

# ***Planning for Unplanned Mega Events***

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Lately, there has been a lot of research that has gone into the impact of the pulse on a city. The politicians and administrators sing paeans about the “prestige” that hosting a large event would bring to the city and the country. The employment or business opportunities multiply giving the host country a platform to display organizing ability at a large scale.

However, there are also large downsides. The city’s infrastructure is tested at its seams. The administrators are left with a mess to clean up. Speculators have a field day and generally the residents feel a ‘hangover’.

In this paper there is an attempt to deal with another kind of pulse. A pulse that is not entirely welcome. A pulse that covers people forced out of their homeland – a nearby country or a city of the same country for a variety of reasons. These could be due to hunger, natural calamities, economic needs, and suppression, including persecution of politically active, ethnic minorities, war and civil war. Such people are called refugees.

A Mass movement of refugees, taking place in an irregular and often in a clandestine manner becomes a ‘pulse’ for the receiving country. It can be categorized as ‘pulse’ mainly because of the intermittent nature of their arrival. Moreover, they are treated as ‘visitors’ by the host country rarely given the privileges of a citizen.

Refugees as pulse actually pose a far greater challenge than the ‘pulse’ created by the organization of a large event. This is mainly because they are created out of a push factor. They are given shelter on humanitarian grounds. This becomes all the

more complex when they come from another country. That is when the issues of citizenship, civic rights etc raise temperatures in domestic politics.

This paper focuses on the city of Delhi to make its point. Delhi, being a showcase city, has the largest budget for any city in India. It has therefore, an infrastructure that is unrivalled in India and even many of its neighboring countries. It therefore attracts migrants of many a hue. Let us now focus on the types of “migrants” who have moved to the city under some duress. In this context there are two distinct sets of refugees that can be taken up. One set are the refugees who moved to Delhi during the Partition. The other is refugees who come from other neighboring countries spread over a larger period of time. The key difference between the two is the governmental effort put in to resolve the problems of the refugees during Partition while for the other set such a state effort was not available.

## ***1947- the mega pulse***

In 1947, with the partition and independence of India, Delhi witnessed one of the largest immigrations in the human history. Delhi whose population was about 900,000 at that time, received almost 470,000 refugees from Punjab and Sindh (now in Pakistan). Not surprisingly, 1941-51 is the period of highest demographic growth in the history of the Capital which expanded from almost 900,000 inhabitants in 1941 to 1.79 million in 1951, corresponding to an annual growth rate of 7.5 percent which has not been equaled since.

***The Government’s response*** - Delhi was not prepared for such doubling of the

population. Tents were pitched to shelter the helpless, hungry and harassed people, uprooted from their homelands. Rudimentary services, mainly water, ration, fuel, clothing and medicines were provided by the newly born government.

The calamity was of such proportion that a separate Ministry of Relief was created by the central government. This Ministry was to handle the relief process of refugees in all towns where they took shelter. The Delhi Improvement Trust that was earlier set up during the British rule in 1936 to manage the urban decay became an instrument for the Ministry of Relief to plan for the settlement of the refugees within Delhi. New townships in the urban fringes were planned during 1948-52. These rehabilitation townships were planned and developed all around Delhi. The 'official' urban area almost doubled between 1941 and 1961.

In hastily acquired lands, schools dispensaries, parks and shopping of marginal standards were provided. These were emergency projects and no time was available for immaculate planning. Through years of improvisations, adjustments and resettlement, the refugees were resettled in 36 rehabilitation colonies.

***The day after*** The sudden explosion of the total population of the city brought multitude of problems with it. There were multiple agencies to run the city while the Delhi Improvement Trust was too preoccupied with its old scheme and property disputes. The congestion continued and the city grew haphazardly, with the lands passing into the hands of the speculators. The Improvement Trust did not succeed in its efforts in urban development. Hence in 1955, the Government of India set up "Delhi Development (Provisional) Authority". Simultaneously there was a pronounced

concern for slum clearance. Under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, the Parliament enacted the "Slum Improvement & Clearance Act" in 1956.

In December 1957, the government replaced Delhi Development (Provisional) Authority and the Improvement Trust by passing the Delhi Development Act. The slum clearance and improvement work was transferred to the Municipal Corporation. In 1962, a 20-year Master Plan was finally approved by the parliament. It assessed the deficiencies in housing, community services, facilities etc and projected requirements of 4.6 million (revised later to 5.3 million) population in 1981. From the urbanized area of 18000 Ha in 1958-59, it was proposed to enlarge to 44736 Ha. All operating agencies were brought within the overall work of the plan.

One fundamental premise of the Master Plan was based on the Western concept of "zoning". It implied segregation of land users and physical uniformity and separation of residential components from the undesirable land uses.

In 1985 with the enactment of the National Capital Region Board Act the scope of planning was further enlarged. The Union Territory of Delhi was to be developed as a focus within its surrounding region, covering an area of 30,000 square kilometers and encompassing a population of over 30 million.

Thus, while Delhi has always been planned as a city with each ruler bringing his own version of the city, the current self rule, democratic set-up was rudely woken up to the reality of the refugees and thus incorporated the idea of planning for city development. It received the highest priority in the national set up and has proved to be a role model for several states to emulate.

## The other refugees

The refugees from the Partition era were considered a national issue, the birth pangs of a new country. And accorded a similar priority. However, since roughly the same time period, almost 500,000 people from different nationalities, primarily the neighboring countries, have also landed in Delhi. They came from Bangladesh, Tibet, Nepal, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka. Apart from these, another 500,000 have come from within India either due to political instability or natural calamities.

Most of these people continue to live in slums (or squatter clusters), while some as tenants and on government allotted land/housing. Except for the refugees from the partition, most of the other refugees do not enjoy any civic rights. Not only that, because of the nature or form of these migrations, often in a clandestine manner, there is very little data available about them. The city planning does not seem to have a clear idea about what to do with such people. Caught between humanitarian grounds, an illegal nature of their existence, ever growing domestic concerns, these refugees do not figure in the city's planning schemes. These people therefore, occupy available spaces within the city, which in most cases would have had alternate uses according to the Master Plan. Thus they distort the current Plan.

## Emerging Issues

- The planned development has to live side by side with unplanned development, pulse effects and political decisions. The present planning framework is usually unable to absorb such events and is not able to accommodate them. As a result there are critical problem of basic services (water supply, drainage, sewerage, power and transport infrastructure).

- The concept of single land-use zoning has not been able to cope with major influxes.
- Employment generation and informal sector jobs have not been a major component of planning.
- The financial and taxation policy does not attract mega investment for city development.
- Physical planning often does not interface closely with socio-cultural and political realities.

## Planning approach

**Formal recognition-** The first step to this should be some form of formal recognition to be accorded to the refugees. There is a widespread belief that the system of granting asylum and therefore a formal refugee status is often misused. This puts enormous pressure on the elected representatives to be strict and firm on granting such status and at the same time balancing the genuine humanitarian necessities. A form of semi-citizenship can be considered which would provide identity to individuals and flexibility to manage their life on their own.

**White Zoning-** The preparation of land-use plans is a statutory function under the Delhi development Act –1957. It is a multifarious component of planning and development of Delhi. Innovative methods of zoning that are flexible, open and indicative rather than rigid, closed and prescriptive have been adopted for several cities across the world. These can be adopted for Delhi as well.

While designing the Master Plan, 5% to 10% of land should be earmarked under 'White Zoning'/ 'Neutral Zoning'. This should not have any specific land use, provided with basic services and amenities and can be used for any such 'pulse' effects.

Land use concept should also permit a gradual shift of land use, such as from plotted residential to mixed land use, group housing and commercial on the basis of payment of conversion charges over a period of time. The land use can be flexible and evolutionary according to the development need. This provides incentives for development of new urban centers at a reasonable investment.

**Site & services – mixed land use** The concept of site and services helps to stretch the scarce resources to the maximum as well as stimulating 'self-help' element within the community. Recognizing the potential of the community should be the central theme of the development of the site. The community should be provided with site for housing with the freedom and flexibility to be used in integration with employment opportunities, hence promoting mixed land-use instead of conventional single-use zoning. This would also promote self-financed low cost housing.

Provision of basic services like water, drainage, sewerage & sanitation, power and access roads should be built into the plan. The local bodies are obliged to provide these services irrespective of the status of a settlement.

Further the efforts to encourage private sector, co-operative societies, and residents' association can also be incorporated depending upon the viability and financial feasibility remunerative enough for large-scale private sector participation. A good option would be to promote co-operative efforts.

## Conclusion

Given the xenophobia in many countries, planning for refugees is a sensitive issue. It is sensitive mainly because it affords an almost "official" status on their stay within the country.

This is where the planners need to take the lead. The premise behind the planning is that refugees will definitely come due to so many imbalances within a region. While efforts to integrate them into the society will be a contentious issue, planners can play a vital role in assuming this within Master plans. Repatriation, re-settlement and local integration are seen as the most durable solutions for refugees. There must be greater recognition of the constructive role of NGOs and their wider use in many emergency situations concerning refugees, displaced persons and repatriation. NGOs, both international and national often present models of low cost approaches, participatory action, commitment and idealism. Much better public understanding of refugees also needs to be promoted.

The traditional belief that refugees are a drag on an economy has to be re-examined. In fact they can be an important source of strengthening city economy by proper planning approach. By proper integration in the social network, they can be assets for the city economy, with skeletal consumption levels (land services etc)

There is a need for a strong effective capacity to respond to emergencies within the key agencies. The strengthening of local capacity to play a part in these actions is necessary. Thus, the issues of refugees need an all-round approach to tackle them while the city planning has to change from reacting to pulse effects to being proactive.

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**Abstract**

*Delhi provides a classic example where planning lives side by side with unplanned development. Besides migrants, it has about one million refugees who face problems of shelter, basic services and employment. There is a need to review the planning framework so as to interface more closely with socio-cultural and political realities.*