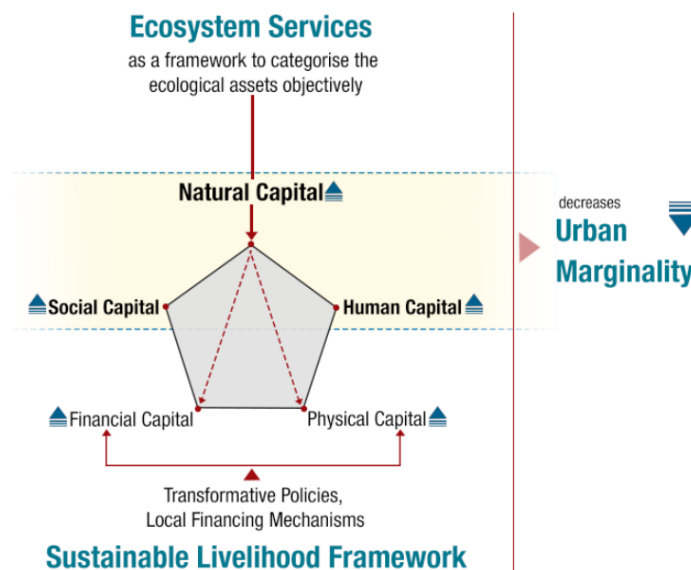


Figure 4: The proposed theoretical framework

This merger of theories involves a diverse gamut of authorities. Hence the design deals with one unit of the city at a time and then extrapolates to the city as a whole, bringing the local mechanisms and local skills into play. The two theories when put together in practice, can result in a holistic upgradation of the living quotient of the cities by allowing the unrealised potential in human capabilities and natural sustenance to make space for each other. Marginalisation might then cease to exist when people and land can grow, modify and develop as and how they allow.

## 2.2. The Developmental Policy Framework and the marginalised situation of the JJs and Ecology

The slums of Delhi, as called Jhuggi Jhonpri Clusters (JJs), can be typified by the criteria listed below:

- A functional city resource in the precinct.
- A residential neighbourhood as immediate adjacency.
- Low-Cost Self-built Houses.
- Presence of government land.

Type of Settlement	Estimated population in 2000 (in lacs)	Percentage of total population
JJ Clusters	20.72	14.8
Slum-designated areas	26.64	19.1
Unauthorised Colonies	7.40	5.3
JJ resettlement colonies	17.76	12.6
Rural Villages	7.40	5.3
Regularised-Unauthorised colonies	17.76	12.6
Urban Villages	8.88	6.4
Planned Colonies	33.08	23.7

Figure 5: The types of residential settlements in Delhi. Source: Delhi Development Authority

The presence of any two or more conditions stated above can facilitate both shelter and livelihood for the income-poor residents of the city who have either migrated or cannot afford legal housing in their city. Hence such living is a chosen socio-economic strategy based on proximity to livelihood opportunity and affordability. Such is the genesis of the only residential type that is identified as a mere 'cluster', by the Master Plan of Delhi (MPD) (See Fig.3). Such households stay in hutments with rental rates of 2500-5000 INR and locate themselves strictly within the neighbourhood's value chain networks since a daily transportation charge is not preferred.

JJs are classified as illegal but they are not illegitimate, as the planning mechanisms notifies it as a form of residential use and provides them with insufficient water, public toilets, electricity, often initiated as a pre-election luring strategy. Since 1956, when the word 'slum' was introduced into the policy documents, Delhi has tried relocation, resettlement, and in-situ rehabilitation but none of them provided decent liveable conditions to the JJ residents.

These policies by the governance structure primarily look at the physical condition of the slum as the flaw and neglect the socio-cultural diversity of living (Banerjee, 2012) that has resulted out of an economic give and take mechanism between the 'slum' and the 'better' slice of the city nearby. It reduced the people's acceptance in the city to ownership of a formal space of living (Bhan, 2009). Hence, all the practices have failed, partially or fully, as it did not put livelihood ahead of housing. The projects also violated its own master plan of not relocating the residents beyond 5 kilometres from the original location (DDA, 2019). The two methods- resettlement and in-situ rehabilitation- have, respectively, either prioritised the mega-events in the city over the lives of the poor or was programmed for top-down utopian results that not only failed to address the existing living condition and but also failed in securing a footing, across the umpteen authorities involved, to materialise itself as of yet (CPR, 2014; Bhan, 2014). In a polarised policy framework and socially out-cast situation, lives about 30 lakh people in 4, 20,000 hutments in 675 JJs (DUSIB, n.d.).

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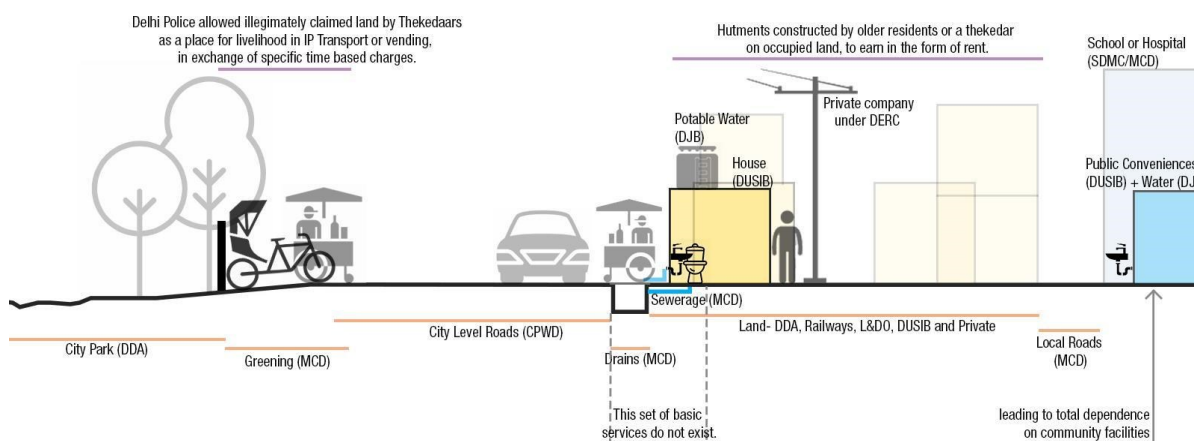


Figure 7: Ownership and Maintenance authorities for a generic cross section of the city. Source: Author

The multiplicity of agencies and authorities (See fig. 3) means not only delayed implementation but also mismanagement due to diplomatic blame-game between them. The method of top-down financing, in this multiplicity, often means trickling down of funds to meagre levels that can barely afford a quality solution. Such deceptiveness is exercised in all aspects of development in Delhi, which is why there isn't enough affordable housing or sufficient infrastructure within the core area of the city, leading to unchecked market-based housing solutions. The developmental authorities look for the easiest profitable and diplomatic way of getting around an urban issue. Rise of slums and restricted city parks are the result of the same failing developmental policies. Unproductive green and excessive paving are the facial makeovers to the worsening liveability quotient even for the plant kingdom, in the most polluted city of the world.

The area-based logic of categorising green areas into parks, district parks, city parks, no development zone etc. (YRP, 2017) has made the ecology of Delhi a recreational asset and a privileged possession. This often leads to contestation against the 'illegal dwellers' stating that the city's lands are polluted by them solely and had they not been there, the city would have been beautiful (Baviskar, 2006). Such rhetorics make evictions the easiest solution to the woes of the middle and higher income groups, even with umpteen agencies involved, something that Baviskar rightly calls 'bourgeoisie environmentalism'.

### 2.3. The Demonstration Site- Lajpat Nagar, Delhi

Being a location that is accessible by three city-level roads, two lines of the metro rail and having one of the four largest retail markets in the city, this precinct has no dearth of livelihood options. It is now an accumulation of 6 types of planned colonies who belong to different socio-economic and ethnic classes. With the Central Market as the pivot of commercial activities with a footfall of 15,000 (TNN, 2020) people every day, the commercial activities have dominated. As the neighbourhood increased in population and



economic activities, it attracted a labour population for employment opportunities, resulting in the shaping up of seven JJs, namely Madrasi Camp, Shiv Mandir Camp, Vijay Camp, Indira Camp, JJ Camp, Pratap Camp, and Adivasi Camp.

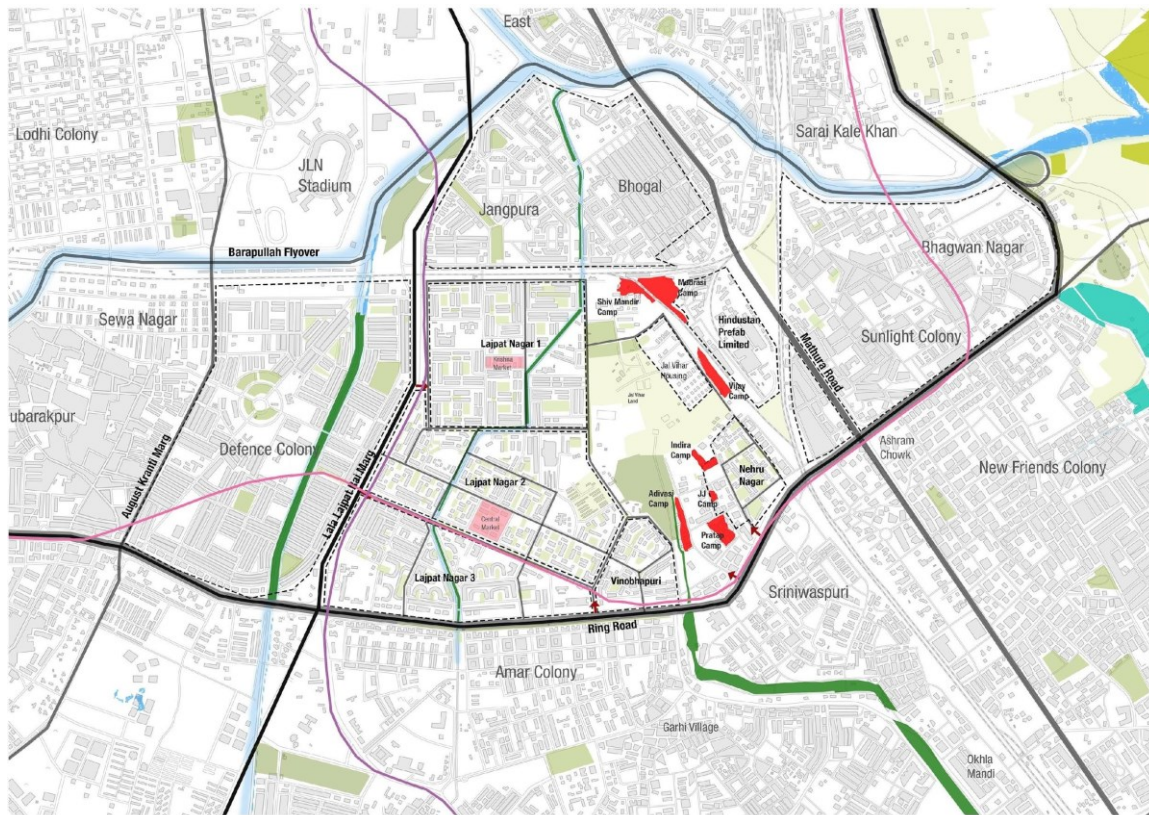


Figure 8: The site and its connectivity. Source: Author

These camps are about 50-60 years old, and are distinct from each other linguistically as each of them is an accumulation of migrants from different states of India. Being culturally different, they show significant differences in the use of spaces, festivals celebrated and even livelihoods. For example, male residents of Madrasi camp are into car cleaning/driving jobs while those of Vijay Camp are employed as mechanics or hawkers primarily, which is altogether different from Adivasi camp’s dominant puppetry profession. Pratap Camp is distinctly involved in scrap dealing for the whole of the neighbourhood leading to further deteriorated living conditions for the inhabitants. However, except Adivasi Camp, all the other camps have not been able to capitalise on the skills that they gained before migrating to Delhi and have hence shifted to available jobs within the urban livelihood diaspora.

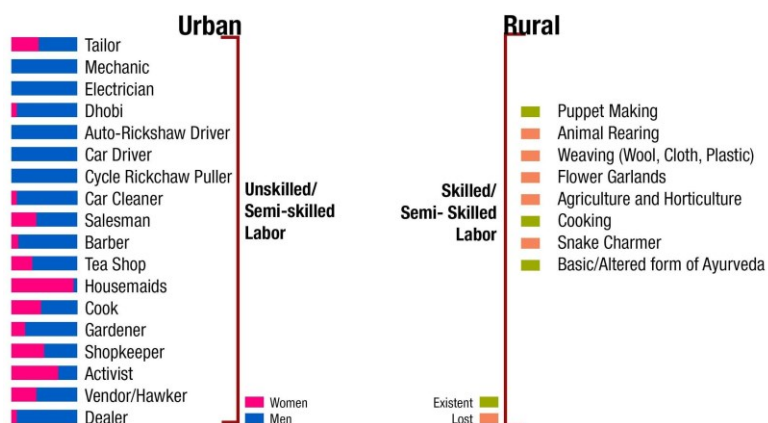


Figure 9: Shift in livelihood due to migration to Delhi

### 2.3.1 Interview Findings

Through approximately 35 semi-structured interviews, in each of the JICs, the following findings were noted:

- They travel to their place of work on foot and locate themselves across multiple opportunities in the neighbourhood’s value chain which are centred on the Central Market.
- Men start with low skill jobs (eg. car cleaning) and sometimes move on to semi-skilled jobs (eg. mechanics) but low pay and long hours prevent them from upskilling and upward mobility.
- The women work equal or more hours but opportunities are mostly limited to domestic help
- Children are sent to beg at the Central Market, missing school. A few parents aspire for better private but unaffordable schools. The better performing government schools have an NGO plugged to their daily workings.
- All the camps depend on public conveniences for daily bathing and defecation. No hutment is built with a toilet by the landlords. The renters cannot alter any part of the hutment.

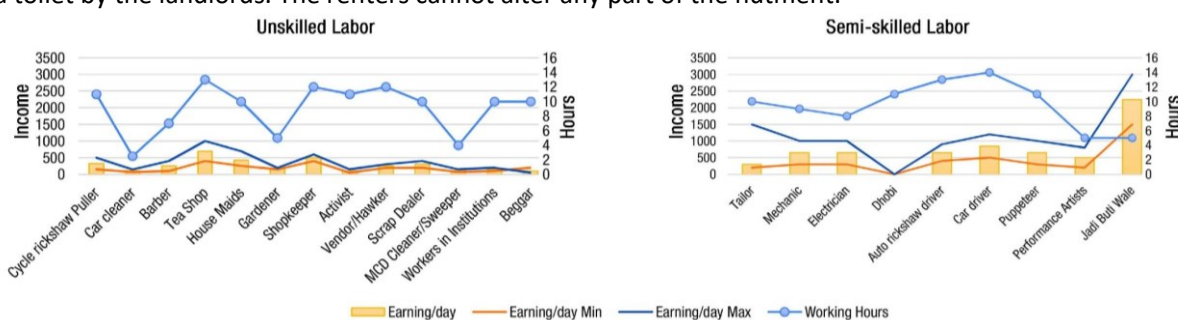


Figure 10: Working Hours-Earnings-Skill level. Source: Author

- The Central Market and adjoining streets are often riddled in traffic congestion, disruptive pedestrian movement and frequent contestation for street frontage between the permanent shop owners and vendors.
- Due to heavy commercial activity and traffic, the residents of Lajpat Nagar have formed block-wise associations to gate their complexes, manage parking and restrict activity within.
- Parks are planted with hybrid or alien species and stay locked most of the time while children do not have a playground.
- Almost all the households employ two or more slum residents on a daily basis, however, the neighbourhood has restricted the latter’s access from the slum to the houses (ref fig 9).
- Drug dealing, as the primary occupation, in Madrasi Camp, has resulted out of non-availability of low skill jobs or skill development opportunities.



Figure 11: The contrasting but issue-ridden conditions of the two socio-economic groups. Source: Author





Figure 12: The underused bounded parks of the neighbourhood. Source: Author

- Alcoholism is not uncommon among men. A government school principal noted an empirically established relationship between better employment and lesser consumption of alcohol, better savings in the family and increased school attendance by the children.
- These clusters tend to have a mostly steady overall population of working adults who return to their native places after 30-40 years often allowing someone in their familial or village network to take their place in the livelihood opportunity they leave behind. These strong bonds with their native places are an important bridge for a cycle of rural-urban migration.

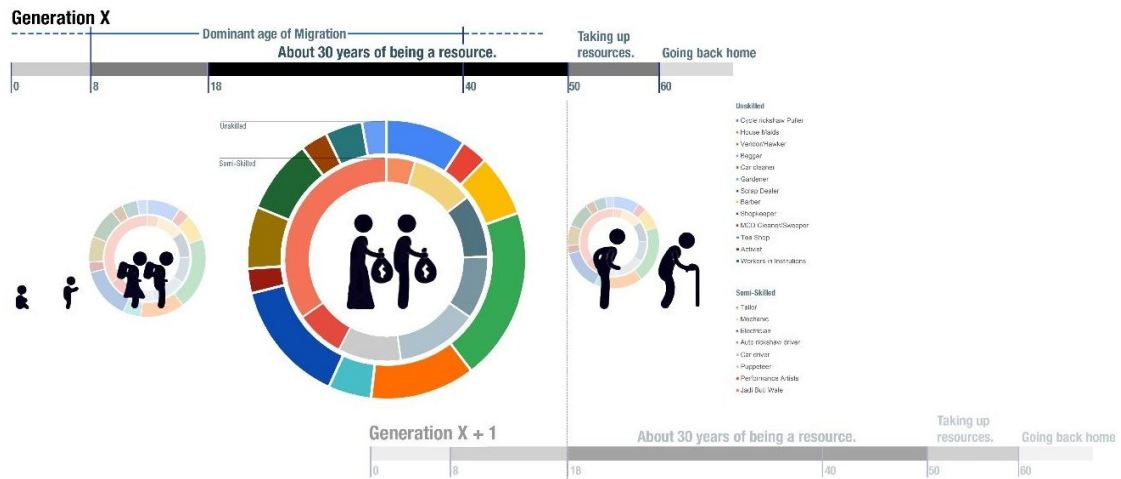


Figure 6: The generation-wise changing population

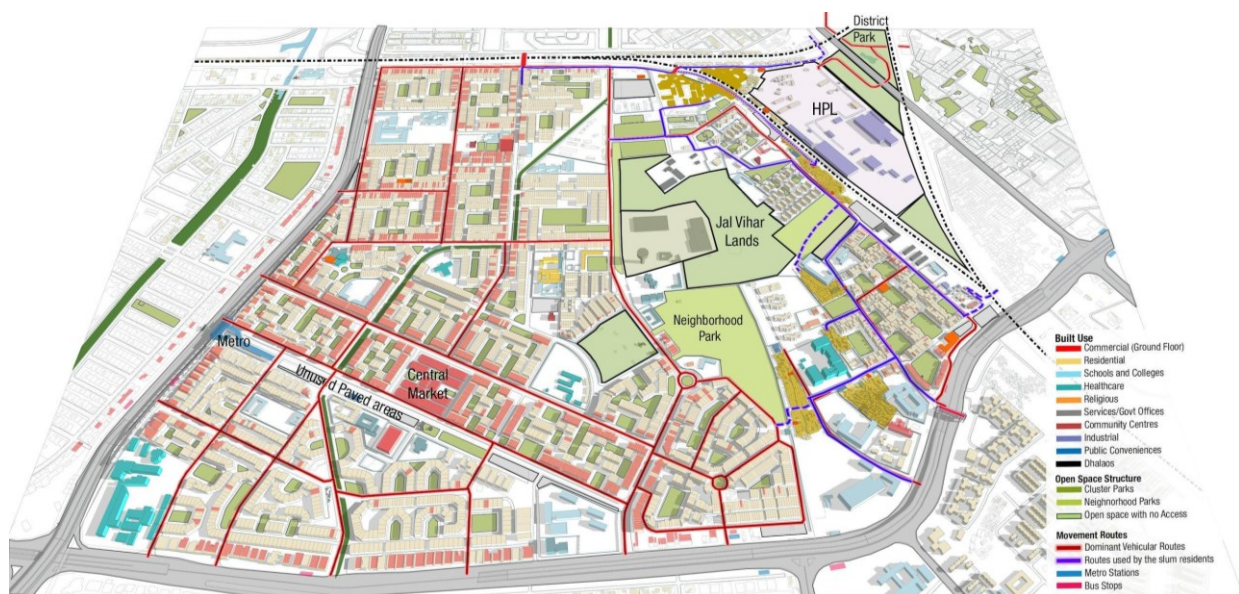


Figure 13: Mapping the issues. Source: Author



### 3. Design Envisioning

#### 3.1. The Proposed Policy Framework

In figure 14, the prioritized section (in darker colour rectangles) of finance, agent, planning, method and space are shown which analytically shows the existing framework and how slum upgradation rehabilitation is a trickle-down attempt (Dupont, 2013). The proposed vision needs a framework that counters existing top-heaviness in planning and replaces trickling-down finance with microfinance; one where the people take a stake in their immediate surroundings and become the producer and consumer. For this it becomes instrumental to bring together local residents, traders associations and NGOs as the agent to take up the program and then finance it through a locally available financing process involving the immediate political representative. Such a framework fairly reverses the course of action, as illustrated in figure 15. This then goes beyond to inform the planning guidelines for the accurate status that the city's housing and livelihood provision are in, to build the deficit housing such that the city is ready for the population increase it is likely to see. It also allows for various real estate projects to come up based on the need of the precinct; not the city.

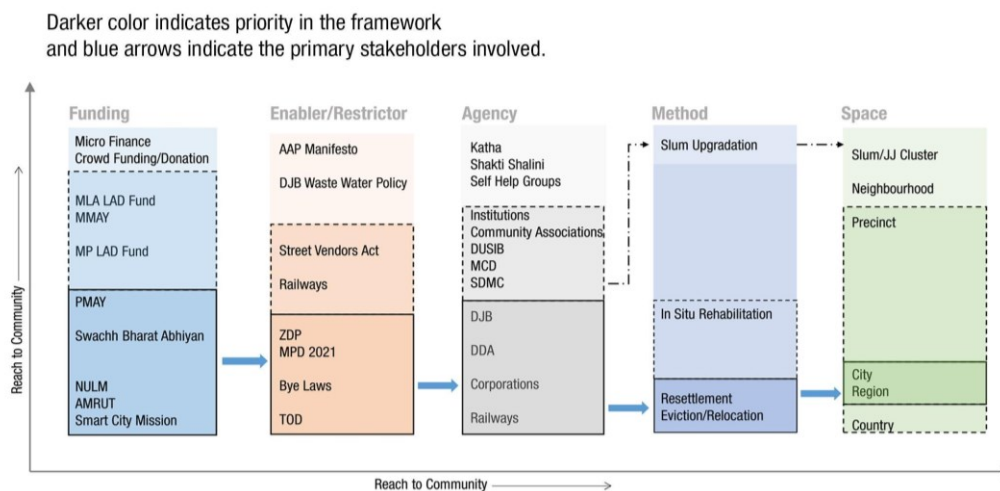


Figure 14: The Existing Development Process

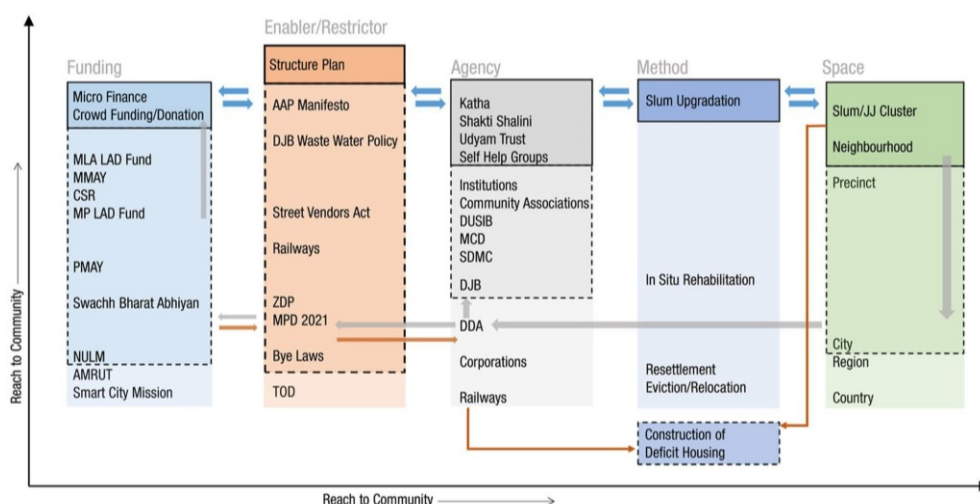


Figure 15: The Proposed Development Process

### 3.2. Design Implementation Methodology

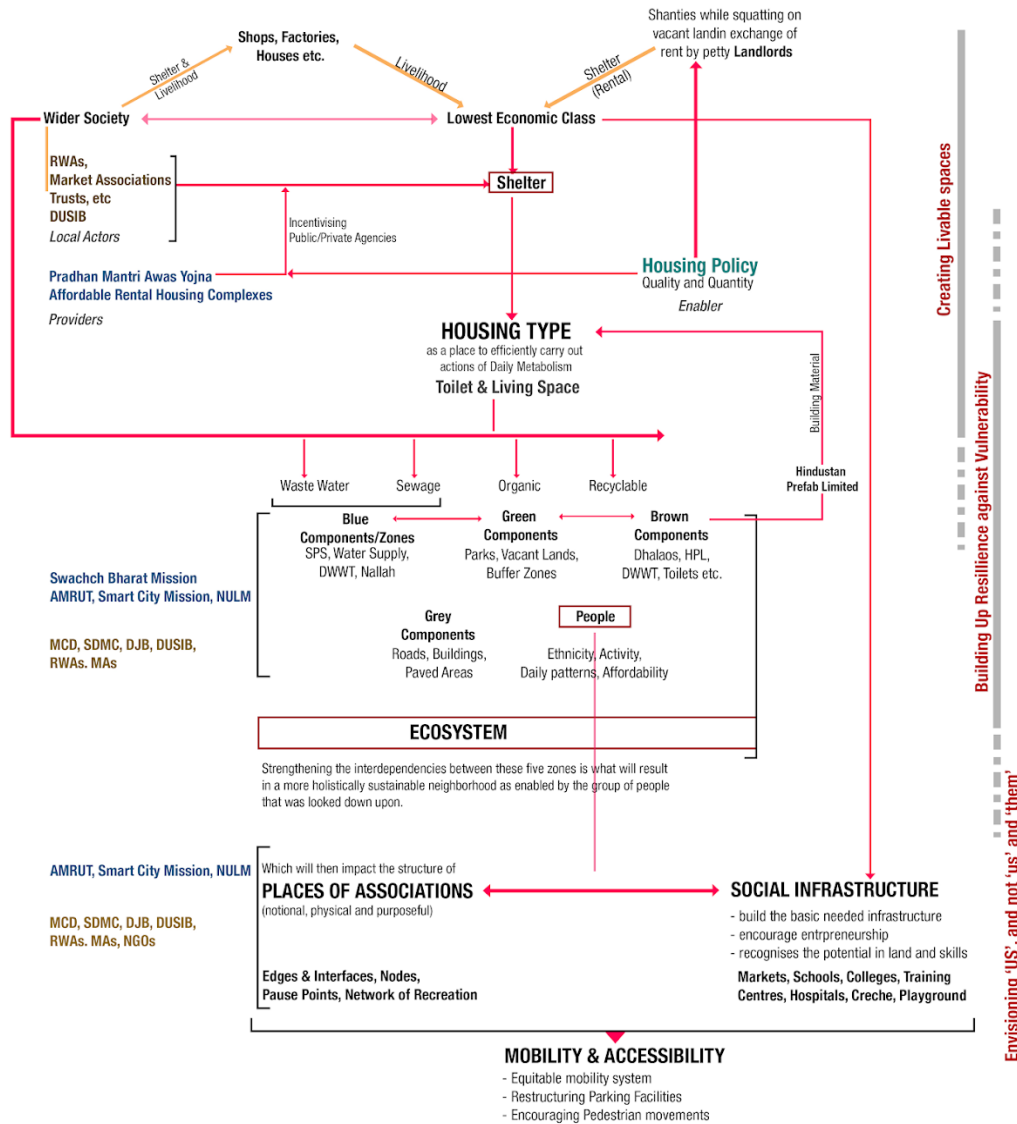


Figure 16: The Proposed Development Methodology

The framework then translates into a methodology (Fig. 14), that first puts forward a housing policy which makes any house without a toilet illegal, and not because it is constructed on unused government land. It also states that if any trader can provide a livelihood, then it must provide a house under the traders’ association, corresponding to the livelihood in exchange of rent. Any demolition must ensure another house in the same precinct before it. Thus, this enables the quantity of housing to be per the number of livelihood opportunities, by making housing as a local strategy at the hands of the employers, as financed by various housing schemes from state and nation.

Later, to increase sustainability and livelihood opportunities, all the potential resources are brought together to make an interdependent ecosystem. For example, the waste cloth from the cloth market goes to the women of madrasi camp and the puppeteer of Adivasi camp to make rugs, puppets and various articles out of it. Various wastes are collected and delivered to the Hindustan Prefab Limited that makes new building material for the affordable housing and the neighbourhood, at large, that gives immediate safer job opportunities to the drug-dealers of Madrasi Camp. The green components are recharged by converting them into forests, urban farming parks and playgrounds, which takes the slum residents as agents of upkeep such that the produce is their asset to be kept or sold. These moves bring

together the groups to acknowledge each other's existence and liberate the unused lands into newer places of associations through new induction of necessary social infrastructure. Such infrastructure encourages capacity building, education and skill development. Thus, the slum upgrade becomes a part of neighbourhood upgradation.

### 3.3. Structuring Design into the Everyday Human Scale

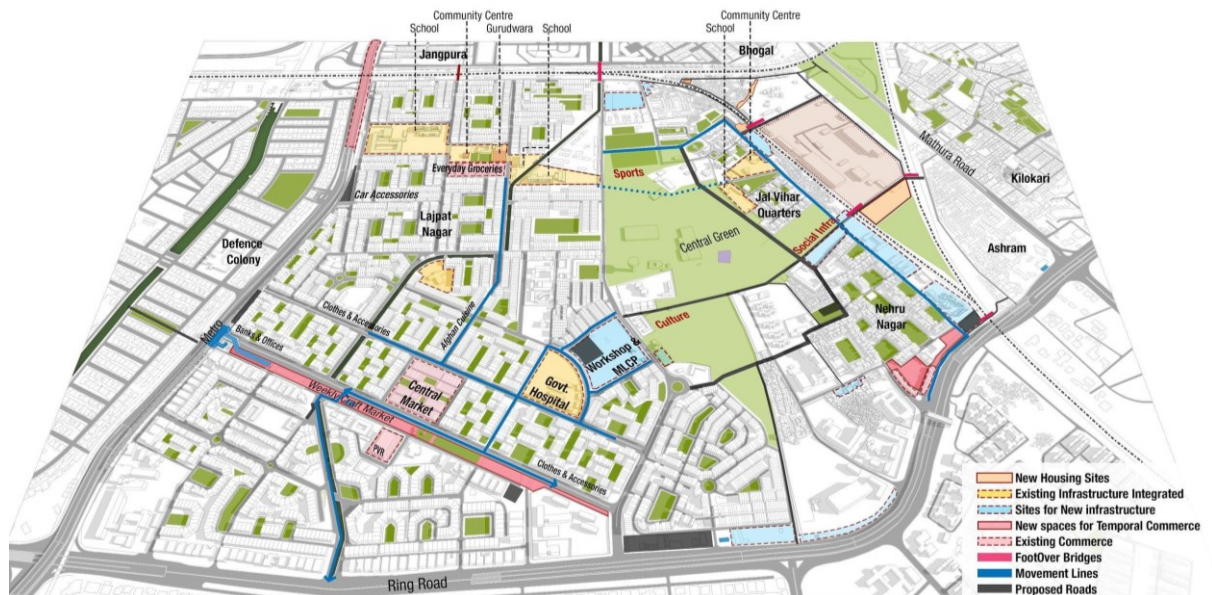


Figure 17: Structure Plan. Source: Author

The major design move, comes in the form of consolidating a central green that has public facilities, sports centre, building innovation centre, night schools, craft display galleries on the edges such that activities emanate from it and across and establishes a common space for not only the neighbourhood but also the precinct. The design also makes motorised vehicles as an externality, to be kept parked in the MLCPs at the edges of the neighbourhood such that the internal streets and paved areas are open for both residential and commercial public activities. It also connects city level destinations in the precinct through the park on top of the concrete covered drain and adjacent public institutions, types of commerce for a better pedestrian experience, creating diverse urban experiences as one moves from one anchor to another. Provision of skill centres, schools, weekly markets, recreation spaces come additive to efficient housing type and decentralised treatment system for the JJC's self-sufficiency. A possibility where the need for better shelter, open spaces and sanitation facilities are combined, along with purposeful community seams for future resilience. 'Culture' as a character to an open space aligns with the puppetry and musical instruments playing skill of the people Adivasi Camp and Pratap Camp. 'Social Infra' aligns with the highest working population of Indira Camp and Vijay Camp and finally 'Sports' to connect the schools and hence eventually the whole neighborhood for a sports infrastructure upgrade of their own (Fig 18).



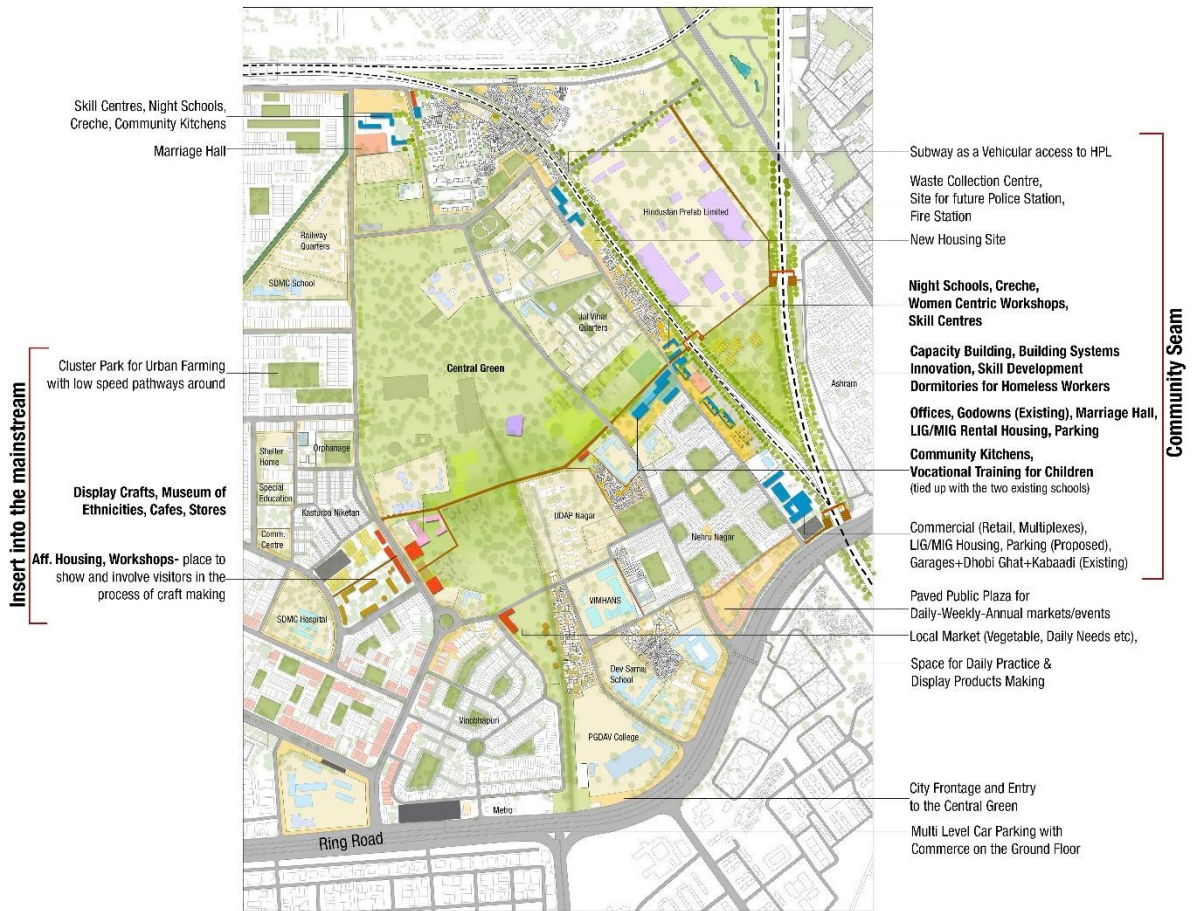


Figure 18: Micro Structure Plan



Figure 19: Aerial view of the Social Infrastructure node. Source: Author







Figure 20: Infill Development of the JICs



Figure 21: Nehru Nagar Market and Urban Farming Parks. Source: Author

#### 4. Conclusion

To make an ecologically sensitive approach fundamental to planning is a relatively newer idea, with no such already implemented work which has borne results over a longer duration of time that can be referred to as case study. However, EtheKwini Municipality, South Africa and Havana, Cuba are few cities which have initiated development programmes where long-term ecological and human socio-economic sustenance is prioritised.

Any selected location across Delhi (fig. 22) can reimagine itself where two of the most marginal resources- People and Land, can upgrade each other. Such upgrade is localised and hence, each of the local future projection and current socio-political, spatial alterations will be unique in urbanity that will add dynamism to how a locality is perceived. Each future then will have enough resistance to shocks like the COVID pandemic, where the slum residents won't lose their jobs within a day and the children will also be able to attend online classes. Delhi would then be able to project itself, as a sustainable, developed and global city.





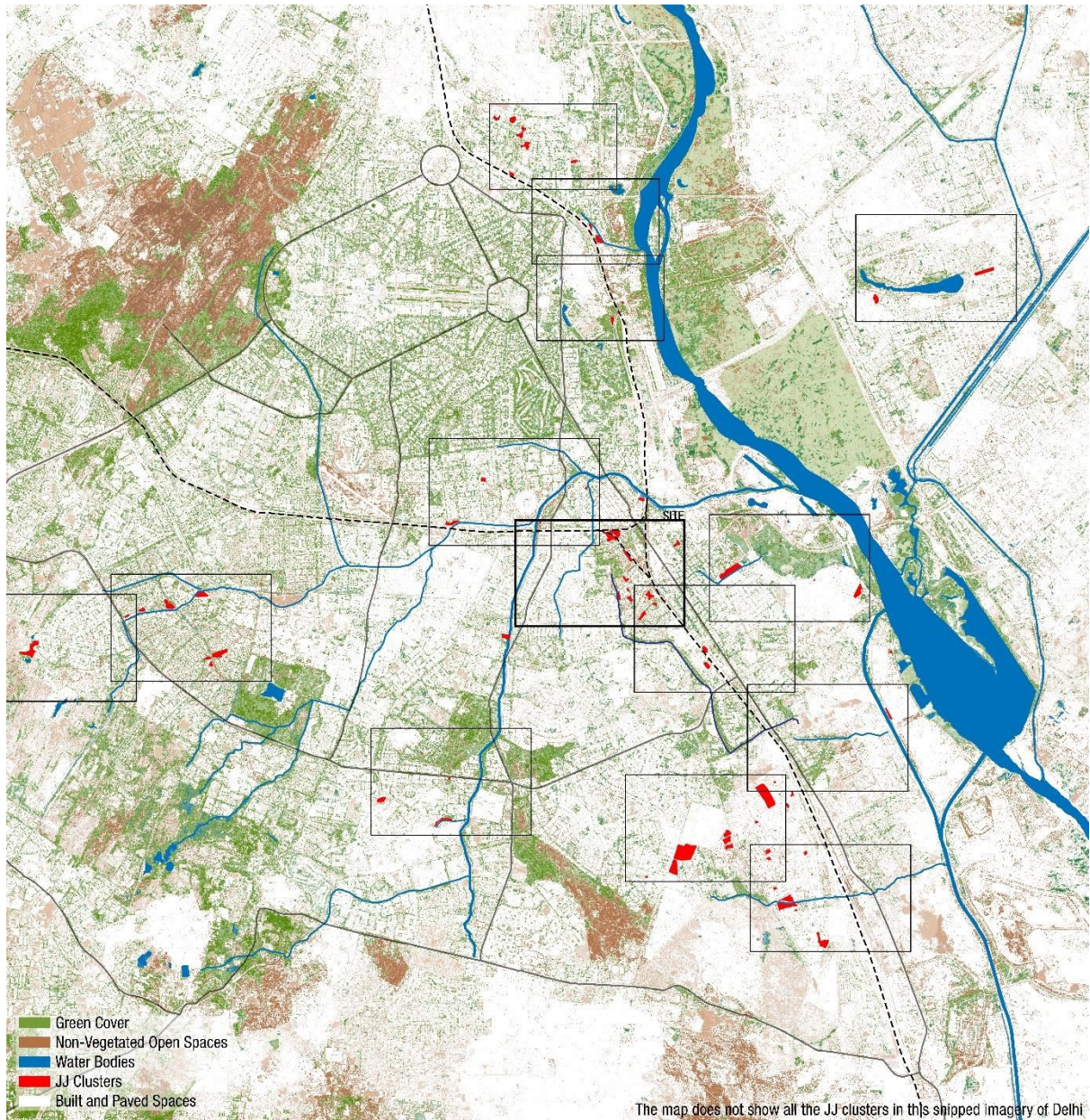


Figure 22: Delhi as a collective of potential neighborhoods. Source: Author



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