

Movement by circumstance, not by choice

Aligning tenure insecurity with urban health, Case: Delhi

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Abstract

Laws around urban spaces are constructed to favour the urban affluent and disadvantage the urban poor. The production of space by the affluent are legitimized based on codes of appearance, paving the way for authorization. The jhuggis (settlements) of the poor are seen as elements of visual clutter, making them unworthy of retention and resulting in forced evictions. The evictee population are connected with derelict ecological zones, structural temporality and association of activities resulting in environmental degradation. They end up occupying areas prone to flash floods, landfill sites, and environmental hazard zones; hence providing the authorities with sufficient reason to re-conduct eviction drives under the natural disasters bracket. Eviction and degrading urban health at a community level is hence cyclic and generational. The lack of recognition within the fold of relevant urban life stems from the condition of indirect employment. Indirect employment hinges on to a formal economic anchor for sustenance and contributes significantly to the functioning of the formal anchor.

The paper questions evictions, its reasons and solutions through the concept of spaces beyond shelter. Shelter, although is of primary concern, cannot be viewed in isolation. Resettlement colonies have been proposed as solutions but have instead resulted in the creation of more counter jhuggis and thus more evictions. The shortcomings therefore shall be addressed through a triadic system of approach that prioritizes a compensatory mechanism based on choice. Namely, compensation by shelter, livelihood and/or skill development. The concept would catalyze their role as productive urban actors instead of being classified as groups preying on urban resources.

Keywords

tenure insecurity, compensation, legitimacy, vulnerability, indirect employment

1. Introduction

1.1. Theoretical Framework

The urban poor has a name we often hear, a name that legally justifies almost all the atrocities inflicted on them, encroachers. Most abundantly found on DDA, Railway, DUSIB and Forest land etc. The urban affluent does the same, but go unnoticed or enjoy status quos and de facto orders. They reside in carefully curated mansions and farmhouses that are clever manipulations or extensions of agricultural land. The High Court of Delhi also affirmed the 'right to the city' of the urban poor, in strong contrast to judgments which presume "illegality" of urban settlements and order eviction. The Court held that: The 'Right to the City' acknowledges that those living in JJ clusters in jhuggis/slums continue to contribute to the social and economic life of a city. It is therefore not surprising that 'Right to the City' has had two-fold

impact on the urban form, or as Bhan would call it, "illegality" as the dominant mode of production". It urges us to question the spatial dichotomies of planned-unplanned, legal-illegal and formal-informal.

Illegality bifurcates the law and makes it accessible via mutations to each of the previously discussed population groups. The urban poor finds itself in the margins of neglect and the resides alongside the spoils of the city. When the areas of spatial neglect become areas of resource recognition, the evictee population is dealt with in a disposable manner. The urban affluent succumbs to a method of devious scheming and re-interpretation of the master plan to suit itself. Roy therefore describes land, "not, in fact, a "bounded" space all, but a type of. governance. She understands it as the state's ability to suspend order, to "decide what is informal and what is not, to determine which forms of informality will thrive and which will disappear ". If one did not understand the concept of evictions being subjected to a certain fragment of the society, this analysis by Roy makes it easier to grasp and shifts it to a discussion of privilege. Parallel cities having parallel laws for parallel citizens. The urban poor and affluent are governed by extremely different sets of rules.

This differential treatment of the urban poor and affluent however runs deeper than mere socio-economic status. Ghertner's argument of 'Rule by Aesthetics' demonstrates how the authoritative and supposedly legitimate instruments of state power-the law-the master plan is based on codes of appearance that express the aesthetic preferences of propertied and empowered urban citizens. This production of a formal economic sector is not privy to isolated functioning. It gives rise to seven informal sectors that support the functioning of the formal. But the evictee population is not acknowledged within the fold of recognizable urban life, making them vulnerable to the whims of eviction, be it active or passive. Their residing location is primarily towards the core city for proximity towards work economies and conveniences associated with it. Hence land economics surrounding the area becomes a major driving force towards their planned displacement. But population X returns, because the increasingly peripheral re-settlement provisions created for them do not have the ability to support their livelihood. The right to shelter is gained, at the cost of loss of livelihood. So the eviction of an illegal settlement replicates itself five times over in smaller more available parcels surrounding their livelihood economies, namely the city core. As Gita Dewan Verma mentions, "housing rights are violated not when people are evicted from squalid slums but when failure to house them in a better way force them to house themselves ".

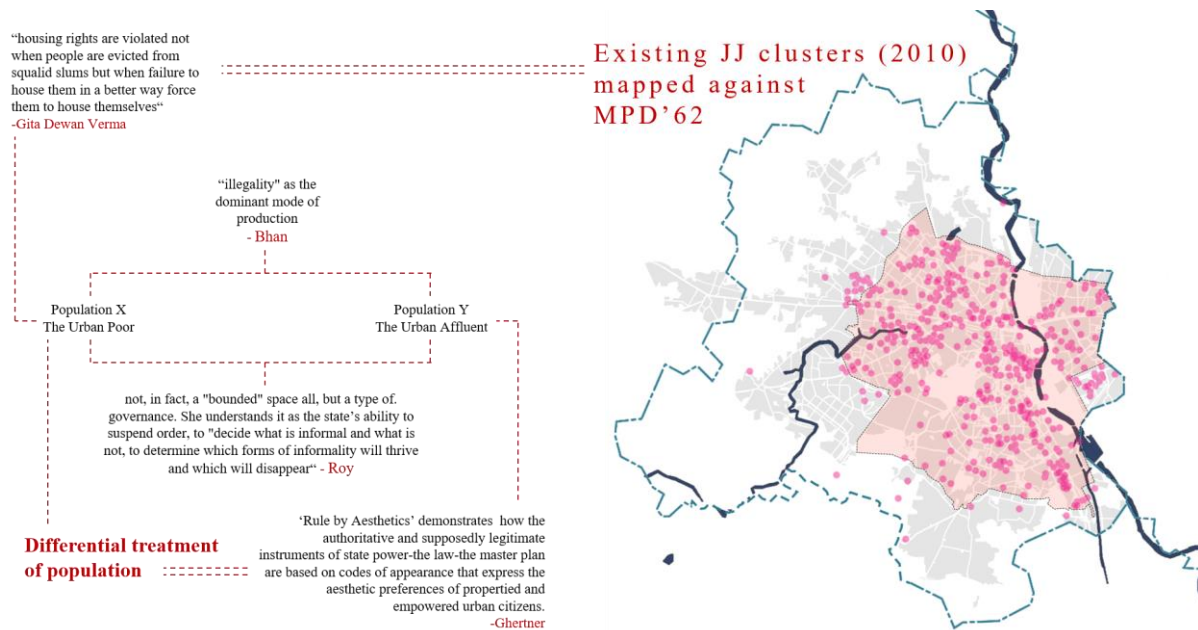


Figure 1. Existing JJ Clusters. Source: Generated by Author from data provided by Bhan (2008, 2013), Dupont (2008) under-development Eviction Database of the Housing and Land Rights Network.

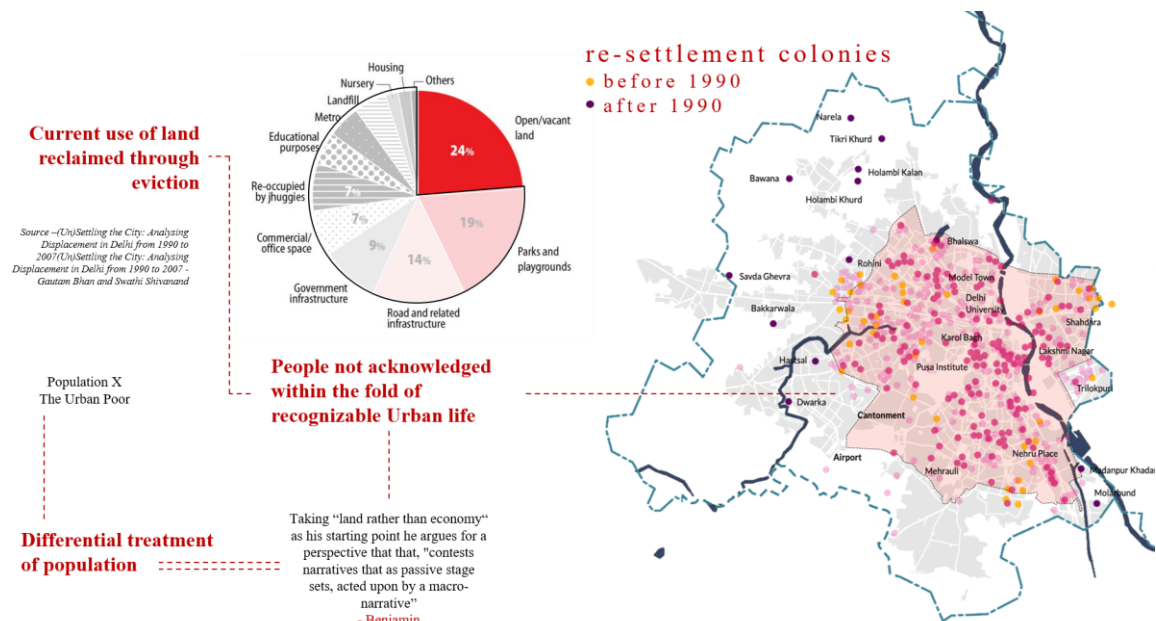


Figure 2. Resettlement Colonies. Source: Generated by Author from data provided by Bhan (2008, 2013), Dupont (2008) under-development Eviction Database of the Housing and Land Rights Network.

A discussion on land economy is imperative at this point and the argument closely resonates with Solomon Benjamin's proposal of Occupancy Urbanism. Taking "land rather than economy" as his starting point he argues for a perspective that, "contests narratives that as passive stage sets, acted upon by a macro-narrative". Now the bifurcation established at hand visualizes Land as Economic Capital and People at Social Capital. Wouldn't a reversal of functions be justifiable? The urban poor as a resource, as producers of economic capital and Land as the container supporting the functional requirements to

enhance the economy. Space is restrictive, the evictee population is not, and the kinetic nature of this incremental economy can be adaptive to the requirements of the group harnessing it. Informality is not illegality, and semi-structuralizing it might be the way towards creating more socially viable acceptance of the evictee population.

1.2. Evictions and the city

Delhi becomes the preferred choice of demonstration for a multitude of reasons. A national mapping of the eviction drives suggest how all the aforesaid reasons behind evictions; namely Slum Clearance/Beautification, Infrastructure projects, Disaster management, Environmental projects/Wildlife protection etc culminate in Delhi. While the rest of the country has very specific parameters for eviction reasons, depending on the contextual, topographic, socio-economic and political factors, Delhi succumbs to all due to its strategic location and administrative backing. It becomes the inevitable breeding ground for capitalism to foster, the preferred choice for most ambitious projects and a yearning to keep the capital image clutter free. Of course, the capital also creates for itself situations that make evictions seem like the inevitable way ahead.

The capital acts as the magnet to thousands of migrants each year. Apart from being the political and administrative capital, Delhi also functions as the migrant capital of the country (Source- Times 2019) . The increase in population influx every year has led to immense amount of pressure on the resources of the city. And while few resources can be produced and recycled to cater to the transient population, land is not one of them. The finite nature of land availability has made it a revered resource. While spatial resource availability becomes an issue of major concern, another equally neglected issue is the fact that the transient population belongs to the lowest rungs of the socio-economic ladder. And that further reduces their chances of residing within recognizable and legible urban limits.

Derelict areas are defined not only by filth and environmental degradation, but also as clusters of criminalized activities. Hence social othering becomes one of the most prominent reasons behind eviction drives. Groups of people are labelled as wrong-doers and that gives polite society enough reason to evict them for the alleged safety of the affluent residents. HLRN documents the various reasons leading to the forced evictions of pockets and social security surprisingly ranks higher than most reasons and is sometimes used as a tool to bring in developmental projects for the symbiotic networking of the city.

1.3. Characteristics of the site of inquiry

Three parcels were selected in order to understand the eviction dynamics and patterns that have been previously executed by the land-owning agencies keeping in mind the major subheads. Pul Pehladpur was an example of social fissures and encroachment that the eviction document hardly recognises and addresses. The Yamuna River bank was an example of Disaster Management since the juggis were part of the Yamuna floodplain. Hence it also formed a part of the Environmental Project and Forest/Wildlife protection subhead. The proposal of a Riverfront development however was the major reason behind the foreseeable eviction drive that seemed to go amiss in most discussions. The third site, Nehru and Jai Bharati Camp was an example of Infrastructure Projects, the most potent reason behind evictions so far. The guise of development has been used time and again to justify the movement of people without hesitation. The camp that had previously occupied the existing landscape was razed to make way for the Delhi-Meerut flyover. The residents found themselves shelter less almost overnight. Although partial rehabilitation was provided in this particular case, most of the juggi dwellers came back to re-settle due to the complete lack of economic opportunities in the rehabilitated zone.

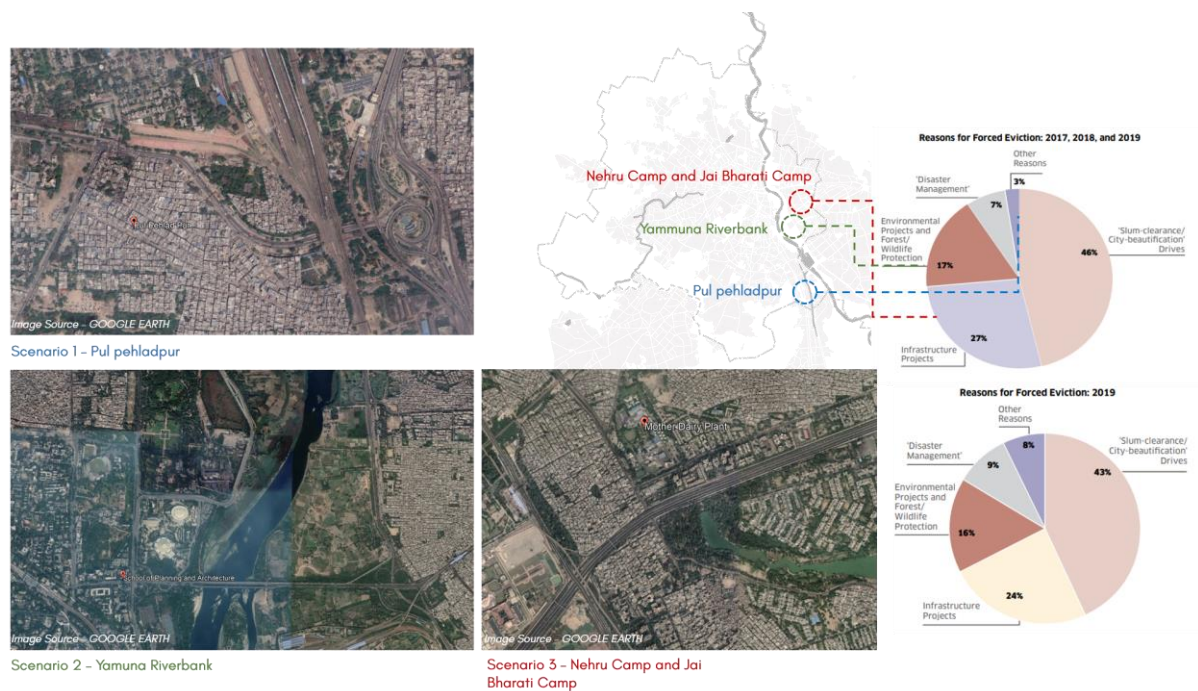


Figure 3. Existing eviction scenarios in the capital. Source: on site data collection by Author.

The reliance on local economic anchors is often diminished when a population is forced to move elsewhere. For a group of people who are dependent on informal economies and hence surrounding magnets, footfall intensity and familiarity for their livelihood, just provisioning of shelter does not come even close to replacing the live that had earlier existed for them. Establishing temples or social infrastructure as a tool to prevent eviction hence becomes a common sight in all the three scenarios. It also helps them lessen the fragmentation from the adjacent social fabric and provide room for interaction during social exchanges. The lack of social accountability however is not reduced and that is primarily because of the “culture of silence” that exists due to oppression. Since the evictee population are not visualised as contributors, they are deemed disposable, a situation that almost entirely defines the three parcels under study.

JJ clusters are preferably located at the core of the city due to dependency on economic anchors. As previously discussed, the urban poor rely on their locational setting and the conveniences associated around them for livelihood opportunities. Therefore, when they are rehabilitated to the fringe areas, as opposed to the 5km radius that the law dictates, the right to shelter is achieved but livelihood is lost. They return to their previously occupied region and house themselves on whatever land is available. The response to an evicted juggi is therefore seven counter juggis that would get displaced in the coming years.

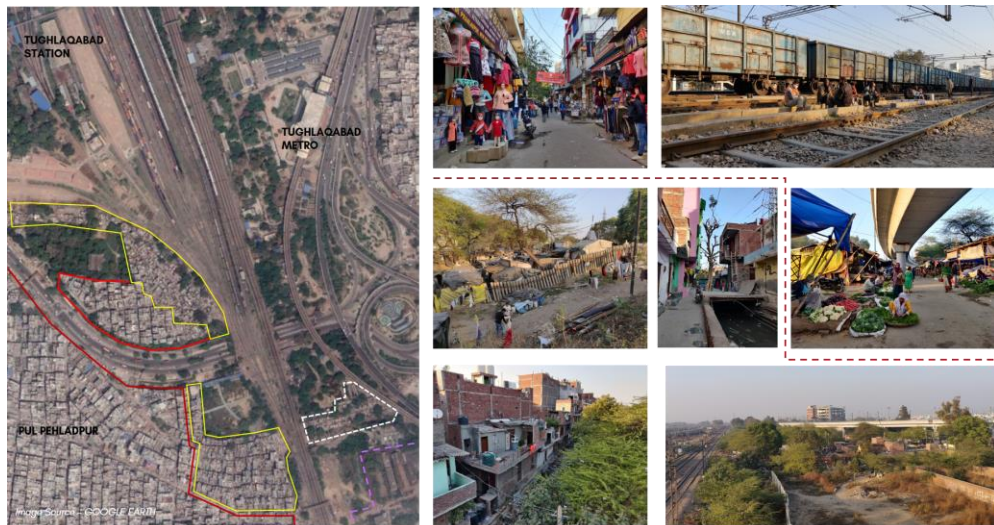


Figure 4. Socio Economic Anchors and Built fabric- Pul Pehladpur. Source: Author.

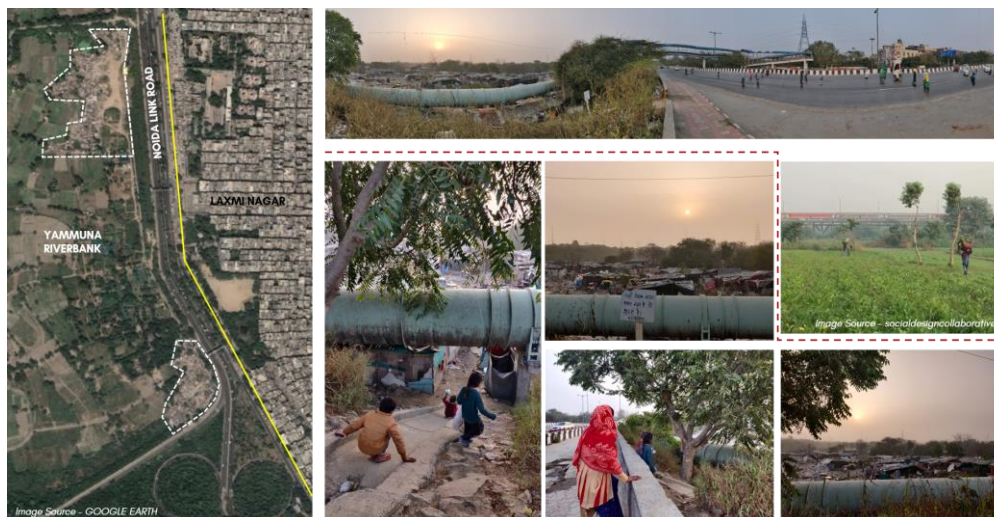


Figure 5. Socio Economic Anchors and Built fabric- Yamuna Riverbank. Source: Author.

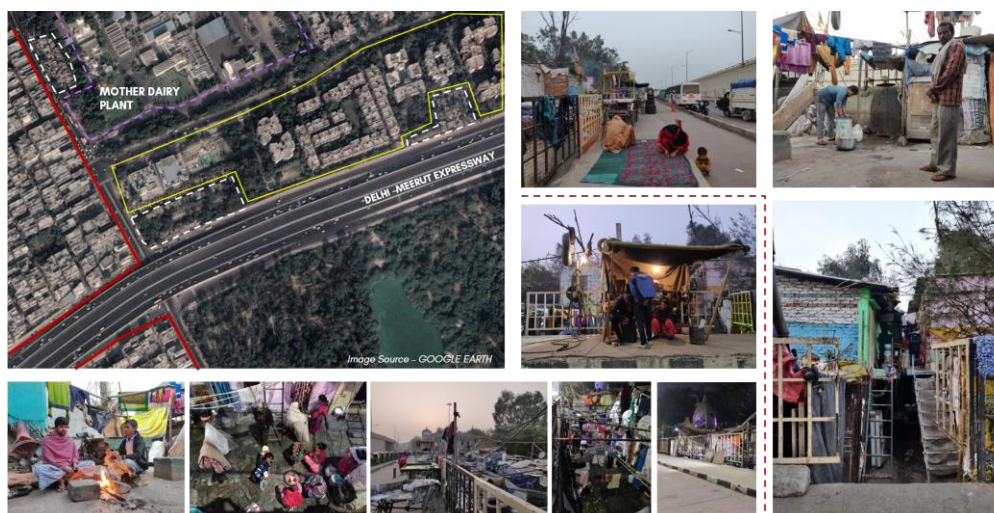


Figure 6. Socio Economic Anchors and Built fabric- Nehru and Jai Bharati Camp. Source: Author.

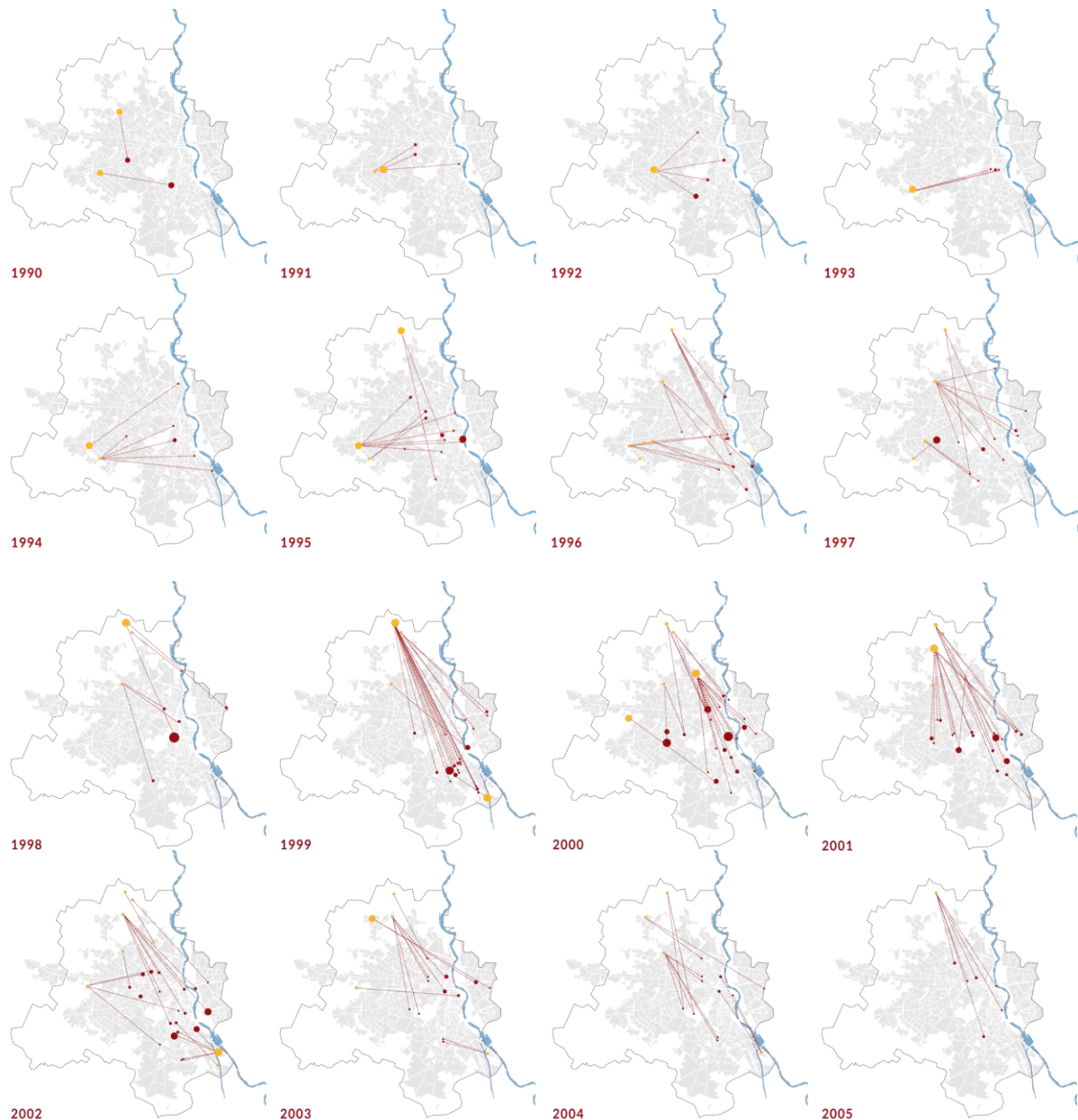


Figure 7. Resettlement Trajectories. Source: Generated by Author from data provided by Bhan (2008, 2013), Dupont (2008) under-development Eviction Database of the Housing and Land Rights Network

2. Area and Site Level Characteristics

2.1. Methodology

- i. Undertaking various sites prone to evictions under the major subheads in order to grasp a better understanding of the phenomenon.
- ii. Identifying areas under imminent and unavoidable threat. Understanding reasons, forces and histories surrounding the eviction threat.
- iii. Understanding vulnerabilities and using it as a parameter to define the existing site conditions and stakeholder classifications.

- iv. Using structural permanence as the secondary defining parameter to classify existing site conditions.
- v. Understanding the concept of direct and indirect employment and use it as an enabler to argue interdependencies and ties.
- vi. Addressing Tenure Security as the first layer of change to facilitate self-empowered and in-situ security movement of generations.
- vii. Understanding land ownership and function to negotiate and prevent future eviction scenarios.
- viii. Assisted livelihood mechanisms and social stitching through networking and stewardship strategies.

2.2. Pul Pehladpur and Eviction History

Pul Pehladpur has had a history of evictions in three phases. The first phase being the Mandi that was displaced twice due to the construction of Badarpur Flyover and Violet Metro Line. It is going through another round of displacement due to the upcoming Silver Line proposal. The second phase of displacement was during the conception of the Tekhand Project that partially displaced VP Singh Camp. The third phase of eviction was during Covid'19 that affected the juggis residing alongside Railway lines. The area also comes under potential eviction site under HLRN's survey. Multiple and upcoming rounds of eviction have fractured its fabric, both social, economic and spatial almost irrevocably.

The Badarpur Mandi resides partly on DMRC land and partly on RLDA Land thus adding to the dispute. Presently the Mandi is under eviction threat due to the upcoming Silver Metro Line. Two population groups depend on the Mandi for livelihood. One being the native population who were the original shop owners of the Mandi during the first round of displacement. They reside in surrounding areas of Badarpur, Pehladpur, Tughlakabad and the nearby juggis. The second population travels on a weekly basis from Palwal, Meerut and nearby towns for sustenance on the mandi economy. This population group hence resides in makeshift clusters and juggis due to lack of rental or other temporary accommodation options. The migrant population also form an informal extension of the Mandi which predominantly occupies Railway Land. While the shops of the pre-existing population exist in a slightly formal manner and on DMRC Land.

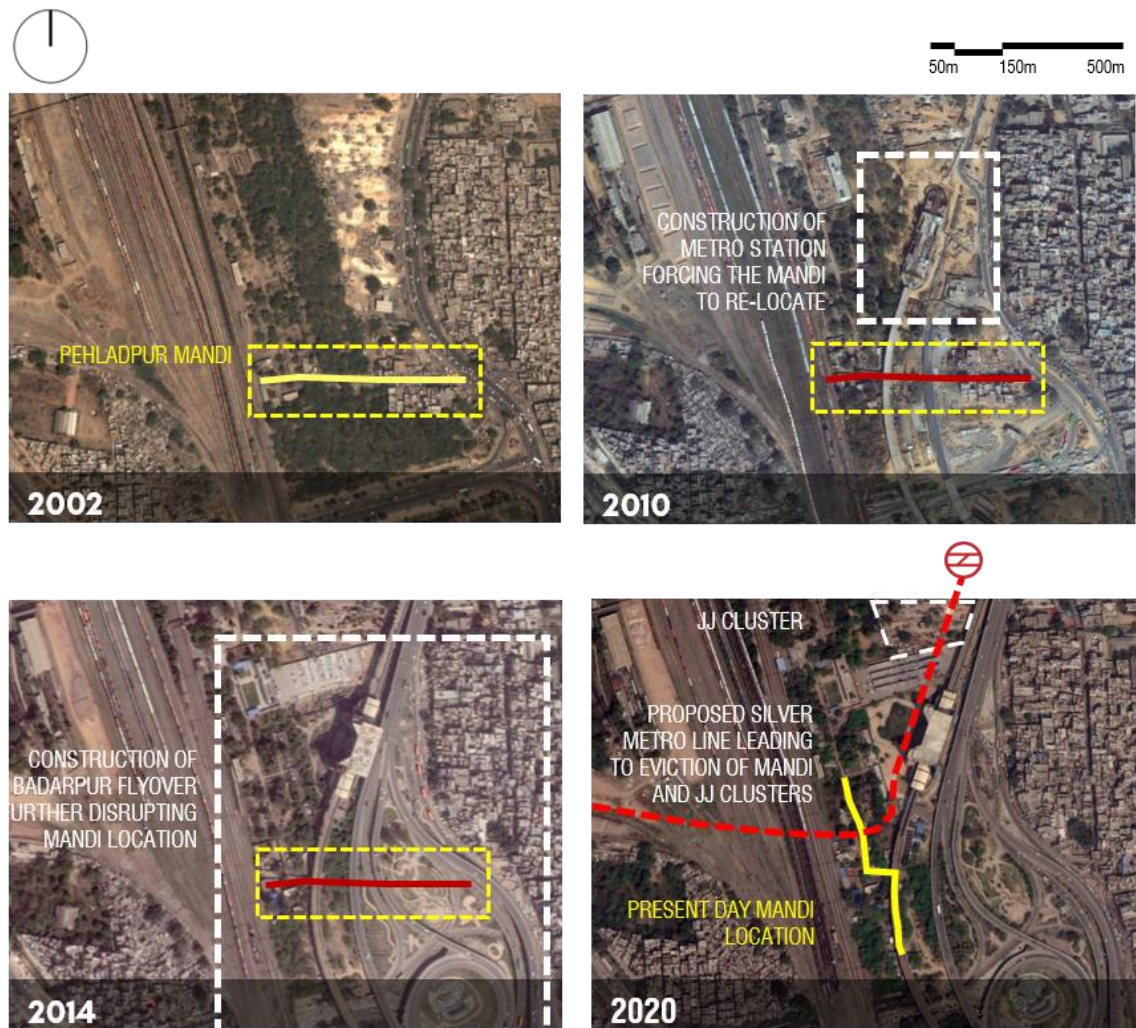


Figure 8. History of evictions in Pul Pehladpur. Source: Google maps and site interviews.

2.3. Urban Dichotomies

The site is predominantly divided into three tangible layers. The presence of a transport spine forms the first layer of Connectivity. The presence of high speed corridors like Mehrauli-Badarpur Road and Mathura Flyover form areas of disconnect on either side of the spines and create dehumanized spaces where informal economies have little or no chance to foster. The built fabric is predominantly divided into fine-grained dense residential and coarse-grained industrial chunks. Other built uses occupy an insignificant and much smaller percentage compared to the residential-industrial parcels hinting at the lack of social infrastructure and destinations. The residential areas are further segregated into visible clusters of which vulnerabilities become a defining parameter. The vulnerability-based segregation is explained in the following module.

The third layer comprises of the blue-green agenda that competes with the urban sprawl for retention. The site is home to a massive segment of Tughlakabad Forest, Biodiversity Park and parts of Asola Wildlife Sanctuary. It also houses a part of the Delhi ridge making it an ecologically sensitive zone. There are three major drains; Kalka Ji Drain, Jaitpur Drain and Tughlakabad Drain; that terminate into the Agra

Canal and are major contributors to the blue network of the site hence demanding the need for an eco-sensitive approach along with the predominance of brown agenda.

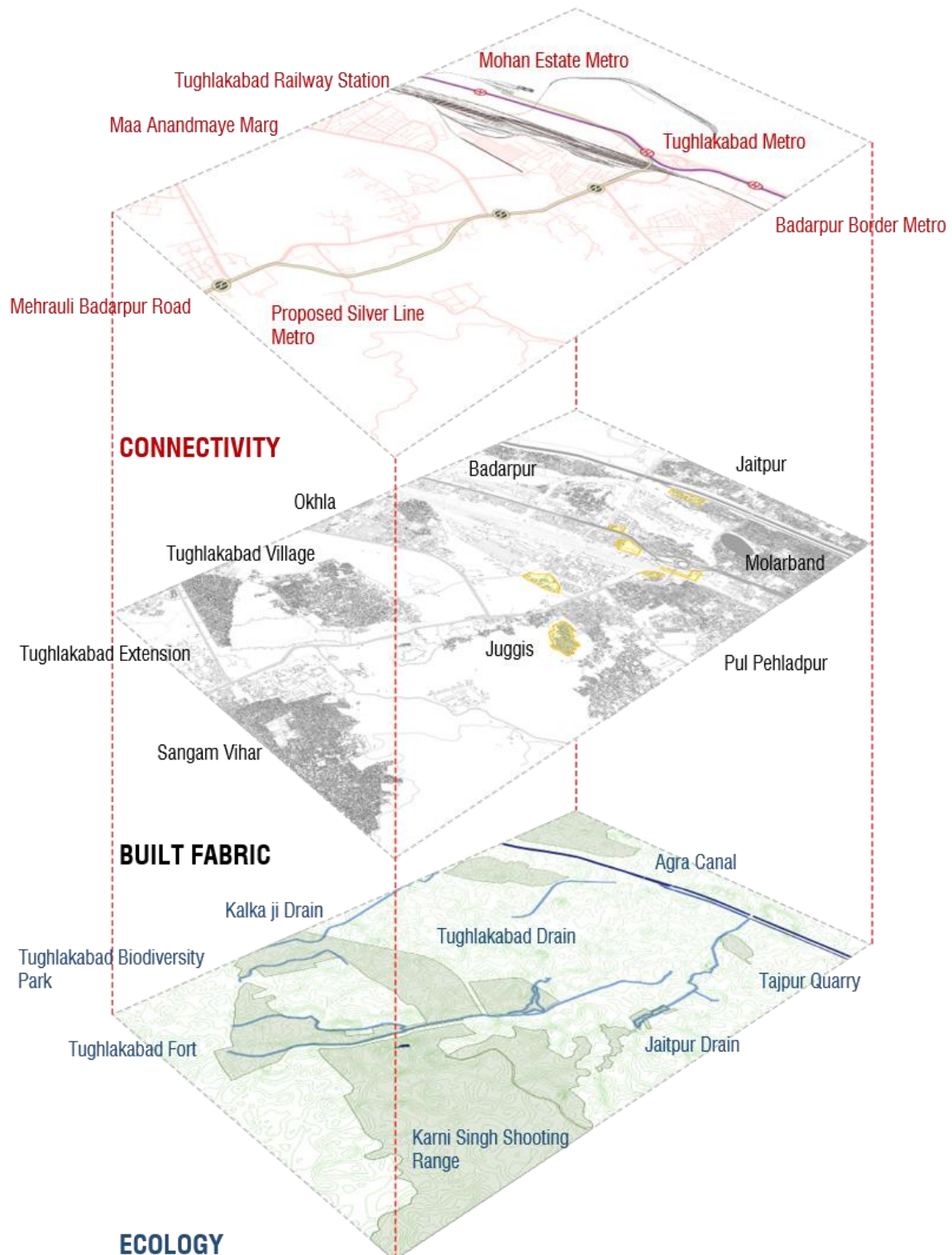


Figure 9. Site Layers. Source: Author.

3. Vulnerability Study

3.1. Vulnerabilities and Ownership

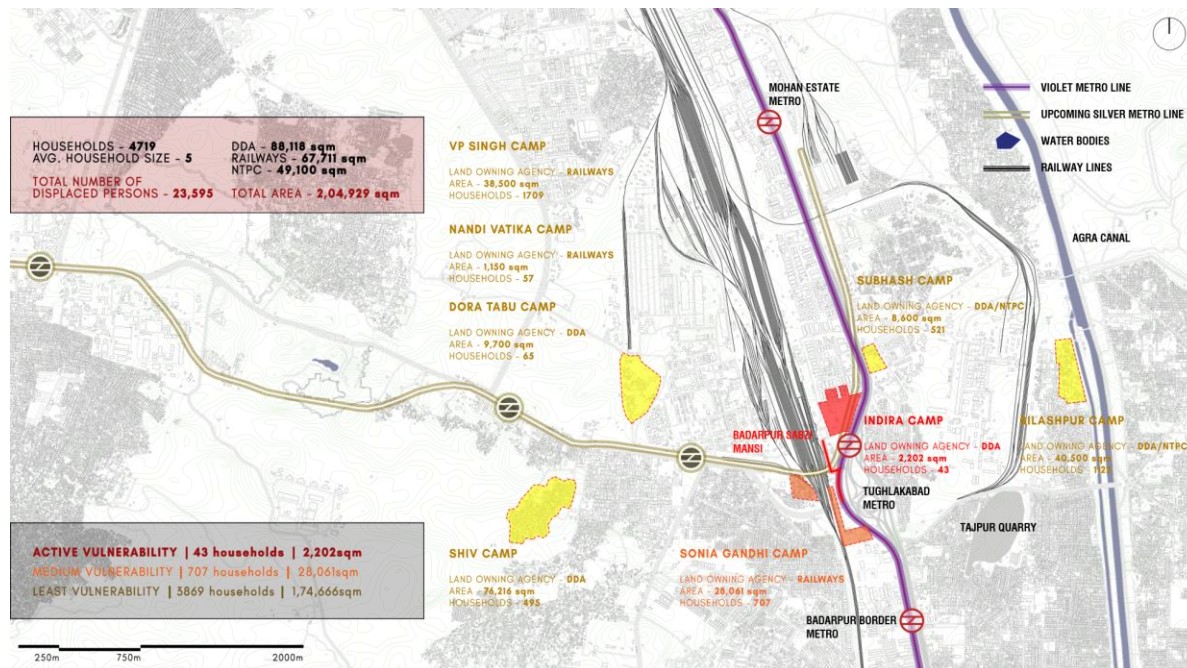


Figure 10. Existing juggis on site and degrees of vulnerability. Source: Author.

Active Vulnerability – Areas under imminent threat that have received eviction notices or/and partially demolished due to the coming up of the Silver Metro Line and other proposed projects. Badarpur Mandi and Indira Camp are part of the active vulnerable zones due to the upcoming Silver Line and a Community Centre proposal adjacent to it.

Medium Vulnerability – Areas under eventual threat due to expansion of activities such as Railway logistics, warehousing etc. Sonia Gandhi Camp that resides in the residual railway spaces are particularly prone to threat due to this particular reason. These camps are also an example of strong social segregation on site, where they exist adjacent to authorized areas but are deemed separate from them morphologically, functionally and socially.

Least Vulnerable – Areas under future threats due to encroaching on land that is not in use currently but will succumb to developmental changes or environmental regulations. The remaining camps marked in yellow eg- Bilashpur Camp, Subhash Camp, Shiv Camp etc are not under any immediate threat but not barred from getting evicted a generation later as well. Vp Singh, Nandi Vatika and Dora Tabu Camp had been partially evicted due to the upcoming Tekhand Project. Eviction was prevented because the project was called off due to certain construction activities not being permitted in the Delhi ridge. This however gives an example of the probability of a future eviction however faint it might be.

The degree of vulnerability is also dependent on the land-owning agency. Since each agency has its own rehabilitation policy and hence a personalized set of rules that would let them evict a population with or without consideration of basic rights, the urgency of the situation increases in case one is residing on Railway Land due to their notorious eviction drives. The Forest Department and DMRC follow a slightly fair method of rehabilitation that relies on Social Impact Assessment and agreeable compensation methods. The largest land-owning agency, DDA however does not have its own Rehabilitation Policy and is governed by the policy rule stated by DUSIB.

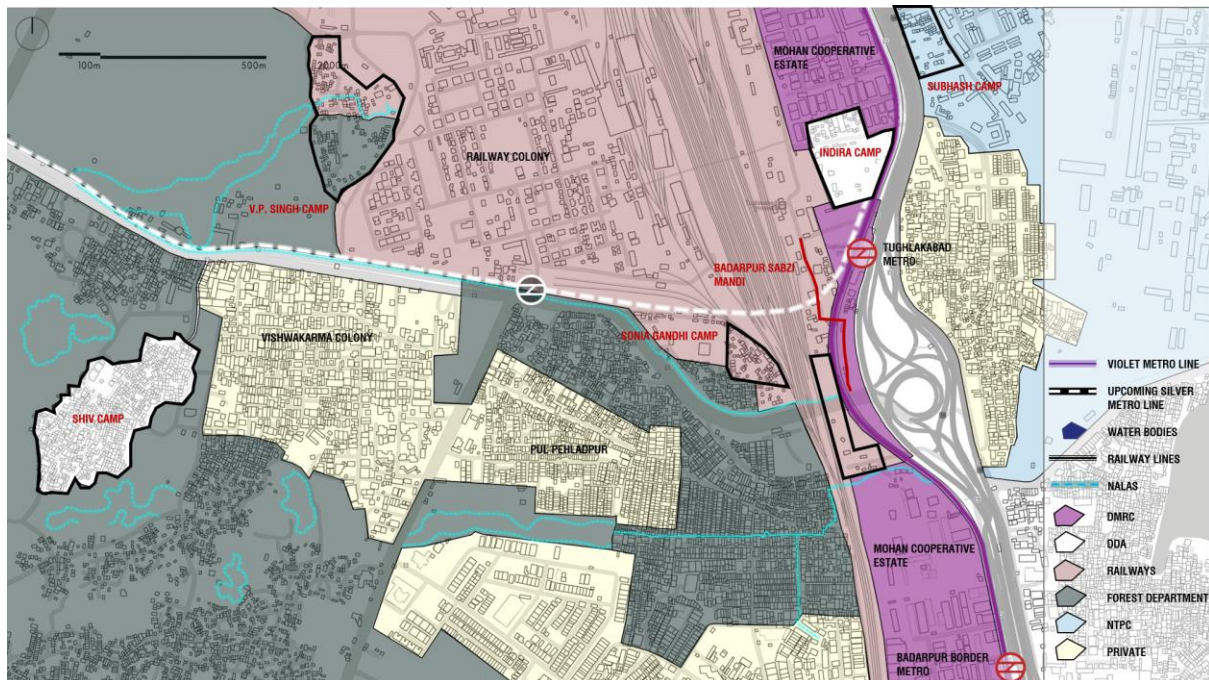


Figure 11. Land ownership Map. Source: Author.

3.2. Vulnerabilities and Morphology

The built morphology also becomes a reflection of how vulnerable the settlements are. The grains, textures and patterns are a consequence of the conditions under which they were formed. The most vulnerable clusters are organic in pattern with a fine grain texture, signifying urgency to build under emergency conditions and availability of land. With a reduction in vulnerability the settlement patterns become more organized denoting the chance at permanence and hopefully implied legitimacy. The authorized colonies of course are planned, the difference in coarse and fine grains stem from the social conditions at this point.

The spines that divide the groups also act as a unifier of sorts. The railway tracks act as crossover and movement points for people from the juggis to move in and out of Pul Pehladpur, almost like a gateway. The tracks also work as spaces of leisure due to the absence and access to specific recreational greens for the juggi dwellers. They depend on the tracks for indirect livelihood as well in the form of cleaning and maintenance works. The juggis residing next to it almost take up stewardship of the activities surrounding the tracks. Parts of Mehrauli-Badarpur Road work the same way. Informal economies take over crevices wherever possible and add to the sense of street life as an extension of the commercial stretch. Both these interfaces have the potential to function as common grounds for the social groups to interact.

The typologies surrounding the interfaces are predominantly of mixed-use nature to cater to the evictee population's dependency on informal economies. With the exception of the strictly planned colonies like Railway and Vishwakarma Colony, the remaining are built to accommodate commerce in some form of the other. Mixed use has also managed to seep into the major streets of Vishwakarma Colony making the typology adjust to commerce instead of motorized movement and parking. In areas of spatial constraint

and temporality of shelter the walls are used as a backbone to set up makeshift shops and livelihood opportunities

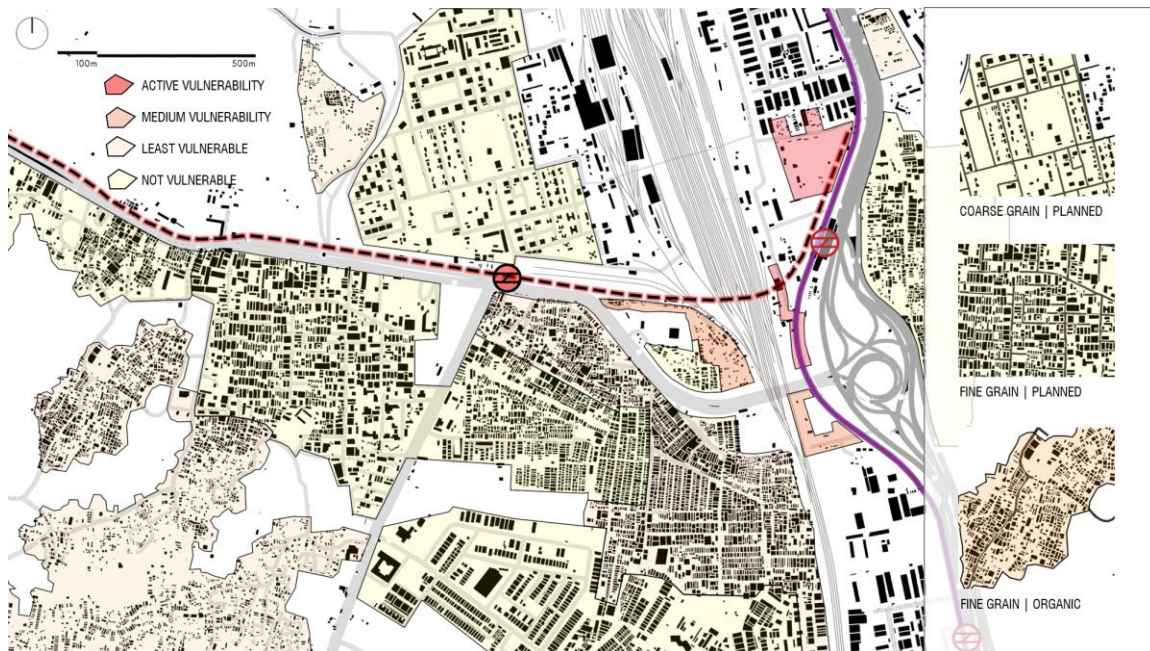


Figure 12. Existing site morphology and degrees of vulnerability. Source: Author.

3.3. Vulnerabilities and Ecology

Adjacency does not ensure access in case of the vulnerable. They are located next to greens but are barred from actively using them either due to edge conditions or privatization or socio-economic gaps. The vulnerable are also often associated with adjacency to derelict ecological precincts or spines, a condition widely prevalent on the site. Derelict ecological conditions add another layer of vulnerability to their already precarious state since the Green Agenda takes precedence while competing with the Brown Agenda.

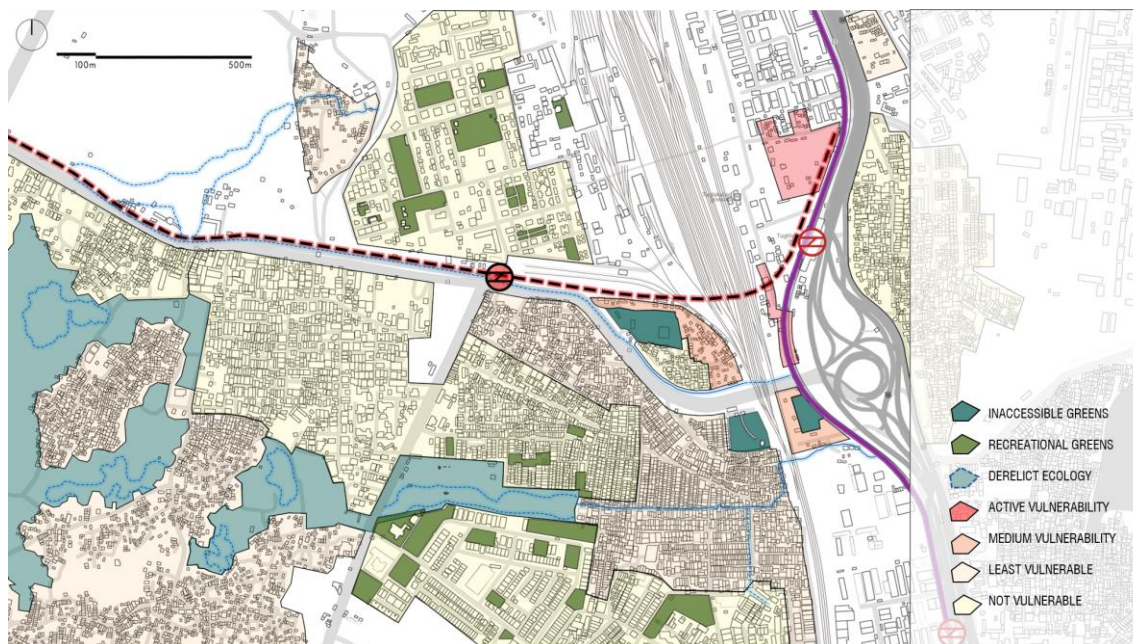


Figure 13. Ecological Precincts mapped against vulnerabilities. Source: Author.

3.4. Structural permanence and social infrastructure

Another parameter used to define the evictee population is Structural permanence. The more volatile the condition, the more temporary their conditions of living tend to be. Semi-permanent structures pave the way for implied legitimization therefore reducing eviction chances compared to the temporary, makeshift shelters.

The presence of Social infrastructure is also predominantly associated with areas exhibiting structural permanence. An exception however is the existence of temples. The presence of a religious precinct imparts a legitimate enclosure to the otherwise makeshift juggi and becomes a mechanism of identity creation for the people residing there.

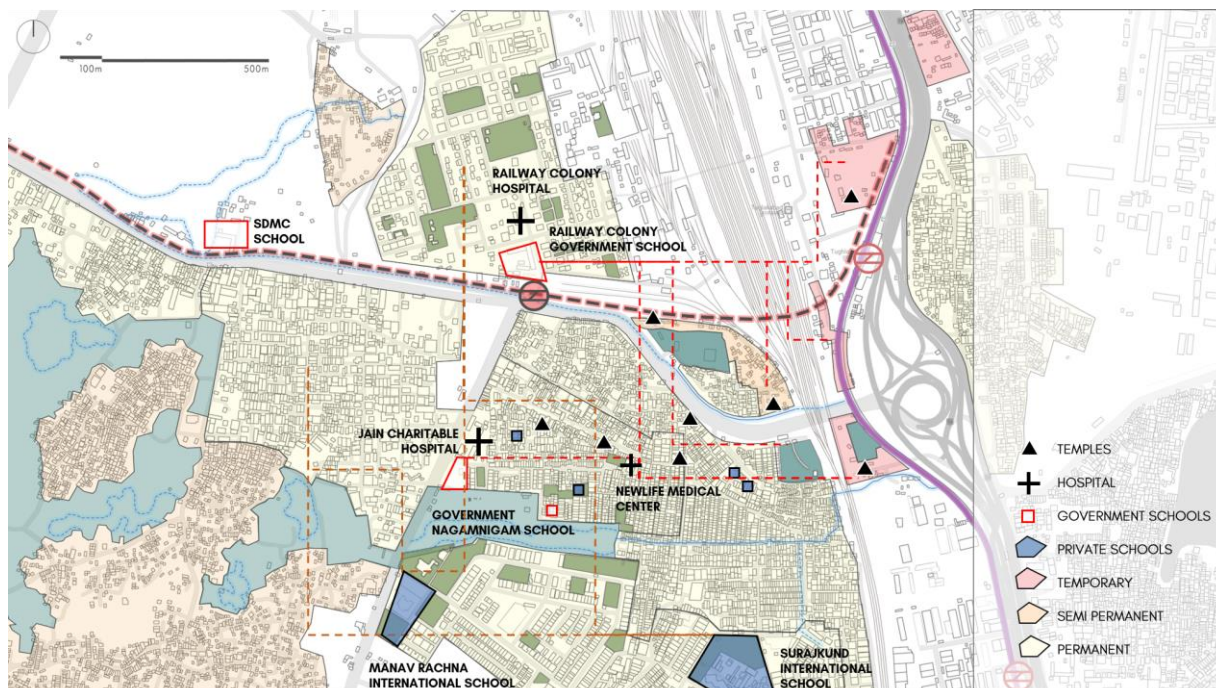


Figure 14. Social infrastructure mapped against Structural Permanence. Source: Author.

3.5. Direct and Indirect employment

There are two types of economic anchors at play in the site and ward levels, Direct and Indirect employment. Here one must refrain from using the term Informal and replace it with indirect for better addressal of the crowd engaged in this type of economy. Direct employment refers to areas that are recognizable and formal work zones. Indirect employment hinges on to a very specific formal economic anchor for sustenance and contributes significantly to the functioning of the (formal) anchor. The precinct's reliance on the group is more substantial than the informality's dependency on the anchor, a fact reinstated from the preference of mobile or movement-based commerce that is predominant. The non-quantifiable nature of indirect employment dictates their occupancy rights and acceptance of productive capacity. Delhi finds it germane to deal with the evictees in a superfluous manner because it negates their contribution to the larger economic network. The lack of recognition within the fold of relevant urban life stems from the condition of indirect employment.

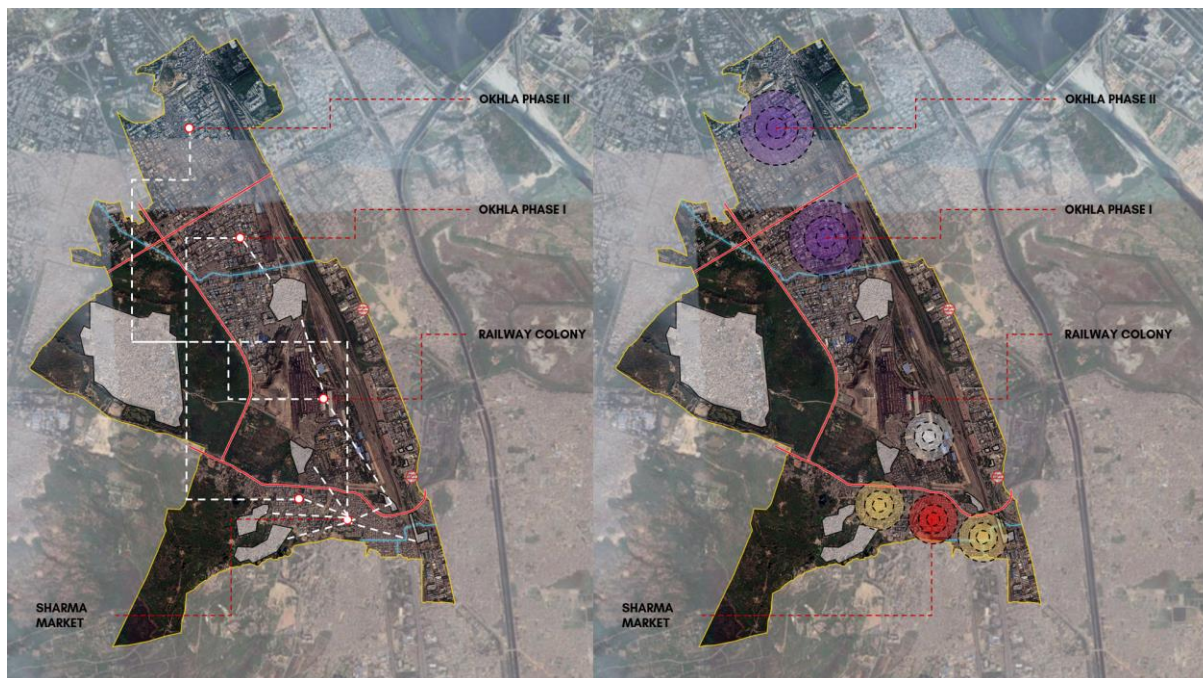


Figure 15. Economic Anchors. Source: Author.

4. Compensatory Mechanisms

4.1. Inferences

Adjacency does not necessarily ensure segregation; the lack of access catalyses it. Structures that divide communities also ironically become unifying elements, example the railway line and commercial edges. Most interdependencies exist without the knowledge and awareness of the stakeholders involved. Indirect employment anchors have to be integrated into the recognizable fold of urban life. Vulnerabilities are more often than not associated with social ideologies rather than spatial locations. Presence of commons or recreations greens does not necessarily ensure their use. Social infrastructures play an important role in identity manufacturing. The city tries to connect the vulnerable groups to networks through infrastructures, but the affordability aspect of it hinders seamless networking.

4.2. Compensation by Housing

Juggis are not formed in random locations. They come up in specific places due to the conveniences associated with them. The conveniences mostly narrow down to economic anchors within walkable distances and feasible socio-cultural infrastructures. Housing therefore becomes the most commonly addressed compensation by the government. And although the law states that the rehabilitation distance should not exceed 5km, it has not gained enough momentum even with recognizable spatial resource availability within the aforesaid distance. A major reason being land economics and the politics associated with using prime land for incentivised developmental projects instead of philanthropy. The upcoming metro line and the TOD regulations that accompany it create a future scenario that visualises urban sprawl in and around the zone of influence. And that spells trouble because the areas to fall prey to increasing sprawl would be the forested zones. Thus, resulting in another round of competition between the green and brown agenda and an evicted population a generation later. To ensure that the

future generations have more anchorage over their home it is necessary to think beyond shelter as a compensatory mechanism.

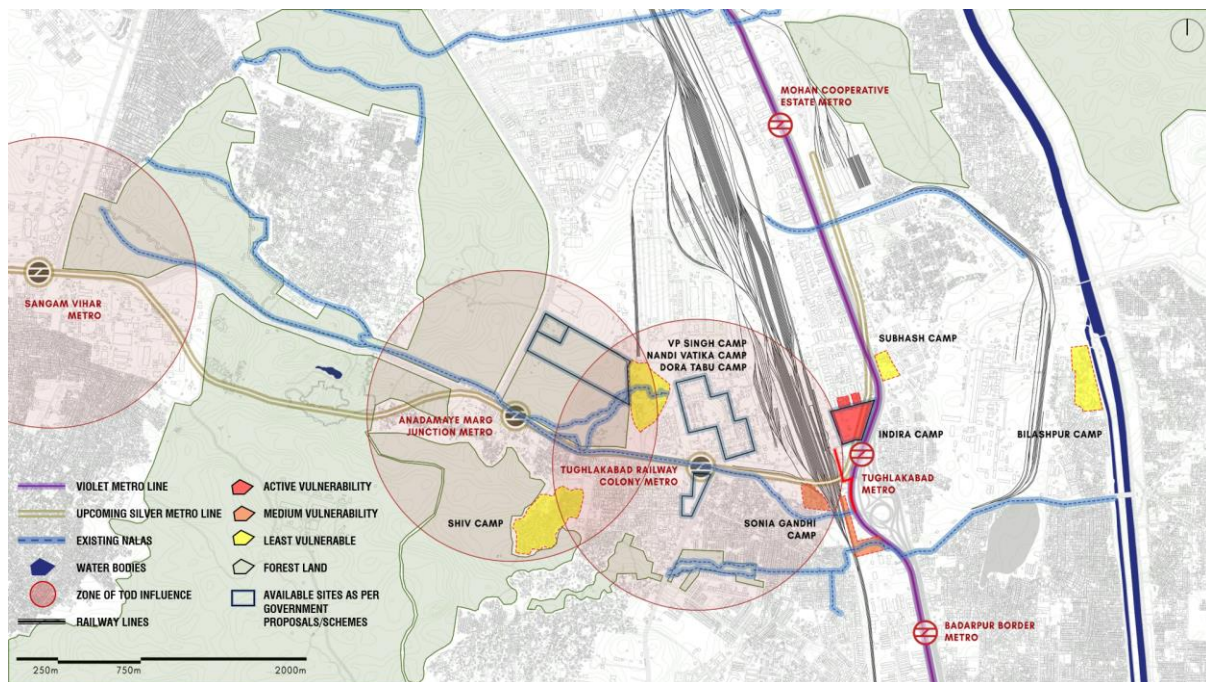


Figure 16. Compensation by Housing. Source: Author.

4.3. Compensation by Livelihood

To envision a scenario where the following generations are not evicted it is necessary to provide mechanisms that would facilitate empowerment. The site is bordered by formal sectors that do not directly employ a majority of the local population, and negligible numbers from the evictee population. Although a percentage of the informal sectors are dependent on the formal for livelihood, their primary mode of dispersal still remains movement centric lines of commerce instead of fixed destinations. Due to the transient nature of work, they are not acknowledged as legitimate contributors to the economy. Another group that fails to attain recognition is the one engaged in domestic and household work, the burden of which predominantly falls on the working women population. Therefore, it is firstly necessary to bring the informal sector under the realm of indirect employment and invest in alternate economies. The compensatory mechanism should also aim to address stakeholders across all age groups. While most of the economic opportunities provided are directed towards the adult and middle-aged men and women, the populations that are at a loss are predominantly the youth and senior citizens. The youth specifically, as mentioned earlier, are at a disadvantage with respect to opportunities that would be fuelled by creativity, culture and consciousness. It is therefore necessary to address the specific needs of the population that not only stem from livelihood opportunities but the option of capacity building and skill development as well.

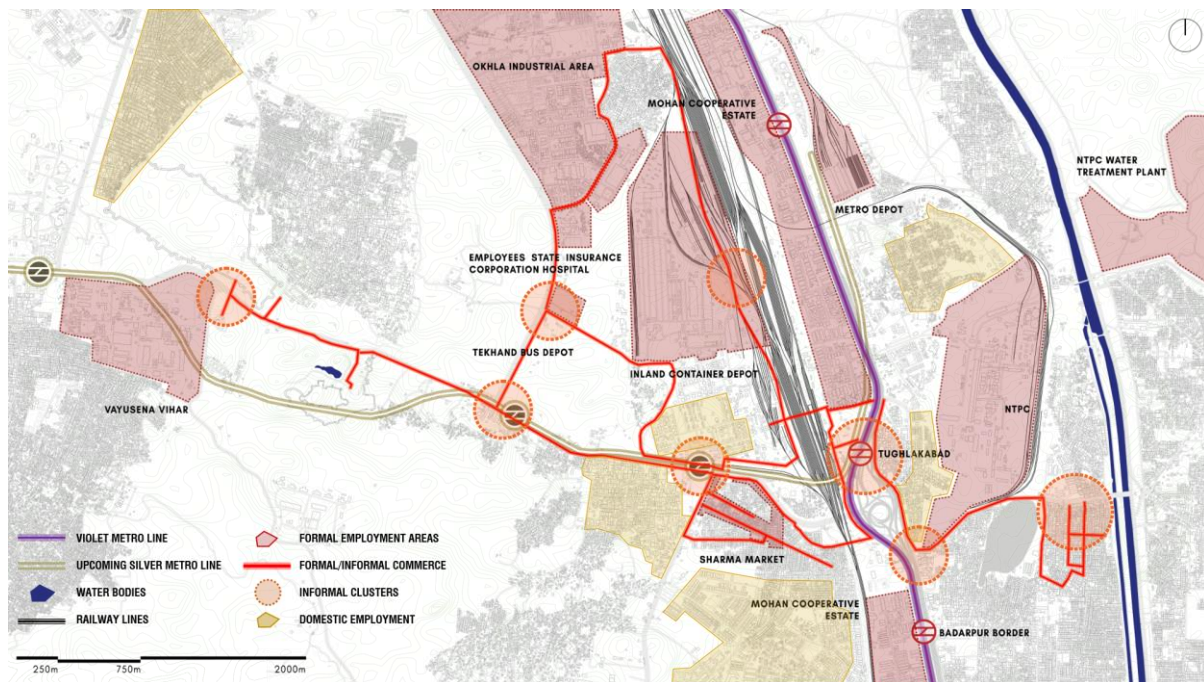


Figure 17. Compensation by Livelihood. Source: Author.

4.4. Compensation by Skill Development

The absence of significant institutions and the distance of major institutional hubs from the site is alarming and one of the primary reasons for a disengaged and unemployed youth population. The presence of ample industrial units is however a hopeful sign that can contribute to the larger network of collective interests. The industrial units can double as skill development centres as well as institutional training leading to a day-night schedule that can cater to education and employment to the youth population thus magnifying their livelihood opportunities. The metro stations can further be reimagined as units beyond transit nodes. Since transport spines form one of the main exchanges and cross-over points for most stakeholder groups, they can be redeveloped to house institutional activities as well. The presence of pre-existing infrastructures and the availability of station points should be harnessed as an advantage by allowing the population to plug in whenever possible. This would ensure employment while creating empowerment opportunities through education. And eventually the option of economic switchovers so that the marginalised population is able to afford legitimate shelter and avoid evictions.

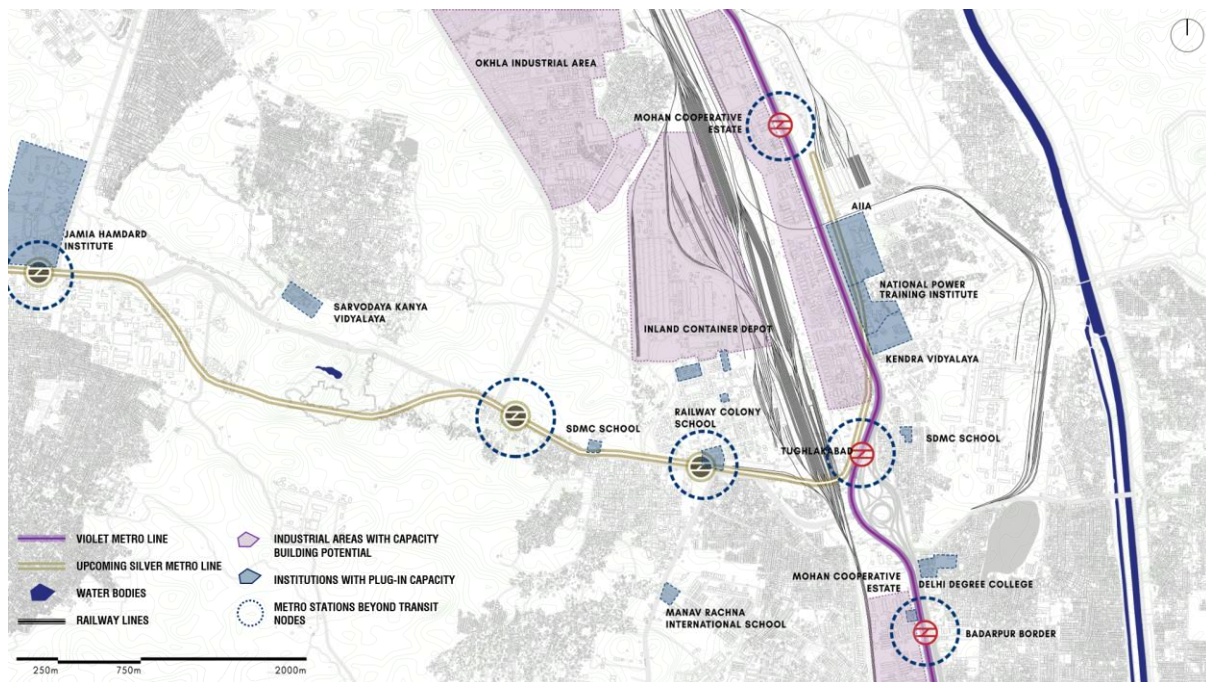


Figure 18. Compensation by Skill Development. Source: Author.

5. Conclusion

No matter what the eviction reasons are headlined, the undercurrent is either social or political in nature. There is a need to understand socio-cultural ephemerality and the implications of space-time index through the lens of forced evictions focusing on the trajectories of locational adherence, urban apathy and social imprisonment questioning the concept of distributive ownership-right-justice. Crises are always garbed in a language that is more acceptable to the larger public. Defeat is shrouded as 'strategic withdrawals', uncontrolled urbanization as 'development' and inevitable pandemics as 'the new normal'. It is deeply unsettling how the fact that forced evictions as a part of humanitarian crises go unnoticed.

Beautification projects are at the forefront of political garnish, paving the way with good intentions such as rehabilitation and resettlement. A whopping 46% of the eviction reason, is indicative of the fact how normalised and appropriated the behaviour is. The residents that bear the brunt of evictions eventually become pawns in a larger agenda. Bearing in mind that the marginalized do not have the privilege of choice, they eventually end up occupying areas prone to flash floods, landfill sites, and environmental hazard zones; hence providing the authorities with sufficient reason to enact under the much-awaited tool of natural disasters.

Stewardship, hence, becomes a major conclusive parameter. Integrating social accountability in the fabric through urbanism and understanding the ethics of consent and socio-spatial empathy. Restructuring the city to conceive integration of communities. Combatting life and livelihood encroachment through identity manufacture and bridging socio-cultural chasms. Exploring the concept of kinetic ownership and shared urbanism and most importantly making housing meaningful instead of a singular regulatory approach. The triadic compensatory mechanism questions the spatial dichotomies of legality-illegality, planned-unplanned, formal-informal. While legality creates absolute urban realities, legitimacy provides the opportunity to form alternative narratives. The attempt is not to create a city that lets you live, but a city that accommodates one's urban realities and acknowledges them as contributive urban actors.

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