

**“REACHING THE UNREACHED”: (UN)MAKING AN INCLUSIVE AND
WORLD-CLASS DELHI**

A Dissertation

by

RICHA DHANJU

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies at
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2011

Major Subject: Anthropology

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Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

“Reaching the Unreached”: (Un)Making an Inclusive and World-Class Delhi.

(December 2011)

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This dissertation focuses on the nature of governance of the urban poor and examines the ‘behind the scene’ politics as well as the ‘side effects’ of a recent good governance project designed to serve six million poor citizens in Delhi, India’s capital city-state with a total population over 14 million. Over the past decade, Delhi’s march to become a world-class city has further marginalized its poor residents as the government has demolished slums, threatened informal livelihoods, and diverted social welfare funds to host international events like the recent Commonwealth Games 2010. Overwhelmed by the growing disparity and a concern for its impact on attracting global trade and tourism, the Delhi government initiated Mission Convergence in 2008, a ‘good governance’ project implemented in partnership with over hundred community-based Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), to survey every poor person in Delhi, streamline and extend welfare service delivery, and to empower poor women across all low income areas in the city-state. The slogan of this initiative was “reaching the

unreached” – to make the aspiring world-class city inclusive and caring of its poor citizens.

Twelve months of ethnographic research with slum residents, partnering NGOs, elected politicians, and government officials, indicates that Mission Convergence introduced a new institutional arrangement for the exclusive governance of the poor in Delhi as an additional two million poor citizens entered the government’s welfare registers and more than 400,000 poor women participated in Mission’s women’s empowerment programs. Such tangible results defined Mission as a successful example of efficient inter-sectoral governance in the global South, but also disturbed the political economy of pre-embedded traditional service providers like elected politicians, local leaders, and welfare staff. This dissertation examines the competing logics of good governance as traditional and new arrangements wrestled to claim authority over serving the poor as the world-class city aspirations continued the social and spatial marginalization of the poor. Mission Convergence was expected to reduce the growing disparity that spawns out of exclusionary urban development policies. However, this dissertation engages with theories of neoliberal governmentality, neoliberal urban development, and feminist economics, to show that supposedly efficient inter-sectoral arrangements could disturb regressive power relations and streamline services for the benefit of the poor, but work in nuanced ways to enable the state to sustain its political legitimacy and to create an aura of its caring and inclusive intentions towards the poor at a time when fast-paced city modernization violated their basic rights to shelter and livelihood in the aspiring world-class Delhi.

DEDICATION

To my mother Manjeet, and my mentor Kathleen O'Reilly.

Thank you for showing me the way.

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My PhD has been a truly collaborative journey. It would have been impossible without the professional and personal support of so many people. First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisors Dr. Cynthia Werner and Dr. Kathleen O'Reilly for giving me a great opportunity to learn and to grow academically. Dr. Werner has been instrumental in shaping my journey thus far. Thank you for your encouragement and support through this process.

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NOMENCLATURE

BSUP	Basic Services for the Urban Poor
DRC	District Resource Center
FAS	Financial Assistance Scheme
GRC	Gender Resource Center
GONGO	Government Organized Nongovernmental Organization
JNNURM	Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission
Mission	Mission Convergence
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MNGO	Mother Nongovernmental Organization
NFE	Non Formal Education
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
PMU	Project Management Unit
RSBY	Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna
SHG	Self Help Group
SJSRY	Swarn Jayanti Swarozgar Yojna
UID	Unique Identification (also known as Aadhaar card)

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1. INTRODUCTION: REACHING THE UNREACHED

“... so fixated is the modernizing gaze on the city as an object of planning and development that it can approach the urban space as a constellation of problems that require solutions.”

(Foucault 1986:22)

1.1 A broken wall

Fatima Bi was a 50 year-old Muslim woman residing in Wedal slum colony in the north east district of Delhi since early 1970's. She lived in a two room shanty with her husband, two daughters, two sons, two daughters-in-law and five grandchildren. Fatima's shanty was located in the Muslim-dominated area of the slum and overlooked an open, overflowing sewer. A wall that previously hid the sewer from the sight of the residents had crumbled without effort last monsoon and the sewer water had seeped inside her home. I had known Fatima as an active member of a people's movement I worked with in 2003 - 04. When I went to meet Fatima in May 2009, she told me that it had been almost nine months since the wall's collapsing, but the municipal staff never came to fix it despite several complaints. As we stood outside her home and talked about the broken wall, the sewer water gently lapped up and touched her doorsteps.

Across the sewer was Jaan slum colony, bustling with activity as hundreds of home-based factories manufactured winter jackets and embroidered wedding dresses. Further ahead was the metro rail station with its posh super market and clean compound.

This dissertation follows the style of Geoforum.

Families dressed in their best clothes visited the metro station and ate pastries and pizza at the super market café on Sundays. The metro station seemed like a misfit in this crude, informal, chaotic environment but was cherished as a social space by its neighboring residents. On the other side of Fatima's shanty was a government school for girls and an open drain separating the school from a dilapidated piece of land. This land held together the skeleton of a community toilet, ripped off of its doors, taps and toilet seats by thieves several years ago. I visited Wedal colony several times since 2003 and these sights always offered the same vision of the city to me – a mix of raw economic and social energy and a depressing reality that in the capital of the world's largest democracy lay vast zones of poverty where a majority of people had no access to basic amenities. Spread around me was a part of the slum-dense north east district in Delhi with a total population of approximately 1.8 million people (Census of India; 2001).

Standing at Fatima's doorsteps by the overflowing sewer reminded me that more Indians lived in poverty than outside it. But if we walk into the metro rail station, the untidy and crowded spaces are replaced by modern infrastructure, technological devices and glitzy lights. If we sit in the metro rail and travel towards the heart of the city, we cross the sewage-filled Yamuna river (almost like a symbolic rite of passage) and enter specific zones in Central and South Delhi with their clean and wide roads, structured residential colonies, chain of flyovers that mostly keep you off the ground and hundreds of construction sites indicating the fast pace at which Delhi is expanding and reinventing itself. Two cities exist in one – separated by a few miles and by rampant disparity, as illustrated in figure 1.1 below.

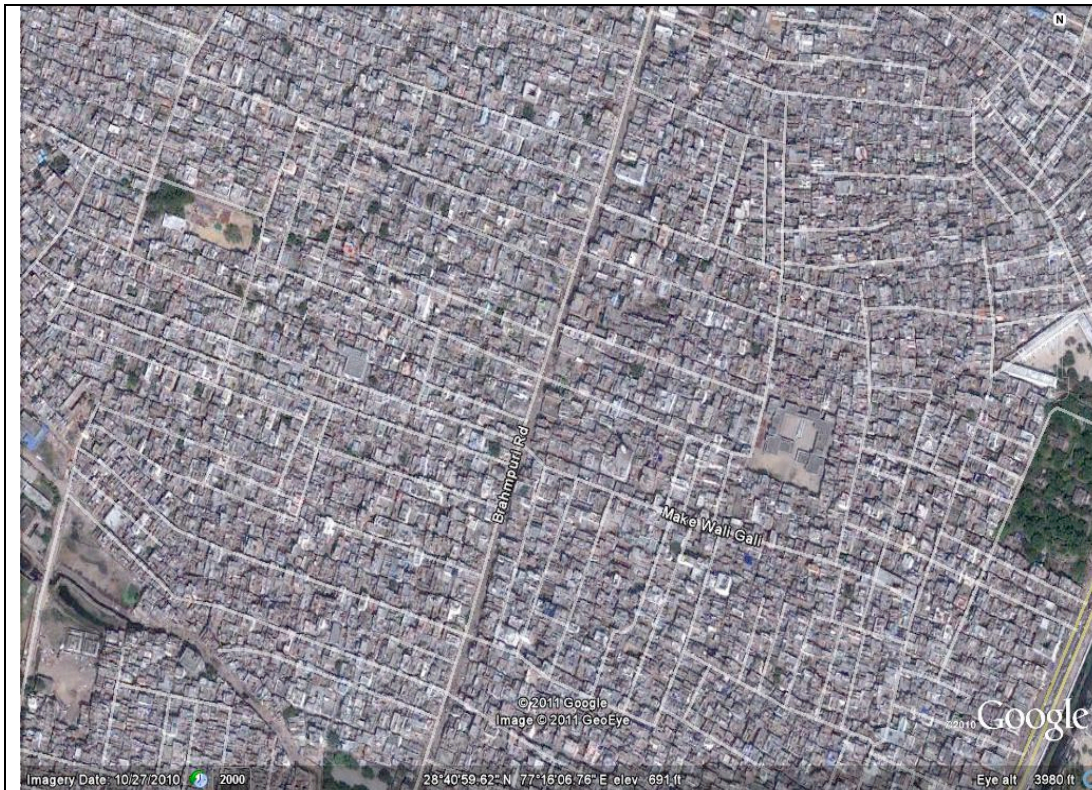


Fig.1.1. Google Earth images of fieldwork sites (including Fatima's slum). First image shows a slum area in north east Delhi. The second image below shows River Yamuna dividing east and north east districts from the rest of Delhi (A cloud cover hides its details). Mission Convergence headquarters are located on the left side of the river, close to the banks of River Yamuna. Slums exist across all nine districts of Delhi but their density is highest in east and north east Delhi.



Fig.1.1. Continued.

After some time Fatima said, “*they [government] don’t care about us. No one will come to fix the wall*”. And then she asked me whether I knew the fate of her slum. “*Will it be demolished? When are they coming with the bulldozer? Where are we to go?...*” She rapidly fired one question after the other. In Fatima’s mind, the government’s lack of concern about the broken wall and sewer-filled homes hinted at the looming demolition of her slum. Since 2006, Delhi residents like Fatima had been witnessing an unprecedented increase in the pace of slum demolitions as the city

prepared itself for the upcoming Commonwealth Games in October 2010.¹ By the time we met in May 2009, Fatima was convinced that the government would not care to fix the wall if the slum itself had to be demolished. A few days ago I had come to know through another resident of Wedal colony named Prasad, that the government was planning the on-site resettlement of the slum for its original residents.² Fatima was one of the original residents and I shared the news with her without hesitation. She replied, *“Oh yes, that is what the ‘center’ people were saying when Munni was there for her henna- painting training yesterday...but I am not sure still.”* She told me that her youngest daughter, 16 year-old Munni is learning henna painting (as a part of the beautician training) free of cost at this center. Since most NGOs in the slum areas are known as ‘centers’ (meaning center of the slum, and/or a space where many services for the poor³ are centrally provided), I thought Fatima was mentioning one of the many

¹ Commonwealth Games in Delhi in October 2010 was seen as a major urban renewal exercise impacting the material and well as human landscape of Delhi. It cost the Indian government \$15Billion, seven times its original planned cost. 120,000 beggars, 60,000 pavement squatters and 800,000 slum dwellers were banished from the city in preparation for the games (http://www.tehelka.com/story_main46.asp?filename=hub110910Gameon.asp). Besides, government funds for social welfare were diverted in preparation for these games. For example: “A total of Rs. 744.35 crore (157 Million USD approx.) originally meant to improve the standard of living of poor sections of the community through various government schemes and programs was diverted to the 2010 Commonwealth Games projects.” (<http://www.bbc.co.uk><http://www.bbc.co.uk>, July 21, 2010)

² An on-site resettlement of a slum colony means that the space where the slum exists would be sold by the government to private corporations for building multi-storey housing units for the original inhabitants of the slum who have been living in the slum before 1998 and have legal paperwork to prove the same. The residents who came to the slum after 1998 would most probably be provided no resettlement (on-site or peripheral) and will be rendered homeless. Half of the slum space is converted into housing units and the other half is leased or sold to businesses. The idea is for the government to extract profits from the land where the slum is located. Slum residents who are chosen for on-site resettlement have to pay a subsidized amount to the government for their new housing unit. To be resettled on the same space as their slum comes as a relief to many slum residents because they can then continue to maintain their economic and social networks.

³I use the term ‘poor’ to refer to an individual or family facing vulnerability because of their poor social, spatial, occupational, and income conditions. Mission Convergence uses the concept of ‘vulnerability’ to

NGOs that run short courses like tailoring and henna painting for women's empowerment.

I asked Munni to take me to this center so that I could talk with the staff and gather more information about demolition and resettlement. Munni and I crossed over from the predominantly Muslim area of the slum to the Hindu area across the road and reached a big community center, bustling with different vocational trainings attended by women and adolescent girls from the Wedal slum colony and the adjoining resettlement colony. The first thing that caught my attention was a temporary board with Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dixit's photograph on it and bold letters stating (translated from Hindi to English):

This is a free Gender Resource Center (GRC) run by the government of Delhi. We provide vocational training for women. We provide legal and health counseling for women and girl child. We fill up and verify forms for social welfare schemes like old age pension, widow pension, Ladli scheme, widow's daughter marriage, disability pension, etc.

A colorful sign of a handshake printed alongside "*Bhagidari*" (partnership) signified that the GRC was an extension of the Delhi government's⁴ famous good

extend the definition of poor and poverty above and beyond its narrow confines to income (\$1.25 a day or 2,200 calories per day in urban India). In metropolitans like Delhi, few people live below this poverty line but the majority still live like poor people due to the abovementioned vulnerabilities, all of which are interconnected. I use the term 'poor' and 'slum resident' interchangeably. I understand that there is no one set definition or measurement of poverty and that residence in slum does not automatically qualify an individual or family as poor. However, I use the term 'poor' to refer to the vulnerabilities that slum residents face by virtue of residing in a spatially vulnerable space and the accompanying lack of basic amenities and opportunities that define the slum.

⁴ Throughout the dissertation, I use 'Delhi government' to refer to the Government of the city-state of the National Capital Territory of Delhi. Delhi is the capital of India but it is also an independent union territory and a state with its own government. The federal government in India is often referred to as 'the government in Delhi' or sometimes, only as 'Delhi'. I use the term 'federal government' to refer to the Government of India.

governance project known as *Bhagidari*, indicating a government-civil society partnership there. The name of the NGO that operated this GRC was Sharan (meaning ‘shelter’). Sharan has been working at Wedal colony since 1994 on issues ranging from reproductive health, disability, environment and youth self-help groups. Inside the GRC, I met with the staff who introduced me to the new government program called Mission Convergence, under which several community-based NGOs like Sharan were partnering with the Delhi government to open GRCs across all slums and resettlement colonies in Delhi. As of August 2011, there were 104 (and growing) GRCs run by 104 different NGOs in different zones of poverty⁵ in Delhi. Each GRC worked for an approximate population of 25 thousand families (between 150,000 to 200,000 individuals) in their “catchment area” – a term used by NGO staff to define the geographic boundary of the area where they work.

Rajan, the young Hindu male project coordinator explained to me that Mission’s motto of “reaching out to the unreached” (in English, no Hindi translation) meant that the Delhi government wanted to extend its welfare services to the poorest people who have so far been left out by the welfare system. Even though the Delhi government had been providing welfare services to the poor for at least five decades, the impact of the services was limited and their reach questionable. Corruption, confusing regulations across multiple departments and lengthy paperwork distanced the poor from benefiting from these services, thus routinizing instead of ameliorating the everyday suffering of

⁵I use the term ‘poverty’ to indicate the social, spatial, and occupational vulnerability faced by people despite their income level, even though people facing any or all the three vulnerabilities are mostly income-poor or below poverty line. Mission Convergence defines poverty on these criteria (detailed discussion in Section 2).

the poor. Gupta (1995) uses the term “malign neglect” to explain this kind of systemic and ordinary suffering of the poor. Mission Convergence was implemented to reach out to the people suffering such malign neglect by not only reforming and expanding the welfare system but also by empowering poor women through vocational training, self help groups, and health and legal counseling, etc, at their doorsteps. Rajan said,

The GRC is the community center where the poor can easily avail government services, [vocational] trainings, free medicines and check-ups, and legal counseling at a stone’s throw from their home.

While Rajan was enthusiastic about the Delhi government’s new initiative towards reaching the unreached, Fatima was certain that the government does not care [to reach her and fix the wall]. Neither was she aware that Mission Convergence was a unique and recent initiative of the Delhi government. For her, it was one of the many “centers” where some free training and services could be availed.

Unlike Fatima, another resident at Wedal named Prasad was well informed about Mission Convergence. 65 year-old Prasad’s hobby was to read newspapers all day long and then inform his friends and neighbors about the recent government promises and policies for the poor. Prasad was so poor that he often borrowed money to buy newspapers, and to use the public pay toilet. He worked part-time as a political party’s *karyakarta* (party worker) at the party’s local office. As a *karyakarta*, Prasad’s job was to mobilize the community’s support towards the party by helping them access different government services such as old age pension and admission in a government school. However, most of Prasad’s time was spent in reading and disseminating news. He was known as the *khabari* (news-giver) of the colony. When I met Prasad in May 2009, he

informed me about Mission Convergence and its 104 GRCs. He looked excited while telling me that this new initiative would provide welfare services at the doorsteps of the poor. But it was only a few days later that I actually came across the GRC with the help of Fatima's daughter Munni. In the meantime, a question that Prasad had raised could not leave my mind, "*but why now [is the government implementing Mission Convergence for the poor]?*" This question paved the foundation for my research on Mission Convergence.

It was Prasad's question coupled with Fatima's conviction that the government is uncaring, alongside Rajan's optimism about the government's new initiative for serving the poor through NGOs like his, that increased my interest in understanding the intentions and workings of Mission Convergence (Henceforth 'Mission', as many slum residents call it). While Fatima Bi feared that her *jhuggi* would be demolished by the government in preparation for the upcoming Commonwealth Games, Rajan was certain that the government had sincere plans about serving poor people like her. Slum demolitions for city modernization and welfare services for the poor were not unprecedented. On the contrary, the two had simultaneously increased and expanded over a period of time in postcolonial India, and especially after the liberalization of the Indian economy in 1991. However, the Commonwealth Games of 2010 were one of the largest efforts of the state to make Delhi a world-class city that would attract global capital (Batra, 2010). Mission was one of the largest efforts of the state to make Delhi an inclusive city that would care for its poor. Both these large-scale developmental efforts, in their specificity between slum demolition and slum welfare, stood in contradiction and

produced an evident tension and confusion for people like Fatima and Prasad. Fatima's worry about her slum's demolition and Prasad's surprise about Mission Convergence are interlinked. They both force us to understand that the relationship between the government and the poor citizens is a complex one wherein, despite knowing their rights and making demands as political voting citizens, the poor have come to normalize the continuing neglect from the welfare state, and therefore question the intentions of its pro-poor projects.

With the introduction of a mass-scale government-NGO partnership for exclusively serving the poor, set notions about who or what is the government, and what the government does for its poor citizens at a time of fast-paced development of an aspiring world-class city – are thrown into disarray. Noted scholars have rightly pointed out that there is much discourse around the assumed decline of the developmental state in the era of neoliberalism, but little is said or known about the kind of state that is replacing it (Gupta and Sivaramakrishnan, 2010; Ferguson, 2009). This dissertation takes up the challenge posed above. My ethnography of Mission Convergence aims to examine whether and how the nature of the state is changing specifically for the millions of poor citizens of an aspiring world-class Delhi situated in a liberalized Indian economy. This dissertation explores the tensions, contradictions, and confusions as they unwrap in the field among the project's different stakeholders (slum residents, government officials, NGO staff, and elected politicians) during the course of my ethnographic fieldwork between 2008 and 2010. Below, I briefly examine the co-

existence of development and disparity in the context of how projects like Mission come to be seen as innovative solutions for bridging the gap.

1.2 Between development and disparity

In search of answers to the economic crisis in 1991, the Indian economy used a complex mix of regulation and de-regulation to integrate with the international economy. The emphasis was on changing policies around trade barriers, taxation, and investment for the opening up of markets to foreign investments and trade (Ahmed, 2011; Gupta and Sivaramakrishnan, 2010; p.19-20). The liberalization of the Indian economy is seen as the beginning of the neoliberal era in India. In line with Ferguson (2009; Peck and Tickell, 2002), I agree that neoliberalism is a complex term that has gained multiple overlapping meanings over the years. I use the term 'neoliberalism' rather carefully in my dissertation to note that in the context of India, it is a macroeconomic doctrine that favors: 1) reduced but important government intervention in the economy; 2) competitive markets; 3) private enterprise over public enterprises, and; 4) an emphasis on running the state like an efficient enterprise (Gupta and Sivaramakrishnan, 2010). Mission as an innovative institutional arrangement is a reflection of the state's effort to work efficiently in partnership with non-state actors. And yet, the working of Mission leaves unanswered questions that arise out of the impact of certain neoliberal policies in the city-state of Delhi.

In deviation from the standard claim that neoliberalism emphasizes reducing public funds by an efficient and cost-cutting government, we see that India has a different story to tell. Scholars have argued that neoliberalism takes different avatars in

alliance with the political and economic environment of a nation-state (Ahmed, 2011; Ferguson, 2009; Gupta and Sivaramakrishnan, 2010, p. 22). In India, higher voter participation from the poorer sections of the population keeps a check on decrease in public expenditure. As a result, the functioning of the democracy allows for market liberalization to take root alongside greater public expenditure.

Twenty years after the liberalization of the Indian economy, mixed results continue to surface. The economy has created a stable middle-class and managed to pull out of poverty several million people. However, despite increased investments in social policy expenditures at the national and state level, there is an increase in the percentage of poor people living in poverty across India (Chatterjee, 2008; Gupta and Sivaramakrishnan, 2010). Economic disparity and economic growth have occurred simultaneously in the post-liberalization India – while 42 percent of Indians live on \$1.25 a day⁶, glorious estimates of India's economy predict that India is an emerging superpower with an 8 percent growth rate. According to the NCUES Report (2006) that evaluated poverty based on indicators beyond basic income and caloric intake, even though the percentage of income-poor in India living on \$1 a day has reduced over the years (from 274 million in 1993-94 to 237 million in 2004-05), the number of people living in social, spatial, occupational and income vulnerabilities has increased by a staggering 100 million over the past decade. The NCEUS Report (2006) argues that approximately 77 percent of Indians live in some form of poverty, i.e., a sub-standard

6

<http://www.worldbank.org.in/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/INDIAEXTN/0,,contentMDK:21880804~pagePK:141137~piPK:141127~theSitePK:295584,00.html>

life with lack of basic amenities and social security. The current population of India is 1.21 billion, with approximately 337 million living in urban areas (Census of India, 2011). This means that 27.8 percent of the total population currently lives in urban areas compared with 25.5 percent in 1991. This percentage is expected to increase to 41 percent by 2030, with over 575 million people living in cities and towns by then (India Urban Poverty Report, 2009⁷). According to the Report of the Committee on Slum Statistics/Census (2010), 61.80 million people were living in slums in India as of 2001 and the UN Population Report (2001) estimated that this number will spiral up to an unprecedented 158.42 million by 2011⁸. Cities in India are viewed as the engines of economic growth, but they are also experiencing unprecedented population growth and lack of basic resources to adequately match this growth.

In the light of the growing urban poverty and greater opportunities for attracting global capital, the burden has fallen on cities to reinvent themselves and compete with each-other for attracting national and global capital investments (Bannerjee-Guha, 2009; Bhan, 2009). Delhi, the capital of an economically booming India, began transforming itself into a 'world-class' city to join this competition and benefit from the inflow of global capital (Batra, 2010). Over the past decade, Delhi improved its civic infrastructure to attract global capital, but in the process, it marginalized millions of poor residents by demolishing slums and restricting informal economies (Batra, 2010; Baviskar, 2006, 2010; Bhan, 2009; Dupont, 2011). Despite several programs and policies for the welfare

⁷ http://data.undp.org.in/poverty_reduction/IUPR_Summary.pdf

⁸ http://mhupa.gov.in/W_new/Slum_Report_NBO.pdf

of its poor citizens, the Delhi government has been heavily criticized for their weak implementation and poor results. Further, mass scale slum demolitions, their resettlement in peripheral wastelands, and poor provision of basic amenities are some indicators that have convinced scholars of the government's intentional exclusion of the urban poor from its development agenda (Batra, 2008, 2010; Batra and Mehra, 2008; Baviskar, 2004, 2006, 2010; Dupont and Ramanathan, 2005; Menon Sen and Bhan, 2008). As a result, Delhi is ripe with contradictions – with 14 million people, it is one of the fastest growing metropolitan cities in the world – but one where nearly 45 percent of its population resides in sub-human conditions in slums or slum-like environments (Delhi Human Development Report, 2006).

Overwhelmed by the growing wealth disparity, visible poverty, and its possible ill-effects on attracting global business and tourism into the city, the government was frantically trying to seek a balance between economic growth and alleviating poverty. The intersection of both these critical agendas alongside the welfare state's obligations to serve its citizens occur through such government programs as Mission Convergence that focus on making Delhi an “inclusive city” for its poor with the intention of also fueling its world-class image. Mission Convergence, as covered throughout this dissertation, is a “good governance” project of government-NGO partnership. It was established in 2008 and continues till date, despite multiple alterations, to transform government relations with its poor citizens. The core objectives of Mission were to enumerate the poor, take stock of the levels and types of poverties, and guide the government in managing poverty through equitable distribution of social welfare funds

and resources while also training poor people's labor (specifically women's) to lift their families out of poverty. In essence, Mission was bringing together supposedly paradoxical ideas such as pro-poor (defined by Ferguson (2009) as unconditional provision of cash and services to the poor), redistribution (use of Delhi's wealth generated through global and local businesses to fund welfare of the poor), and neoliberal (use of NGOs to efficiently and economically to serve government's agenda of making Delhi fit for attracting global capital) (Ferguson, 2009, p. 178). Delhi therefore was trying to create an impression that it was competent in managing its poverty while also preparing itself to attract global capital.

1.3 Research focus

My research examines how Mission's mass-scale government-NGO partnership is introducing a new paradigm for the exclusive governance of the poor in Delhi. I explore the workings of Mission's programs within the overarching paradigm of Delhi as an aspiring world-class city. I do not start with an assumption that the aspirations for a world-class Delhi are at odds with or in opposition to the aspirations of an inclusive Delhi. On the contrary, I argue throughout my dissertation that the two are inseparable. To be more precise, the politics of transforming Delhi into a modern hub for global capital hinges strongly upon the politics of governing the poor in Delhi through programs that aim to include them with the intention of acquiring their political consent and economic labor for the transformation of Delhi.

My research on Mission Convergence contributes a new area of inquiry to the field of urban governance and state-NGO-poor relations through an ethnographic

examination of the everyday practices and experiences of actors impacted by and engaged in the making of a world-class *and* inclusive Delhi. I aim to show that the welfare and empowerment of the poor in Delhi as envisaged by Mission is located between the political economy of a city aspiring to become ‘world-class’ and ‘inclusive’. The two paradigms might seem exclusionary in their approach towards the poor – the world-class Delhi is widely criticized as being built on the backs of the poor while the inclusive Delhi is hopeful of mainstreaming the rights of the poor by efficiently providing government services to them. While the former is guided by the neoliberal principles of global capital accumulation, the latter is grounded in the Delhi government’s welfare obligations towards its poor citizens (c.f. Ferguson, 2009). I argue that Mission’s practices and programs attempt to bridge the gap between both aspirations by creating an exclusive system for the governance of the poor. Mission’s practices highlight that the development trajectory of countries like India often takes an in-between path wherein neoliberal calls for liberalized trade policies (lesser but important state intervention) favoring global economic networks and demanding modern infrastructure, safe and clean spaces, and flexible labor must be achieved alongside reforming and expanding the welfare programs of the government for its poor citizens.

1.4 The question of development

The programs for inspiring, empowering, including, disciplining, and nurturing the poor represent the classic developmental trends highlighted by scholars like Ferguson (1990), Scott (1998), Cruikshank (1999), Mosse (2005), and Li (2005, 2007). Many scholars, including anthropologists, adopt a neo-Marxist approach to the study of

development projects and institutions (Chatterjee, 2008; Escobar, 1995; Kaviraj, 1984; Li, 2007). They see development projects⁹ as an apparatus suspicious of spreading government control, or elite power, or neo-imperialistic capitalism – all of which are criticized for shunning radical social change in favor of maintaining their respective hegemonic strongholds (Bardhan, 1984; Chatterjee, 2008; Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1990; Kaviraj, 1991). As a result, scholars have highlighted that several development projects have failed in achieving their intended/ideal objectives in most parts of the world and as Ferguson (1990) reminds us; their failure has become the norm. Following Ferguson, Li (2005) calls for a critical engagement with development that looks beyond asking why certain schemes fail, choosing to ask more plainly, in her own words, “What do these schemes do? What are their messy contradictory, multilayered, and conjectural effects?” (Li, 2005, p. 384).

In line with the above discussion, Roy (2011) and Ferguson (1994) provide two different answers to this question. Roy (2011) suggests that the continuous production of development solutions is a requirement for the flow of capital from financial and development institutions that boost such projects alongside introducing reforms and conditions that indirectly benefit them or help expand their ideals. Development solutions therefore emerge out of the material and ideological circuits of global capitalism. But Ferguson had noted many years prior to Roy’s current claims that to interpret development projects as “part of the historical expansion of capitalism or as elements in a global strategy for controlling or capitalizing peasant production”,

⁹ Especially those development projects funded by international donor banks to seek greater market flexibility and introduction of new financial regulations (Harvey, 2005)

provides a weak analysis of why development projects are initiated or continued despite weak results (1994, p. 180). Ferguson's ethnographic study of the Canadian government-funded Thaba Tseka development project in Lesotho shows that the global capitalist agenda finds no space for articulation through such projects. But what finds space is the ability of the government to expand its bureaucratic control over spaces and people previously unreached. Ferguson (1990) argues that poverty alleviation is nothing more than a justification through which the government is able to enter uncharted territory and reinforce the power of the bureaucratic state. On an entirely opposite note, Corbridge et al.'s (2005) multi-sited ethnographic study of state-citizen relations in India critiques over-simplistic neo-marxist interpretations of state's development interventions, and in fact points out that the government is concerned with the poverty of its citizens and in devising participatory and inclusive solutions for their benefit. What outcomes these interventions produce are dependent upon the complexity of the social and political relations on the ground, but poor outcomes should not be judged as poor intentions.

I argue that the question of why development projects like Mission are implemented despite recurrent failures does not have a single right answer. In contemporary India, it is difficult to differentiate between the welfare state and the neoliberal state (c.f. Sharma, 2006). I argue that the state's genuine interest in the development of its poor, in the expansion of its bureaucratic control and political legitimacy over their lives, and in enabling the circulation of neoliberal capital and ideas— these are all closely tied and overlapping objectives. Mission's welfare and empowerment programs delivered free of cost at the doorsteps of the poor were expected

to legitimize the authority of the state and showcase the caring and inclusive nature of the government; such programs were simultaneously expected to extend the state's bureaucratic control (through NGOs) on the messy terrains of poverty to produce countable and governable subjects that contribute their labor and political consent towards the making of a world-class Delhi as the hub for global trade and tourism (c.f. Gupta and Sharma, 2006, p. 281). The Delhi government's partnership with NGOs, the establishment of community-based GRCs, the expansive surveys of the poor, the extension of welfare services to more poor added to government registers, and the systematic implementation of a conventional set of women's empowerment programs across all slums in Delhi – all these practices being implemented alongside the frenzy for making Delhi world-class highlight only too clearly that the welfare of the poor in contemporary India remains a significant concern of the post-liberalization Indian. Why this entrenched concern has taken the shape of Mission Convergence in Delhi, and how this concern is being managed or solved by its programs – these are questions my dissertation aims to answer.

Further, I draw attention to Li's analysis that we must look beyond "the state" to other non-state actors – like NGOs, politicians, and local leaders – acting on multiple spatial scales to improve the target population. As Li argues, "the state" has seldom had a monopoly on improvement." (2005, p. 384). Li (2005) suggests aptly that development projects or 'improvement schemes' are never one coherent plan emerging out of the authority of one coherent source. Instead, they maintain a journey through fragmented objectives, techniques, and knowledge that emerge as an 'assemblage' always in the

process of change. Li (2005, p. 386) states that an assemblage is “...always subject to contestation and reformulation by a range of pressures and forces it cannot contain.” I suggest that Mission as an assemblage of development is constituted *and* disturbed by the multiple state and non-state actors that carry conflicting agendas for the poor in particular, and, for the city in general.

The development theories examined above highlight that in order to study a specific urban policy, it is important to look at the intentions behind the policy as it evolves from political and economic motivations and forces across the global, national, and local scales (Brenner, 2002; Harvey, 2005; Robinson, 2002; Roy 2011, 2011a). Large scale development projects like Mission are formulated with certain intentions – make the government responsive to the poor, alleviate poverty, and empower the poor to break through the cycle of poverty. Such project ideals, when implemented, activate several expected as well as unexpected changes not only on the target population that they intend to develop but also on prominent actors sharing political and economic relations with these populations. An ethnographic examination of the intentions that introduce Mission as a solution to Delhi’s growing poverty and the changes that they unleash in the slums of Delhi reveal multiple things to us: the political and economic logics behind the intention; the gaps between the *intended* and the *implemented*, and most importantly, the political, economic and social relationships sustained or strained in the process of the working of the intention.

1.5 Anthropology of the state and the government

Anthropologists have provided a new meaning to the concept of state. Unlike philosophers, political scientists, and sociologists who studied the state as a system distinct from the society, an autonomous actor, an instrument of capitalist class, or an object not worthy studying, anthropologists examine the state as a product of cultural processes and social relations (Fuller and Benei, 2000; Gupta and Sharma, 2006). Contrary to neo-Marxist and Weberian theories of the state that saw culture as a product of the state, certain prominent anthropologists (Corbridge et al., 2005; Gupta, 1995, 2005; Ferguson and Gupta, 2002; Gupta and Sharma, 2006; Ong, 1999) conceptualize the state within the context of the family, civil society and the economy, and global capitalism, thus rejecting the state-civil society binary which has been at the core of several prominent theories of state (c.f. Skocpol, 1979).

Ethnographers explore the *mundane minutiae* – the microscopic relationship between different people and the mechanisms of the state at the level of the everyday. Anthropological studies of the state are mostly known as ethnographies of the “profane, mundane, and banal bureaucratic working of the state at the local level” (Fuller and Benei, 2000, p. 16). Anthropologists look to understand the micropolitics of state at work and how the citizens engage in a constant process of imagining, encountering and re-imagining the state through their daily direct or indirect (through intermediaries) interactions with state machinery, and through their discussions, rumors, narratives about the state (Jeffrey and Lerche, 2000; Gupta and Sharma, 2006). Gupta (2005, p. 28, also Tarlo, 2000; Corbridge et al., 2005) points out that the most mundane practices and

representations of the state along with the materiality of the state's practices are located in statistics, reports, surveys, offices, transfers, inspections, and bureaucratic processes. For many poor people, such practices and materials have life-changing repercussions, and therefore allocate great power in the hands of specific state actors (Tarlo, 2000). For the poor in Delhi, their ability to receive welfare services was dependent on the files, reports, and offices of the welfare departments and elected politicians. These materials defined the state rather unpleasantly for the poor and highlighted a lop-sided relationship between the poor as beneficiaries and the state as benefactors.

Beyond the local, anthropologists have examined the increase in the supra-national and non-state actors that constitute the state (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002), also indicating how state practices at the level of the everyday are changed through the state's policies emerging out of circuits of global neoliberal ideology and capital (Dolhinow, 2005; Gupta and Sharma, 2006; Roy, 2011; Sharma, 2008). Drawing on Foucault's notion of governmentality and a Marxist emphasis on political economy, Ong (1999) proposes that special attention be given to the regulatory effects that particular institutions like the state and the economy have in making particular kinds of subjects and also how these subjects respond to the changing political-economic conditions induced by globalization. The general assumption is that states in the neoliberal era are eroding and minimizing, shunning welfare, thinning the apparatus, and being economics-centric. However, Ong (1999; also Brenner, 2002; Ferguson, 2009; Gupta and Sivaramakrishnan, 2010; Sinha, 2010) asserts that the state is anything but shrinking in today's neoliberal global era. Instead, the state is only taking more flexible forms.

Ferguson and Gupta (2002) show how the state is emboldened through neoliberalism – the state extends its tactics of governance through diverse actors which are either taking over or sharing states' responsibilities (these actors include - international NGOs, community NGOs, government NGOs, transnational agencies, local struggling groups). Ferguson and Gupta (2002) show that state has tactics to claim hierarchy (verticality) and encompassment (localization) among its population even when its functions are displaced on to other actors. Anthropology of the state has therefore been largely successful in dismantling the logic of a material, centralized, and coherent state, and instead produces a fragmented, multiple, and discourse-dependent idea and effect of the state that exists above and beyond its visible and assumed materiality and national boundaries.

The postcolonial state in India has been predominantly understood as a system separated from the common citizen by the passive revolution of the elites enabled through their bureaucratic controls (Kaviraj, 1984; Chatterjee, 1986). More recently, the passive revolution theory has been extended to show the utilization of development projects as a technique to pacify the poor and avoid violence by those suffering from the nexus of industrial capital, elites, and state bureaucracy (Chatterjee, 2008). Despite this Gramscian outlook on the state as being managed by the dominant class, scholars have also pointed out that this does not make the state a cohesive unit. Most Indian scholars have argued that the state-society boundary is porous and unclear and that social forces play a significant role in influencing the working of the state in the everyday lives of its citizens (Edelman and Mitra, 2006; Harriss, 2010; Harriss-White, 2002; Jeffrey, 2001).

As a result, people who come together to constitute the state at different levels do not share a common vision, purpose, or interest. In fact, they are often in competition or conflict with one another — as we see in Section 3.

My dissertation on Mission suggests that the state, through its networks across multiple government departments and partnering nongovernmental organizations that intersect within this Delhi government project, decides what Mission should do on an everyday basis, how it must access the poor, and what results it must produce on the ground. Attending to the state's welfare obligations through an efficiency based inter-sectoral model of governance enables the state to spread its ideology (of 'reaching the unreached'), agenda (managing poverty), and material presence (through GRC infrastructure and its welfare services). This initiative of the Delhi government was understood by several slum residents as the initiative of local NGOs, several of which already run centers on the same model as the GRCs, and are known as "*silaii kadhaii* centers" (tailoring-embroidery centers). Few slum residents also noted that the "Sheila Dixit government" (Sheila Dixit is the Chief Minister of Delhi) was simplifying welfare procedures for their benefit – as if the government were one specific entity or actor operating from a single site and through a single agenda. Most partnering NGO viewed Mission as a political strategy of the government, and a much required one at that. Despite being a significant cog of this political strategy, NGOs continued to see themselves as different from the government, often complaining that their "partnership" was a farce, and that they worked more like paid contractors than as equal partners of the government. Politicians, however, vented over the "outsourcing of democracy" and

“privatization” of the government once NGOs started provision of welfare services. For all politicians I interviewed, government and NGOs were separate entities and the two had no business in working as partners for serving the poor. These ethnographic considerations give me the impression that the state and the government do succeed at some level to produce an effect of unity and rationality. And yet, at the level of the everyday, the unity and the rationality take on complex, fragmented, conflicting, and competing logics of government.

In my dissertation, I examine the state as a symbolic and material entity which is multifaceted and internally fractured. Following Ferguson (1990), I view the state not as a unitary actor or material reality, but a way in which multiple power relations come together in a coordinated manner to assert control over the population. In agreement with several scholars, my research dispels the idea that the state is distinct from civil society and in fact asserts that dispersed networks of social actors and non-state institutions assist the state with its processes of governance and especially with expanding and consolidating its control over populations (Foucault, 1991; Ferguson and Gupta, 2002; Gupta and Sharma, 2006; Mitchell, 1991; Rose, 1996).

In the sections below, I first introduce the core stakeholders that impact and are impacted by Mission’s practices and then move on to discuss in detail the concerns that activated the government’s attention towards making a world-class as well as an inclusive city.

1.6 A description of the stakeholders

1.6.1 The Delhi government

Delhi is a federally managed union territory but has the political structure of a state with its own government constituted by seventy members of the legislative assembly (MLAs) that represent the seventy constituencies in Delhi. There are two prominent political parties that have presided over the legislature over the past twenty years – Indian National Congress (INC, also popularly known as ‘Congress’) and Bharatiya Junta Party (BJP).¹⁰ The Congress Party has been in majority in the legislature since 1998 and the head of the legislature is the Chief Minister (governor) of Delhi, Sheila Dixit.

The MLAs play a major role in the infrastructural development¹¹ of their constituency for which each receives Rs. 20 Million (\$445,000 approx.¹²) under the Local Area Development Scheme (LADS) for a period of five years from the Delhi government (Delhi Citizen Forum, 2003).¹³ However, almost 50 percent of these funds are returned unused to the Delhi government due to the tedious coordination required across departments, long delays, and the lack of such projects to generate immediate political goodwill within the constituency. The MLAs therefore had come to rely heavily on identifying and approving the needy for 42 different welfare schemes provided by

¹⁰ As of 2011, 24 MLAs are from BJP, 5 from other smaller parties, while the majority is from Congress.

¹¹ Infrastructural development under LADS includes: construction of school buildings, community halls, hostels for working women or school girls, public toilets, public libraries, water tanks, roads and drainages, parks and street lights, etc.

¹² Throughout the dissertation, I have used the Rupees (Rs.) to US Dollar (\$) conversion rate of Rs. 45 for \$1. As of March 18, 2011, the conversion rate is at Rs. 45.1 for \$1.

¹³ Center for Civil Society: http://www.ccsindia.org/ccsindia/dh_pdf/ch_25mlalocalarea.pdf

eight different government departments. The MLAs act as authorized middle-men between the department bureaucrats and the welfare-requiring citizens. This authority enables several of them to create political goodwill and also to engage in corrupt practices in partnership with welfare staff and local leaders (*pradhans*).

In the context of Mission, I define the Delhi government as constituting the following actors: elected politicians (MLAs and Chief Minister) and, bureaucrats and lower level staff that manage different departments of the government. As will become evident through ethnographic details in Section 3, even though Mission is a Delhi government initiative led by the Chief Minister and is planned and managed by government bureaucrats (with inputs from international and national development consultants), it meets with stiff resistance from MLAs and bureaucrats that constitute the same government. Collusion as well as conflicts between different Delhi government actors shows that the concept of “government” is a fragmented reality (despite having material and manual presence) that operates through multiple logics of multiple actors.

1.6.2 Mission Convergence

Mission was established in August 2008 as an autonomous body registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860. But my research shows that there is nothing “autonomous” about Mission as it operates within the institutional and ideological domain of the state. It was conceptualized, designed and funded by the Delhi government in consultation with academics and local and international development consultants. The government bureaucrats working in Mission continue to manage and monitor it on an everyday basis and its partnering NGOs run its programs on the ground.

These characteristics make Mission a Government-organized NGO, or a GONGO. I view Mission as a “government project” whose programs are implemented on the ground through partnering NGOs. Sharma (2006) does an excellent job defining the power dynamics and everyday field practices of a GONGO. In her case, she argues that the government cannot entirely wash its hands off welfare duties and therefore uses collaborative institutional arrangements like GONGOs to expand its work and reach. Similarly, in the case of Mission, the Delhi government recognized that it could not serve the growing poor in ways that NGOs were trying to do with their established networks, services and infrastructure in the slums. NGOs worked as government’s “partners” to survey the poor and deliver its programs at their doorsteps– not to replace the government’s intervention in the same. The GONGO arrangement did enable the government to extract more information about the nature and number of poor in the slums of Delhi as the government tried to popularize itself as “caring” of the poor.

Mission’s institutional structure is broadly divided into two parts: headquarter and field. There are three kinds of staff working at the Mission headquarter, also known as the Project Management Unit (PMU): 1) government bureaucrats; 2) development specialists hired on contract; and, 3) development consultants from the World Bank and the United Nations (UN). Mission’s director is a high-ranking government bureaucrat. She is the highest authority in the project and reports directly to the Chief Secretary (highest ranking bureaucrat in the Delhi government) and the Chief Minister of Delhi. Consultants from the World Bank and the United Nations assist Mission’s director with policy formulation and provide advice on how to implement different programs. The

development specialists hired by Mission assist with the implementation of Mission's programs. Figure 1.2 illustrates the institutional structure of Mission Convergence.

1.6.3 Gender Resource Centers (GRCs) and other partnering NGOs

At the level of the field, there are 104 NGOs that have partnered with Mission and are implementing programs through Gender Resource Centers (GRCs) in low income areas across Delhi. These NGOs are selected by the project management unit based on their past development record and reputation in the community. Most NGOs are small scale secular organizations established and run by middle-class people. These NGOs have been working in poor areas through large and small funded projects on issues like water and sanitation, women's rights, health, vocational trainings, non formal education, etc. Two out of the four NGOs in my catchment areas worked primarily on women's empowerment and were headed by middle class feminist women. Each GRC hires eight individuals who run different programs for service delivery and women's empowerment there. One female and one male community mobilizers are hired from within the community and serve as the main contact between the GRC and the community.

The GRCs are supervised by two different kinds of NGOs – two “Mother NGOs” (MNGOs) each of which supervises the overall work progress of approximately fifty NGOs, and; nine District Resource Centers (DRCs), one located in each of the nine districts in Delhi. DRCs specifically supervise the welfare delivery component of all the GRCs working within their district and they also collaborate with the Deputy Commissioner in their district to take the welfare approval forward. The GRCs therefore

are supervised and supported by a network of other NGOs placed into a hierarchy by the Project Management Unit. Figure 1.3 illustrates the GRC staff hierarchy.

The GRCs are funded by the department of Women and Child Development (WCD) of the Delhi government. It is one of the eight welfare-providing departments and provides Rs. 72,800,000 (\$1.6 Million approx.) per year for the construction and everyday operations of the 104 GRCs. Each GRC receives a monthly funding of Rs.145,000 (\$3,333) for staff salaries, rent, and for running women's empowerment programs. This is excluding the Rs.80,000 (\$1,740) for the GRC's initial set up cost and an additional Rs.80,000 for the set-up costs involving vocational training equipments and materials.

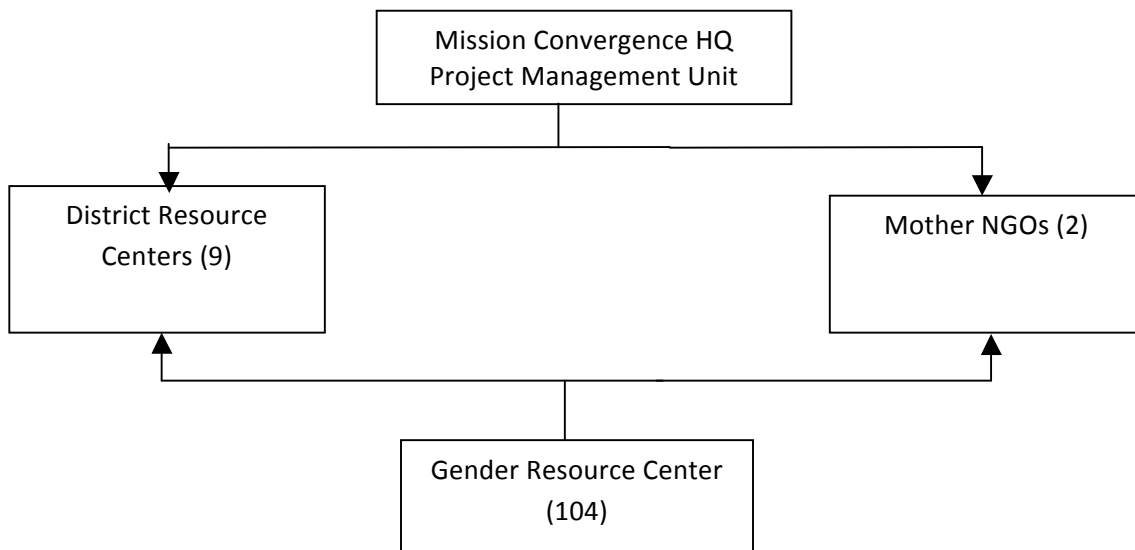


Fig.1.2. Institutional structure of Mission Convergence

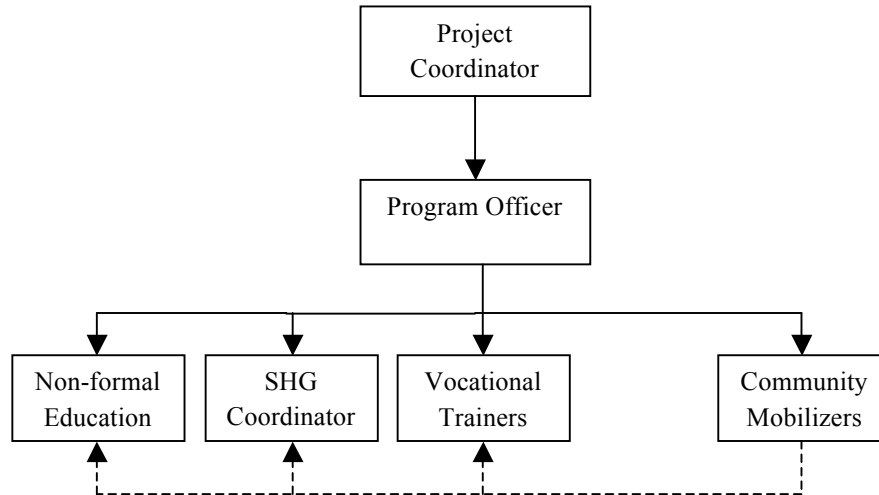


Fig.1.3. GRC staff hierarchy

1.6.4 Slum residents

Recent figures indicate the at least 65 percent of the total population of Delhi or approximately 9 million out of 14 million people reside in different variations of slums and resettlement colonies (Bhan, 2009). These areas are categorized based on their poor basic infrastructure and lack of basic amenities like potable water, sanitation, functional clinics and schools, safe housing, drains, sewers, and roads. Table 1 below indicates the different kinds of housing options available in Delhi and the percentages of people residing in them. The columns in bold indicate the areas where Mission's GRCs are established to serve the residents there.

Table 1.1.

Housing types in Delhi (blue indicates the housing types where Mission works).
 Source: Government of Delhi (2004), *Economic Survey of Delhi 2002–2003*,
 Government of Delhi, New Delhi. (Bhan, 2009, p. 132).

Type of settlement	Percentage of total population
JJ cluster (shanties)	14.8
Slum-designated areas	19.1
Unauthorized colonies	5.3
Resettlement colonies	12.7
Regularized-unauthorized colonies	12.7
Rural villages	5.3
Urban villages	6.4
Planned colonies	23.7
Total	100.0

It must be made clear that not all people residing in these areas are income-poor. And neither do all slum residents associate with the word “poor”. I use the term “poor” and “slum resident” interchangeably but carefully while discussing the policies of the government for the people residing in spatial vulnerability – one of the vulnerability criteria’s of the Delhi government. When discussing individuals and families. I provide details of the basic income and living condition of each slum resident or family in order to show the different vulnerabilities faced by them. The basic average income earned by most of my informants across four slum colonies was between Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 10,000 per month (\$45 to \$220). Though each family’s standard of living is dependent upon the

number of wage-earning members, almost all of my informants (with the exception of those residing in specific sections of Sethu slum) have basic amenities like electricity connection, cooking gas, refrigerator, television, and ability to have three square meals a day (by buying subsidized food grains and fuel from the government-authorized public distribution system). Some families have to decide between sending their children to college, or arranging for the marriage of their daughters, or receiving treatment for an illness. Considering these other parameters of poverty, the Delhi government formulated proxy indicators based on the social, spatial, and occupational vulnerabilities faced by the income-poor as well as non-income poor. I explain this further in a later section on Mission's programs. I also examine the changing nature of slums in India in a later section. Below, I examine the urban boom in India to show why exactly the Delhi government found it necessary to implement Mission.

1.7 The urban boom and slums in India

The postcolonial Indian state has primarily focused its policies and resources on the development and welfare of its rural areas because until recently, about 70 percent of the Indian population resided in rural India. Urban policies mainly focused on infrastructure development, not on creating sound institutional responses to the growing population and poverty in urban India. Policy makers assumed that urban poverty was a temporary phenomenon which would be solved with the gradual modernization of the cities (Beall, 2000; p. 846). But policy makers are now realizing that the growth of urban India requires a radical policy shift.¹⁴ According to McKinsey's report on India's

¹⁴ <http://www.livemint.com/2011/07/16000221/Fresh-thrust-to-urbanization.html?h=E>

urbanization, urban India will witness a growth by 250 million people over the next 20 years and the urban population will rise to 590 Million by 2030. This will mean that almost double of current US population will reside in urban centers alone in India, a country one-third the size of the US.

In Delhi, the urban population is estimated to rise from 14 million in 2011 to 25.5 million by 2030. According to McKinsey economists this kind of urban population growth is unprecedented in human history and will require certain immediate infrastructural and governance reforms to brace for such inflow of population.¹⁵ These reforms would have to focus on a 70 percent increase in work creation to meet the economic demands of the increasing urban populations. Work creation requires increased investment in infrastructural expansion and modernization for attracting investments from Indian and global corporations. Governmental intervention in preparing these cities as urban economic centers for global trade, and tourism are therefore considered imperative for the successful growth of Indian cities. The idea of making Delhi into a world-class city is justified by the government in the light of expanding urban population and their economic needs. But what remains unjustified is the suffering of the poor as the city expands and modernizes its infrastructure to become an economic hub. Below, I provide a brief history of slums in Delhi to prove that the idea of slums has changed with the onset of neoliberal urbanization, thus further marginalizing the poor.

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(https://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/Economic_Studies/Country_Reports/Indias_high_stakes_urban_challenge_2571)

Slums are illegal and informal spaces where the poor reside for lack of better options. Slums are known as an off-shoot of rapid urbanization and weak development policies of the state¹⁶ (c.f. Davis, 2006). Only about 25 percent of Delhi's population currently lives in planned colonies while the majority lives in slums or slum-like conditions (Bhan, 2009). Attention from media (especially with movies like *Slumdog Millionaire*, *Salaam Bombay*, *City of God*), development sector (hundreds of NGOs work in slums and receive government and international funding for their work here), government programs and services (free schools, hospitals, community centers, welfare services), and from civil society (either middle class residential associations favoring its eradication or middle-class activists fighting for its permanence - both on the grounds of human rights), have in fact situated slums at the center-stage of mainstream development intervention. Like in India's other metropolitans, slums are a prominent fixture on Delhi's landscape, but the idea of the slum has taken various meanings in the post-independent India.

Prior to independence from the British colonial rule, India became the capital of the British Empire in 1911, exactly a century ago. Between 1911 and 1937, the British developed a new area away from the old Walled City area of Delhi that was built during the earlier centuries of Mughal rule. This new area came to be known as New Delhi. While New Delhi became known for its architectural design and planning as the hub of British administration and residence, the Walled City lay neglected, filthy and

¹⁶ Weak policies for the agricultural, educational, and economic development in rural areas cause mass-scale migration from rural to urban India, and, weak policies for affordable housing that are unable to meet the basic demands for shelter of the increasing city population lead to the creation of slums.

overcrowded with ‘natives’ and a rush of migrants who came to work in the booming mercantile markets of the city (Batra, 2010; Sharan, 2006). In essence, the Walled City was transformed from a bustling city into a slum with the onset of the development of the “New Delhi”. Batra (2010) points out that the workers who built New Delhi and the people who were evicted for its development were confined to the crumbling Walled City – quite like the current mass of poor who build and run the aspiring world-class Delhi but are shunned into its peripheries.

As early as the 1950’s, the newly-independent Indian government considered housing a basic right of all citizens and slums a disgrace to the nation. Delhi being the capital of India formulated policies to meet the housing need of the growing populations (that increased with the flow of post-partition migrants from Pakistan in 1947) through federal government’s Five-Year Plans and the Delhi government’s Master Plans (Beall, 2000, p. 846; Dupont, 2008). Dupont (2008) notes that despite a good start, the Delhi government’s prime department for land acquisition and development – the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) – failed to meet the housing needs of low-income people and that led to the creation of informal settlements on public land (Dupont and Ramanathan, 2007 examine in detail how the DDA plans went awry). As a result, the slum population increased from 4 percent of Delhi’s population in 1951 to 27 percent in 1998, i.e. an increase in the slum population from 63,000 to 3,000,000 (Dupont, 2008, p. 81). The emergency period (1975-77) however temporarily halted the growth of slum. During the emergency, apart from several other undemocratic programs like the sterilization drive (Tarlo, 1995, 2000), a city beautification drive in major cities

demolished thousands of slums and forced millions of people into peripheral resettlement colonies with no roads, clinics, or schools.¹⁷

In general, between the 1960's and 1990's, the federal and Delhi government considered affordable housing the right of the poor and therefore made efforts to meet this growing need. Approximately 40 resettlement colonies were built between 1965 and 1985 with the logic of decongesting the city and providing better housing to the poor (Puri and Bhatia, 2009). However, with more than 3 million people living in 1,000 slum clusters across Delhi as of 1998, and at least 50,000 people migrating into Delhi slums every year, the problems of slums had become too big to manage.¹⁸ Further, middle-class judicial activism against slums in their neighborhoods gained strength in the 1990's to emphasize on the illegal nature of slum residency and the right of the legal tax payer to live in clean environments (Baviskar, 2002, 2003; Ramanathan, 2005, 2006). The concern for creating decent housing for the poor was replaced by the growing elite and middle-class's emphasis on ridding Delhi of all slums to make it an aesthetically appealing city. Ghertner (2008) notes that slums now began to be seen as nuisance created by the poor taking over spaces and making them illegal as well as unaesthetic,

¹⁷ Some residents of Surja resettlement colony have narrated stories about their eviction from the center of the city and forceful resettlement in the then peripheries of Delhi. Dadu is an 80 year old Hindu man. He was evicted from Majnu Tila in North Delhi (near the Delhi University campus) in 1975 under the city beautification plan. He said, "*We were ten of us – me, my wife and children, and three relatives. The government truck came one day, rounded us all up, pushed us in, and came to this place. We were told this would be our new home. We were given a plot of land and we were supposed to make our own house there. There were fields on all sides. No ration shops, no roads to the city, nothing. All of that came after about 10 years. Until then, we just lived, somehow.*"

¹⁸ It is estimated by the Slum and Juggi Jhonpri department of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) that at least 200,000 people migrate to Delhi every year, out of which 50,000 make slums their new home (Puri and Bhatia, 2009).

not as spaces where people resided due to lack of other options. The government that previously emphasized replacing slums with decent housing for the poor now focused on getting rid of slums with restricted options of resettlement.

The economic liberalization starting with 1991 was also the time when neoliberalism had begun impacting governmental development policies and economy in India (Dupont, 2011). In the 2000's, mass slum demolitions became common as Delhi prepared itself for its entry into the global economic circuit (Baviskar, 2006; Dupont, 2011; Ramanathan, 2005). The emphasis was on converting slum-occupied "dead land" into profit-bearing land that can be sold off to private corporations while transferring select slum residents into subsidized plots in resettlement colonies. For example, 35,000 families were evicted from the Yamuna Pushta slums located on the banks of river Yamuna on the claims that it polluted the river (Menon-Sen, 2010). A part of the cleared area is currently being developed as a recreational site on the theme of River Thames in London. Further, the \$20 Billion federal scheme known as National Urban Renewal Mission¹⁹ was established in 2005 to disburse conditional funds to sixty-three cities across India for their modernization (Mahadevia, 2011). Also, \$13 Billion were spent on modernizing Delhi for the Commonwealth Games of 2010 while an estimated three million poor were displaced in the process – this only further confirmed that Delhi was prioritizing material modernization that often limited the fundamental rights of its poor citizens. Batra (2010) notes that the Delhi government's policies are exclusionary of the poor such that they create a superficially modern city with no space for the poor who

¹⁹ I provide more details on this project in Section 2

construct this modern city and make it work. He uses the term ‘apartheid city’ to define the spatial and economic disparities arising out of the government’s exclusionary policies. Even though apartheid connotes racial or social segregation, Batra aptly applies it to highlight the spatial dimension of economic exclusion taking place in Delhi.

1.8 Beyond slumdog megacity and subaltern urbanism

Above, I have summarized that the idea of the slum has changed over the past sixty years in post-colonial India. Rapid neoliberal development is making the government focus on eradicating slums such that India should no longer be defined by its sprawling poverty and deprivation in the public discourse. However, there is a stark contrast between the fast-paced urbanism that is uprooting slums in favor of creating modern cities in India and the scholarly discourses being circulated about the “slumdog” and subaltern nature of Indian slums. Roy (2011) argues that cities in the global South have been popularly defined as “slumdog megacities” and characterized by their informal, unstructured, and filthy spaces energized by sparks of entrepreneurial energy of the poor. Such definitions emerge in stark contrast to the global or world-class cities of the North. The megacities of the South are seen as aspiring but struggling to emerge from the shadows of the standards of the western world-class cities. The chaotic energy and desperation to succeed in the megacities is further defined through public media experiments like *Slumdog Millionaire*. Roy notes that while cities like Mumbai and Delhi come to be known as slumdog megacities, little attention is paid to who claims them to be so, and why.

Challenging the interpretation of the cities of the South as struggling slumdog megacities, certain scholars have elaborated on the subaltern nature of the megacity which thrives economically and politically, despite many odds – one of them being lack of governmental support (Chatterjee, 2004; Benjamin, 2008). These scholars provide terms like occupancy urbanism, political society, subaltern cosmopolitanism, alternative entrepreneurialism, and *jugaar* mentality (make-do with whatever you get) to create a new yet equally homogeneous interpretation of the cities of the South as organic grounds of subaltern urban survivalism and politics that does not care to fit into the mould of development defined by the west. Roy (2011, p. 226) calls this ‘subaltern urbanism’, a concept that tries to resurrect slums as spaces of desperation and instead focus on its local vibrant entrepreneurial energy.

Roy argues that both interpretations of the city, the slumdog megacity and subaltern urbanism, are important but offer a biased, partial, and synecdochic version of the city in which the slum is the center or the backbone of the city. Poverty, desperation, raw energy, and unique survival strategies have come to define both interpretations to an extent that the slum has become synecdochic with the city of the developing South.

Roy is correct in her analysis of the synecdochic nature of Southern urbanism which also explains why governments are making efforts at redefining the city through policy interventions such as Mission. The idea is to replace the synecdoche of the Southern city as the slum with the synecdoche of the Southern city as a world-class city. This re-formation of the synecdoche is considered crucial for the governments in attracting global capital. Mission was implemented to soothe the blow of neoliberal

forces that work to alter the synecdoche of Delhi and make it a world-class city, and also to channelize the entrepreneurial energy of the slums towards the economy of an aspiring city. In the sections below, I first provide an overview of literatures on the concepts of world-class city and inclusive city and then show how urbanism links the two concepts into a cohesive unit of synecdochic development.

1.9 Making a world-class and inclusive Delhi

The idea of a world-class city emerged around the 1970's when global and transnational businesses began booming in the west. A world-class city, also commonly known as world city or global city, is a concept that was first coined by Peter Hall in his seminal 1966 book titled 'The World City'. The term world-class city or global city (Freidmann, 1986; Sassen, 2006) is used by urban scholars to explain a certain kind of urban explosion across the world that caters to economic elites and corporations through set characteristics like clean and modern infrastructure, safe and well-connected spaces, skilled labor, political stability, and a government encouraging of economic opportunities. To make a city world-class means to make its zones of poverty invisible or to make them compatible with the world-class city image. In Delhi, "world-class" is the term actually used by the Delhi Development Authority in its official documents on city plan (Delhi Development Authority, 2007; Dupont, 2008). This term is commonly used by scholars and activists to explain the growing frenzy among policy makers and the middle-class for converting Delhi into a city that meets the standards of popular business and tourist destinations like Shanghai, Dubai, New York, London, and Tokyo.

According to Freidmann and Wolff (1982, p. 310) world cities share a dialectical relationship with the world systems. They suggest that open trade between the core, semi-periphery, and periphery – with core operating as the node – leads to the creation of world cities as “key basing points” and “command and control nodes” for corporations (Robinson, 2002). Global or world-cities are major sites for majority of the production of innovation emerges while the periphery is where cities of the third world provide to the core their cheap and flexible labor in their sweatshops and back processing offices (and these distinct zones exist even within each city). The world system is reproduced and strengthened by the forces of neoliberal capitalism as cities across the world compete to become world-class at the cost of marginalization of its own citizens (c.f. Ahmed, 2011 for discussion on Delhi’s leap from manufacturing to service industry to attract global capital, and its impact on the economic exclusion of the urban poor). Olds and Yeung (2004, p. 495) state that “global cities are represented as the visible manifestation of the global economy” as they showcase the “relationship between globalization, urban change, and uneven development” (2004, p. 495). Brenner (2004) reminds us that despite a seemingly free-market neoliberally-driven enterprise of making world-class cities, the state plays the most significant role because global cities are not only expected to attract global capital but also validate nationalist territorial developmental claims of the state.

Robinson (2002, 2006) is a strong critic of state policies that make “calculated attempts” at making world-class cities. She argues that such policies do not take into consideration the geopolitical, historical and economic contexts that differentiate the

cities of the developed and developing countries. Despite high percentage of citizens living in poverty, such policies prioritize prominent sectors of the global economy for development and investment while neglecting the state's welfare duties towards the poor (Robinson, 2006, p. 111). States like India are diverting disproportionate amounts of public resources and funds to construct 'show-case' infrastructure or to host international sports or trade events at the cost of marginalizing its own citizens in dire needs of these resources (Batra, 2010; Olds and Yeung, 2004, p. 505-507). Such events and infrastructures have been growing fast in Delhi and are publicized as glorious national assets to the common person to justify its costs (Dupont, 2008). These represent what Olds and Yeung (2004, p. 507) claims is a "reterritorialization of state power from the national scale towards the urban scale" to create 'glocal' territories that serve global economy and therefore act as hubs of economic growth for the entire nation (c.f. Bhan, 2009; Brenner, 1998, 2004; Srivastava, 2009). Such vivid intersections of the local with the global and of economic growth with political territorial developmental claims are driving many governments, including Delhi's, to devise policies for fast-tracking their evolution into a world-class city.

In contemporary post-liberal India, physical restructuring of the city is seen as the prime indicator of economic growth as well as a political indicator of a responsive state willing to invest into a fast-growing economy. But in cities like Delhi and Mumbai, where poverty is visible and growing, material restructuring alone cannot serve the purpose. Further, as cities modernize to attract global capital, the social and economic disparities come to the surface. Tall buildings and shanties stand in stark contrast with

one another. Slums as illegal and disorganized spaces become the prime target of such modernization projects and the slum residents its prime victims. The mass displacement of the poor, rising homelessness, and the ensuing loss of their livelihoods hinders the modernizing city's economic and social fabric. Social policy interventions are planned to manage poverty and to assimilate the poor into the making of a world-class city.

For urban centers like Delhi, it is imperative to include the poor into its agendas for economic development because the poor are the backbone of the city's economy. The number of poor in urban centers is so huge (and growing) that they can neither be ignored nor banished out of the city in any sustainable manner without negatively impacting the economy of the city. The poor provide cheap and flexible labor to all kinds of businesses and therefore help the city keep production costs under check. Further, the high economic stakes of the poor in cities like Delhi ensures that the struggles for right to the city become even more intense and can also have profound ramifications on the government's ability to maintain political consent that can further spill over and affect the city's ability to attract global capital (Freidmann and Wolff, 1982, p. 330).

Recognizing their marginalization in the process of making a world-class city, the poor in the city criticize urban policies. Their struggles are evident in large and small protests organized around slum demolitions, peripheral resettlement, homelessness, and ban on informal economies as direct violation of their basic human rights to shelter and

livelihood (Hazard Center, 2007; Holston, 2009; Menon-Sen and Bhan, 2008).²⁰

Through his long-term ethnographic research with autoconstruction (slum) residents in Brazil, Holston (2009, p. 245) shows that residents organize action against the “entrenched regimes of citizen inequality that the urban centers use to segregate them”.

He confronts Chatterjee’s (2004) claims that the Indian society is divided into civil society and political society and that the latter are lesser citizens with tenuous rights due to the illegality of their residence and livelihood. Using examples of successful urban rights movements and alliances among slum residents in Brazil, India (specifically Mumbai), and elsewhere, Holston claims that the poor are aware of their rights and use their peripheral location as a site for a movement to demand their right to the city, i.e., a right to property ownership, basic amenities, and decent life. In the slums of Delhi, an organized call for the right to the city has originated predominantly from sympathetic middle-class civil society organizations than from the slum residents themselves (I talk in greater detail about NGO-middle class interests in Section 2). NGOs like Hazard Center work both as organizations and as movements to engage the slum residents to make demands of the state. Unlike Holston’s claims, I assert that the slum residents in Delhi have relied upon a mix of support from civil society (NGO) and their own political identity as voters to make demands of the state for their right to shelter, livelihood, and basic amenities. Residents in my field sites were well aware of their rights as citizens but unlike the autoconstruction residents of Brazil, they were not always convinced that their

²⁰ One strong resistance group is the Bhalaswa Lok Shakti Manch (Bhalaswa People’s Power Group) organized by the women residents of Bhalaswa, a peripheral resettlement colony in Delhi. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0HqAZxFlnQ>). Another strong resistance group was formed by the Delhi University students to protest the displacement of the poor and the \$13 Billion spent on the Commonwealth Games of October 2010.

rights could generate the desired results. NGOs' call for collective action and demands were interspersed by local gatekeepers and local elected politicians and often resulted in fragmented and temporary movements. Despite more than 45 percent of Delhi's population living in slum-like conditions, there is no common grassroots platform or movement that voices their demands. Scholars and academics have highlighted their plight, but grassroots action has been small, rare, or temporary – though not entirely invisible or ineffective.

Due to the high economic stakes and the growing resistance of the poor, the government is now simultaneously making efforts through large-scale programs like Mission to show that it cares for its poor citizens. These programs are expected to alleviate or at least manage the poverty in Delhi with the core intention of nurturing model citizens through specific programs for their welfare and empowerment (Roy, 2011). Mission uses the language of “reaching the unreached” as its core slogan. One of Mission's advertisement claims that “*Mission Convergence is a movement to bring the benefits through 42 schemes of Delhi government to 40 lakh unreached families*”. A picture on the back cover of Mission's brochure (Reaching the Unreached, 2009) shows that poor women now have “a ray of hope” (Figures 1.4 and 1.5 below). Such materials presented the language of a state caring towards its poor citizens.



Fig. 1.4. “We strive to change lives.” An advertisement in a national newspaper claiming that Mission is a “movement”. Source: The Hindu, August 12, 2009.

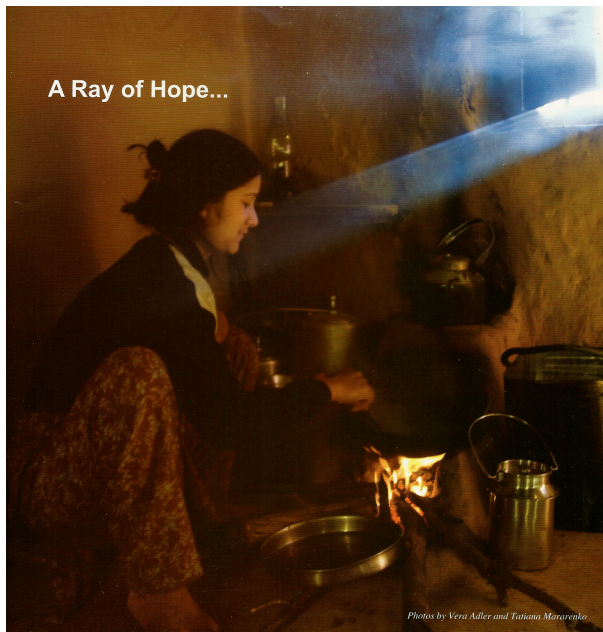


Fig. 1.5. “A ray of hope.” Source: Reaching the unreached, project brochure, 2009.

The Delhi government claimed that Mission's programs will make Delhi an 'inclusive city' – a term that had gained much popularity since the United Nations Center for Human Settlement (UNCHS) Global Campaign on Urban Governance in 2001 for making cities inclusive across the urbanizing world. The campaign defines 'inclusive city' as,

A place where everyone, regardless of wealth, gender, age, race or religion, is enabled to participate productively and positively in the opportunities cities have to offer. Inclusive decision-making processes are an essential means to achieve this and are the cornerstone of the campaign.

UN report, September 200²¹

Another section of this UN report on inclusive cities claims that the divide between the rich and the poor is taking away the citizenship rights of the poor, along with their sense of belonging to the city. According to the UN, the three inter-related ideas that can contribute to the realization of the citizenship of the poor are: good urban governance (with a focus on decentralization, inter-sectoral partnerships, and participation of the poor), equitable growth, and respect for human rights (Inclusive Cities Report, 2001; Taylor, 2000). According to the report, there is a direct relation between including the poor in the city and ensuring that the city thrives economically. That poverty must be alleviated, or at least managed, is recognized by all cities trying to win global capital. Some cities do so by demolishing slums and moving the poor to the peripheries (pre-Mission Delhi, Mumbai, Johannesburg, Jordan, (c.f. Davis, 2006; Parker, 2009)), others do so by issuing passports that do not allow rural to urban migration (all cities in China), and some use social services and public-private partnerships to clean up zones of

²¹ [http://ww2.unhabitat.org/campaigns/governance/docs_pubs.asp#Inclusive Cities](http://ww2.unhabitat.org/campaigns/governance/docs_pubs.asp#Inclusive%20Cities)

poverty, pacify the poor and engage them in the global economy (Rio de Janeiro²², post-Mission Delhi). Recognizing that governments across the globe are pressurizing cities to meet global standards of business (like modern infrastructure, clean and safe spaces, versatile labor), the UN reminds the cities that modern and clean spaces should not be created by marginalizing or removing the poor because they are crucial to the construction of world-class cities.

Literature on world-class and inclusive cities suggests that the two concepts work together to seize the opportunities of urbanism and to minimize its ill-effects on the poor. The neoliberal nexus of industrial global/local capital and the state works to promote a homogeneous version of what the city should become – world-class. However, the transition is not as smooth as expected as the poor fight for their right to the city. I argue that Mission falls short in strengthening the rights of the poor to the city, i.e. the right to shelter and livelihood – both of which are violated by exercises in city modernization. Extension of welfare services at the doorsteps of the poor does enable the poor to avail certain basic rights related to their citizenship. However, these are minimal efforts at mainly redistributing the revenues earned by the state through global and national markets (Gupta and Sivaramakrishnan, 2010, p. 23). Fatima's fear of her slum's demolition does not vanish with her receipt of welfare at her doorsteps or with her daughter Munni's participation in Mission's women's empowerment programs. Mission tries to fill – but is successful in further highlighting – the gaping hole in the government's efforts to create a truly inclusive city. I argue that the poor citizen's partial

²² <http://video.nytimes.com/video/2010/10/10/world/americas/1248069140837/taming-the-city-of-god.html>

realization of rights through Mission's programs does not enable them to effectively benefit from these programs to alleviate their poverty or become empowered.

Why then is Mission being hailed as successful inter-sectoral experiment in good governance and poverty alleviation by international organizations like the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM) and the United Nations? I argue that Prasad's optimism and puzzlement are key to understanding the possibility of alterations in previously stagnant and unresponsive government-urban poor relations. As hundred-plus NGOs work with the Delhi government to bring services at the doorsteps of the poor, the poor are being informed about the plethora of welfare services that they can rightfully access as entitlement holders, not as beneficiaries of government dole out – this is the progressive language used by Mission to describe its novel approach towards the inclusion and empowerment of the poor – a step in the right direction towards the realization of citizenship, however partial. I am hopeful that in the long run, despite roadblocks and subsequent unexpected changes, Mission's programs could spawn greater awareness and thirst for more rights among the poor residents to call for their holistic inclusion in the city. In the sections below, I examine the specific programs that the Delhi government implemented for including the poor in the aspiring world-class city.

1.10 Programs for inclusion

The Gender Resource Centers established by Mission have symbolic value. Located in 104 slums across all nine districts in Delhi, its uniform spread give a semblance of inclusiveness and connectivity for the people residing here, trying to assure

them that they have not been entirely swept off the modernizing agenda of Delhi. Mission's infrastructure (GRCs) act as systematic material markers of the government's plans to alleviate poverty across Delhi. To do so, Mission worked primarily on three components: reforming the Delhi government's welfare system; empowering poor women, and; revising poverty as vulnerability. Below, I briefly discuss the reasons behind Mission's focus on these three components.

1.10.1 The welfare issue

According to the Delhi government, there are multiple reasons to focus on the poor. As mentioned above, nearly 45 percent of Delhi's 14 million people reside in slums. Further, approximately 100,000 people are homeless and nearly 500,000 migrants from neighboring states make Delhi their home every year. Despite being one of the wealthiest cities in India, the distributive impacts of Delhi's twice-the-national-average per capita income have not reached a large chunk of its population (Delhi Human Development Report, 2006; Project documents, 2009). Though the Delhi government spent \$17 million annually on welfare schemes²³, a large number of poor were unable to access them because of their poor management and delivery. Mission was established to provide a single-window interface to the 42 different welfare services spread across the eight welfare-providing departments of Delhi government. The idea was to create a smooth process wherein welfare services can reach the poor at their doorsteps through

²³ The total Delhi government budget is Rs 27,067 crore for the 2011-12 fiscal year. The total social security and welfare budget of the Delhi government for the fiscal year 2011 is 1040 crore. (Delhi government budget:

http://delhi.gov.in/wps/wcm/connect/lib_finance/Finance/Home/Budget/Budget+2011-12/Budget+at+a+Glance+2011-12)

the Gender Resource Centers located within their community. Section 3 examines in detail the changes in welfare delivery, the conflict that emerges between new and old welfare providers as a result of Mission, and its impact on the poor.

1.10.2 Untapped resources: Empowering poor women

Alongside problems with determining the actual number of welfare-entitled poor, the low social and economic status of women in Delhi was also a concern that the Delhi government considered in critical need of attention. High infant mortality rate (43 deaths in 1000 live births), low sex ratios (821 females to 1000 males), and high gender gap in literacy (12%)²⁴, characterizes the social landscape of Delhi (Delhi Human Development Report, 2006; Project documents, 2008, 2009). According to Mission documents (2008, 2009), the lower literacy rate, especially among women living in socially and spatially marginalized locations like slums, was leading to women's minimal participation in the formal workforce of the city-state. In view of these depressing figures, Mission expanded on a prior women's empowerment program of the Delhi government known as *Stree Shakti* (women's power) and used GRCs across all Delhi slums for providing services like vocational trainings, free legal and health camps, free medicines, non-formal education, and self-help group formations. Figure 1.6 below illustrates a community mobilizer informing a resident about women's empowerment programs. Sections 4 and 5 focus on the meanings and impacts of women's empowerment

²⁴ Delhi has the highest gender gap in literacy in comparison to the other three metropolitan cities – Mumbai, Calcutta, Chennai. Even though 85 percent of people in Delhi can read and write, there is a difference of 12 percent in the number of male v. female who have achieved basic literacy (Delhi Human Development Report, 2006).

programs on the beneficiaries as well as GRC staff respectively. Figure 1.7 illustrates the women's empowerment icon used by Mission.



Fig. 1.6. Mobilizing women. At a resettlement colony near Jaan slum community mobilizer Farida (in burkha) is informing a woman resident about women's empowerment programs.



Fig. 1.7. Face of empowerment. This face is used as icon of Mission Convergence. The script in Hindi next to the icon says “Stree Shakti Kendra” (Women's power center), known as Gender Resource Center (GRC).

1.10.3 Counting and categorizing the poor

Apart from the problems with welfare schemes, there was also confusion about how many people were really eligible for what kind of welfare. The Delhi government used income criteria as a means to ascertain poverty. However, due to an un-revised below poverty line criteria (BPL, at \$1.25 a day) even in the face of inflation, a majority of the population facing social, occupational, and spatial vulnerabilities did not fall below the poverty line, thus failing to receive welfare services (Project Report, 2009). To solve this problem, Mission used proxy indicators to develop a more inclusive definition of poverty based on the social, spatial and occupation vulnerability of people along with their income level.²⁵ This is known as the “vulnerability criteria” (Table 1.2) and is expected to assist the government in surveying and categorizing the poor according to their vulnerabilities for the purpose of targeted disbursement of welfare. Figure 1.8 illustrates the survey of a poor household in progress.

Further, Mission was in the process of developing a Family Vulnerability Index (FVI) during my fieldwork. Interviews with development consultants working on FVI revealed that the government planned to measure the family-level vulnerability to provide the most effective package of welfare services and to also track the progress of the family. FVI was being developed as a technique for ensuring that each and every beneficiary family would use the services responsibly for managing their vulnerabilities. Such detailed calculation of the poor shows that the government wanted to make a

²⁵ Throughout the dissertation, I use poverty and vulnerability interchangeably to refer to the condition of all those people who might or might not be income-poor but do suffer from the above mentioned vulnerabilities.

gradual move from a welfare or assistentialist approach to a capabilities approach (Molyneux, 2008, p. 783). Under the assistentialist approach, the government as a welfare provider is blamed for promoting a “dependency culture” among the passive dole-receiving poor. Under the capabilities approach, the emphasis is on making the poor active and responsible stakeholders who develop/strengthen their capabilities through trainings and education to chart their own exit routes out of poverty, or to at least reduce their risks of falling back into poverty (World Bank Report on Attacking Poverty, 2001).

Table 1.2.

Vulnerability based identification criteria.

Source: <http://www.missionconvergence.org/survey.html>

Spatially vulnerable	Socially vulnerable	Occupationally vulnerable
Homeless JJ Clusters Notified/non-notified colonies Resettlement Colonies F,G, and H colonies	Households with 60+ year old people (alone or dependent) Households with disabled people Households with people suffering from debilitating & stigmatized ailments like TB, HIV/AIDS, Leprosy Households with single women (alone or dependent) Households with unprotected children	Ragpicker Unskilled construction worker Porter Casual daily wage laborer Casual domestic worker Street vendor/ hawker Cycle rickshaw puller Unskilled worker in a small household enterprise or industry



Fig. 1.8. Surveying the poor. Source: Annual Report, Mission Convergence 2009

Mission continued to extend welfare services to maintain state legitimacy over the poor while also using FVI and women's empowerment programs like vocational trainings and self-help groups to strengthen poor women's capabilities and make them responsible stakeholders in lifting their families out of poverty. All these interventions came together to provide both, a safety net as well as a spring board for the poor in Delhi (Ferguson, 2009). However, such programs only superficially train the poor women to manage their poverty in a more immediate or short-term basis without first attending to the structural issues that cause their poverty and gendered discrimination in the first place. I argue that such programs burden the poor women with the responsibility for

managing something beyond the technical capabilities they are expected to gain through Mission's programs. The programs through which these capabilities are developed become tools for the technical government and management of the poor by the state. I examine these programs and criticisms in greater detail in Section 4. In this section I have explained Mission's programs and the outcomes they intend to produce. Below, I will move away from project details and related theories to focus more specifically on the methodologies and field experiences that constituted my research on Mission.

1.11 Ethnography of a development project

What does an ethnography of a government-led development project mean? It means taking a closer look at several aspects of the project: the global and local scenario within which the project was established, the objectives of the project, the actors that do the 'developing', the actors they are trying to 'develop', the processes and practices that make the project work (or not work), how success is defined by the project, and the twists and turns a project witnesses on the ground. Ferguson (1990) suggests that anthropological studies of development project must look beyond the intentions of the project and into the social realities that it produces on the ground. In my dissertation, I examine not only the social realities produced by Mission, but also the global and the local economic and political realities that produce Mission. My ethnographic study of Mission is the study of the ideas, peoples, techniques, and apparatuses put into place to manage the poor in confirmation with the aspirations of Delhi as a world-class city. I want to state here that it is not my intention to simply point out the shortcomings of the project or to minimize the hard work of its staff. My intention as a critical scholar is to

place the working of Mission within the larger context of how development projects are planned, implemented, and impacted by the political and economic forces at the local and the global scale. Mission does not exist in isolation; my aim is to show the networks, forces and pressures at multiple levels that come together to enable as well as alter this project on the ground. Below, I provide details about my fieldwork.

1.11.1 The journey to/in the field

For almost a decade now, I have been interested in understanding the relationship between the urban poor citizens and their governments. When I started thinking about my dissertation project during the early years of my PhD, I decided to examine the question I encountered while working with the Right to Information (RTI) movement in the slums of Delhi in 2003 and 2004 (Figures 1.9 below illustrates the location of Delhi in India): *What does the government do for its poor citizens?* The RTI movement named *Parivartan* (meaning ‘transformation’) was a call for action to force the Delhi government to pass the Right to Information Act.²⁶ We worked especially with the poor citizens to show evidence of rampant corruption affecting their everyday life as a means to pressurize the government into passing the Act. We worked with slum residents to conduct social audits of government works and services impacting their everyday lives

²⁶ Known as the Freedom of Information Act in the US, the RTI act allows the common citizen to demand information about government proceedings, decisions, and works to ensure transparency and accountability. The RTI Act was passed by the Delhi government in 2005. Common citizens can now file a special application with the information officer in each government department and seek required information. Under the Act, it is the duty of the department to provide that information to the applicant within a month of the receipt of the application. Since 2005, the RTI has been used by several poor and middle-class citizens to know the status of their works with the different departments. The slum residents have been especially successful in using the RTI to expose millions of dollars worth of corruption in the Public Distribution System that was set up to provide them subsidized foodgrains. As a result of their struggle, most slum residents in Delhi now receive good quality subsidized foodgrains on time. The federal government is contemplating a new system for delivering this subsidy in a more efficient manner.

and followed that up with public hearings to publicize the unearthed corruption as a means to generate collective action.

The main office of *Parivartan* was located in east Delhi and we worked most vigorously with residents of Surja, Sethu, and Wedal slum colonies. As a woman RTI activist, most of my interactions in the slums were with women residents like Fatima Bi with whom I developed strong collegial bonds. These were women affected on an everyday basis by the corrupt practices of local bureaucrats and elected politicians who managed various welfare schemes ranging from old age pensions to subsidized food grains.

While working with the RTI movement, I began to realize that the situation on the ground was far more complex than what meets the eye. For the slum residents, apart from corruption, there were several other entangled networks between the global and the local scale that were actively marginalizing the poor. Delhi's aspirations to become a world-class city were already taking roots and slum demolitions were gaining an even faster pace. Many of my acquaintances in the slums lived in the constant fear of eviction and homelessness. By the time I left for the US in 2005 to pursue my higher education, I was convinced that I had the answer to my question: *the government does not do anything for its poor citizens because the poor do not fit within its neoliberal aspirations.*

When I returned to the field in 2009, the government had devised a massive project to revamp its welfare system and empower poor women in a bid to "reach the unreached". Mission was like a response to the mass-scale corruption causing the malign

neglect of the poor by the state. The RTI movement and several other civil society efforts highlighted the malign neglect of the poor. But what really made the government act was the aspiration to make Delhi world-class. Mission's uniform spread across Delhi somewhat signified an ideological and material shift in the government-poor relations in Delhi at a time when breakneck modernization of the city was further marginalizing the poor. In view of these changes, I derived inspiration from Prasad's question – "*but why now [is the government implementing Mission Convergence for the poor]?"*" to ask two inter-related questions: *what does the government do for its poor, and why? And, why and how do diverse governmental policies co-exist in a city space?*

1.11.2 Fieldwork sites

I conducted fieldwork in four slums – Wedal, Jaan, Surja, and Sethu (Figure 1.10). All four were located near the border of east and north east districts of Delhi, districts with the maximum density of slums. My decision to select these four slums was based on the following factors: high levels of vulnerability; specific areas facing high probability of demolition; mix of Hindu and Muslim population; proximity to one-another; and pre-established contacts in the field. Wedal and Jaan were predominantly Muslim areas and were located a mile away from each other. Surja and Setu had an equal number of Muslim and Hindu residents and were located two miles away from one-another. The distance between both sets of field sites was approximately six miles. Wedal slum became my primary field site because of my thick networks among the women residents and NGOs there that I developed as an RTI activist and later while doing preliminary fieldwork in 2008.

All four slums had distinct histories. Wedal was established in 1975 when a prominent Congress party leader struck a deal with those displaced from the core of the city by the city beautification drive during the Emergency era in 1975-1979. The politician asked for votes from the displaced citizens in return for security to squat on a marshy piece of public land. For almost a decade, residents of Wedal claim that the politician protected them from government bulldozers and land mafia. By 1990, Wedal had developed from a cluster of temporary shanties to a *pucca* slum. Residents built brick houses, demanded and received basic amenities like water, electricity, community toilets, and drains (though the slum still does not have a sewer connection). The Congress leader met his political downfall in the early 1990's after he was indicted for planning the anti-Sikh riots of 1984. Since then, Wedal has been a political stronghold of an opposition party.

Jaan, Surja, and Sethu were slums that developed as off-shoots of the resettlement colonies that were planned and constructed between 1970 – 1980 when Delhi was trying to decongest and beautify itself. Similar to the story of Dadu from Surja that I have shared above (p. 36), most residents here were displaced from the core of the city and given subsidized plots of land in these areas. Fieldwork here revealed that several residents in Surja and Jaan were provided free plots of land in the resettlement colonies by the government as an incentive for undergoing sterilization through the compulsory family planning drive during the Emergency era of 1975-1979. However, when all plots filled up, the sterilized citizens decided to squat on empty pieces of land around the resettlement colonies which gradually transformed from *kuccha* shanties to a

pucca slum colony (Emma Tralo 1995, 2000 provides great insight into these related processes of sterilization and land acquisition).

In the 1970's, the majority of east and north east Delhi along the Uttar Pradesh state border was fallow, swampy, or agricultural land with no roads, transportation, or basic amenities like electricity and water until late 1980's. Today, all slums there have these basic amenities, however unreliable, (except sewers and fully functional community toilets) and are connected to the other parts of Delhi by the metro rail and the city bus system. The real estate value of these areas has increased by more than 500 percent over the past twenty years. As such, demolition of these slums for sale to private corporations or for profitable governmental use is expected to generate millions of dollars in revenue for the Delhi government.

As I entered the field and worked to immerse myself in the field, I tried to rent a house near Wedal slum, my primary field site. Throughout the first month of house hunting in this area, I heard from real estate agents and residents the same answer – we don't rent houses to single women. Dejected, I sought admission in a working women's hostel located in central Delhi, about ten miles away and across the river from my field sites. My daily commute to the field took between 30 to 45 minutes and involved changing two metro rails and walking or riding a bicycle rickshaw from the metro station to the slum.

Next, I started looking for a research assistant. My friend and field assistant during preliminary fieldwork put me in touch with Geeta Uniyal. Geeta had been working for NGOs over the past ten years and was in the process of applying for

admission for a master's degree in social work. Geeta is a 34 year old married Hindu woman. She lives in east Delhi and comes from a middle-class family. Geeta's friendly nature and extensive contacts in my field areas enabled us to create quick and strong networks in the field sites. Geeta also assisted me during my follow-up fieldwork in July 2010.

1.11.3 Research methodology

Over the course of nine months between May 2009 and July 2010, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork at three different levels/sites – four slums located in east and north east Delhi (Sethu, Jaan, Surja, Wedal) (Figures 1.9 and 1.10), four partnering NGOs working here, and Mission headquarter located in the posh ten-story building on the banks of river Yamuna. I collected project literature and conducted participant observation with the eight staff members (three government bureaucrats and five development consultants hired on contract) at the Mission headquarters, forty staff working in the four partnering NGOs and two additional partnering NGOs also located in east and north east Delhi, three local slum leaders, three members of legislative assembly elected from the field area, one cabinet minister of the Delhi government including the minister in-charge for social welfare, and approximately fifty residents across the four slum colonies.

I recorded my interactions, observations, and conversation in the field notes that I wrote daily. I gathered information through semi-structured and unstructured/informal interviews and interactions. Majority of my interviews (38) are with staff working with the four partnering NGOs. All my interviews, with the exception of four interviews with

development consultants (working with Mission and the United Nations), were conducted in Hindi and were tape recorded, transcribed, and translated by my research assistant Geeta Uniyal and myself. Geeta also helped me with my daily field notes.

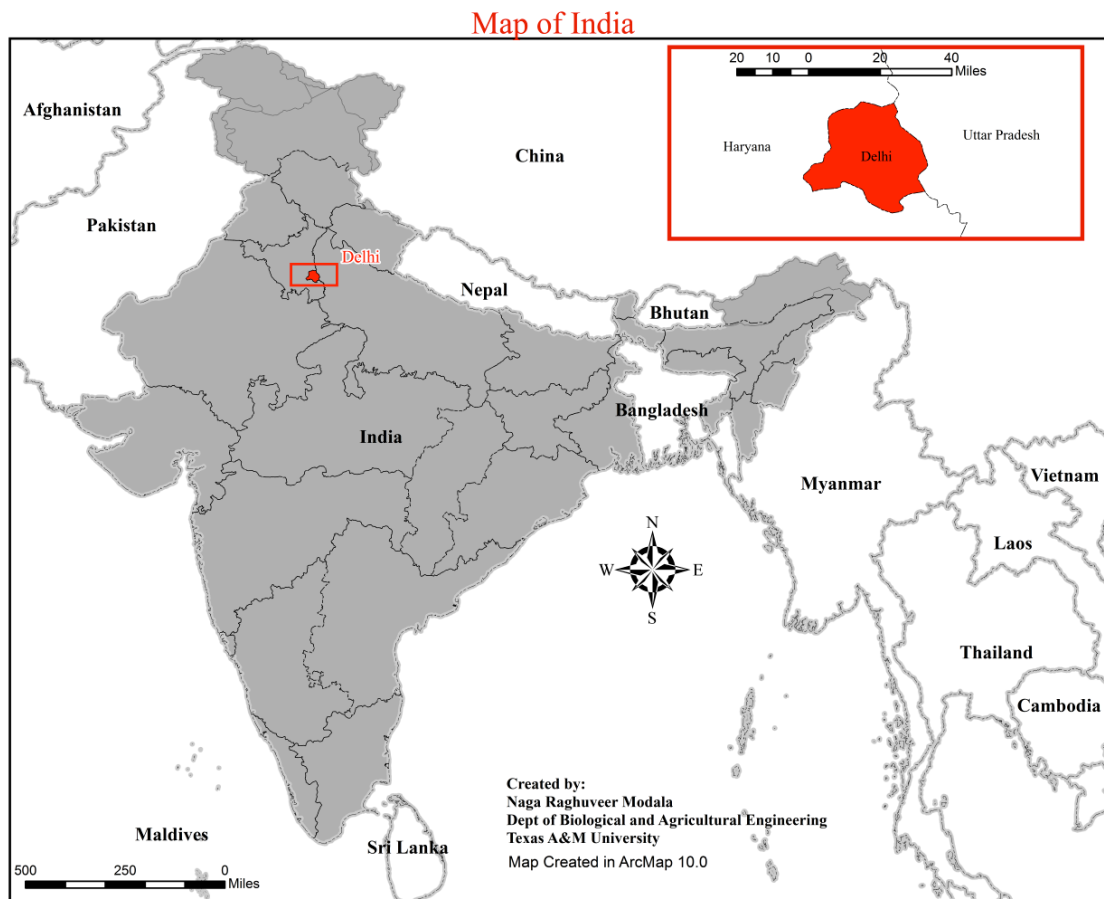


Fig. 1.9. Map of India showing the location of Delhi. (Made with Natural Earth. Free vector and raster map data @ naturalearthdata.com.)



Fig. 1.10. Map of Delhi. This map illustrates the four slum colonies and Mission headquarters where research was conducted. River Yamuna divides the east and north east districts from the rest of Delhi (Made with Natural Earth. Free vector and raster map data @ naturalearthdata.com).

Informal conversations constitute the largest chunk of my information, especially with slum residents. Opportunities for gathering information came in the form of discussions over chai and during meetings at NGOs attended by women residents. In slums and NGO offices especially, planned interviews snowballed into informal conversations and ended with group discussions. It was mostly once the digital recorder was switched off and stacked away that people started taking more openly, not for the fear of providing secret information but because most felt uninhibited when they were not being recorded. With the recorder out of sight, passers-by joined our informal interactions and entered into discussions about Mission's work, basic amenities in slums, corruption in welfare delivery, and women's empowerment programs. These fluid interactions generated rich data that tied together the various concerns of the slum residents and whether they are met by Mission's programs or not. I wrote all these discussions in my field notes by relying on my memory and the sparse notes Geeta and I would quickly jot down in the field.

Along with field notes and interviews, I also participated in various training workshops, planning meetings, and one award ceremony conducted by Mission headquarters for partnering NGOs. These venues provided scope to understand the relationship between Mission staff and NGO staff. I also attended weekly and monthly staff meetings at three out of the four Gender Resource Centers in my field area. One GRC did not allow me to participate in their staff meetings. I accompanied each GRC's women community mobilizer into the field to observe their interaction with the slum residents. I paid special attention to which areas of the slums each mobilizer chose to

visit and why, and the language they used to explain Mission's work to the residents. I also took note of the questions and behavior of the residents towards the mobilizers.

In the interest of anonymity, I have used pseudonyms for my field sites, informants, and partnering NGOs, using Hindu and Muslim pseudonyms of names to convey the religious identity of each informant. However, I want to clarify that my statement on their religious identity does not automatically mean that all of them were practicing their religion. Some did practice their religion while others were affiliated to it by simple virtue of being born into a Hindu and Muslim family and therefore having religion-specific names.

The use of pseudonyms for the slums where I conducted fieldwork allows me to maintain confidentiality of the partnering NGOs and their staff working in each slum. Only one NGO worked as a GRC in each of these slums; their identity would be revealed without the use of pseudonym for the name of slums. My choice of photographs throughout the dissertation was again based on ensuring the confidentiality of the NGO staff; this concern reduced the number of photographs I could use without divulging information about the area or the staff. I provide details about each informant to the limit where it does not compromise her/his confidentiality. I have tweaked certain minor details about informants that could have otherwise revealed their identity. For some informants, I have either provided no or minimal details in a conscious effort to ensure their confidentiality because even minimal details could have revealed their identity due to their position in Mission's hierarchy.

On a typical fieldwork day (Figure 1.11 below), I would reach one of the four slums around 10 am when women would have sent their children to school and had some time to talk while assembling toys or binding books, or making artificial jewelry, or tailoring clothes – some common economic activities taken over by most women residents in the field area. During this time I would also visit the various NGOs (non-partnering) working in that area, catch up with NGO staff (mostly women who also reside in the same area), and gather information about any events or meetings planned for the coming days before heading out to spend time at the GRC in that area. At the GRC, I would spend hours observing staff practices, attending small staff meetings, talking with women attending the vocational training classes held at the GRC, and assisting the GRC staff with filling up welfare forms and informing slum residents about their eligibility for different schemes. Later in the day, I would accompany GRC mobilizers to the field and observe their work. Most fieldwork days ended with almost an hour-long discussion and preliminary field notes writing with my research assistant Geeta. She accompanied me throughout the day, with the exception of times when I would conduct semi-structured interviews with women informants.²⁷ While I would conduct interviews, Geeta would observe a vocational training class or interact with the staff. Geeta also helped the staff with the basic working of the GRC. Every evening, we would sit at a cafeteria at one of the metro stations adjoining our field area to exchange field notes and ideas and take stock of the day.

²⁷ In compliance with the local culture, Geeta and I always stayed together when interacting with or interviewing a male informant.



Fig. 1.11: A typical day in the field. Research assistant Geeta Uniyal (in red shawl) talking with community members as a community mobilizer disseminates information in the background.

Typical days in the field were often interspersed by visits to the Mission headquarters located across the river Yamuna, approximately ten miles away from the field sites. At Mission headquarters, I had little scope for observing staff activities or sitting in on meetings. The environment there was formal and restrictive. My headquarters visits were sporadic because each visit required gaining prior appointment from a Mission staff, which in itself was difficult as the staff always seemed busy. Nonetheless, apart from attending several meetings and workshops between Mission staff and partnering NGOs, I also attended few planning meetings held between Mission staff, the World Bank consultants, and the United Nations consultant on developing the Family Vulnerability Index (FVI), on creating sound survey methodologies, and on creating the technological database for the Suvidha Cards. Mostly, my informants at the

four GRCs/ partnering NGOs helped me connect with the staff at the headquarters and to set up interview appointments with them. Apart from observations and interviews, I also photographically documented my fieldwork across the different sites. To my informants, I identified myself as a student researcher interested in the work of Mission, women's empowerment, and urban poverty.

While in the field, I often found myself jumping scales in the way I represented myself at different locations – for example, the way I dressed while going to the slum vs. going to Mission headquarter, the language I chose to speak (Hindi or English) in different locations, the affiliations I found myself revealing (PhD student in a US university vs. research student) to certain informants. All my choices were guided by a political understanding of what part of my identity worked best in which situation. If I wore formal *salwaar-kameez* (Indian dress) and communicated in English in Mission headquarters, it was to gain a sense of authority among those who judged me and how much time and information they should spare for me based on these identity markers. My decision to speak only in Hindi and wear simpler Indian clothes in NGOs and slums was to ensure that despite being a middle-class and educated woman, I would fit into the environment I aimed to study. However, changing identities often became difficult when I met all informants on one platform, for example, the workshops and award functions organized by Mission. I don't know what impression such interactions gave to my informants but these situations helped me recognize the class politics a researcher finds herself immersed in, in order to fit into diverse environments and gather maximum

information while trying to become one with her immediate environment (c.f. Lal, 1996).

I returned from the field in January 2010, but Mission continued to undergo drastic changes in its objectives as politicians and bureaucrats resisted its work through varied strategies. Being away from the field, I knew that I was missing out on significant ethnographic details even as I continued to be in touch with a select group of internet-savvy informants, most of whom work in the offices of partnering NGOs. My advisor recommended that I return to the field and update my research. Upon returning to the field in July 2010, I disseminated preliminary research findings to policy makers and NGOs, and also received crucial feedback from them. July 2010 also proved to be the best time to take stock of a number of recent major changes Mission had faced and to learn about its new trajectories in the light of these recent changes.

1.12 Core issues and structure of dissertation

My dissertation is structured around three core issues: 1) the global and local pressure faced by the Delhi government to turn India's capital into a 'world-class' city (Section 2); 2) the friction between partnering NGOs and local elected politicians over control of the welfare system (Section 3); and 3) the effort to empower poor women through conventional set of programs that provide temporary technical solutions to the problem of poverty and gendered discrimination (Sections 4 and 5). Section 6 provides a concluding discussion.

The **first issue** attends to the Delhi government's global aspirations, which contradict Mission's objectives. Section 2 examines literatures on urban neoliberal

development and governance to assert that development trajectories take the middle-path between neoliberal development and welfare obligations to create a hybrid “roll out” neoliberal paradigm that simultaneously includes and excludes the poor in an aspiring world-class city. This Section lays the global and local economic and political context within which Mission emerged to establish a kind of new paternalism exclusively over the low income areas of Delhi.

The **second issue** involves conflict between local politicians and partnering NGOs. In Section 3, I show that as the government tries to multiply sites of regulation and supervision of the poor through partnering NGOs, state-NGO partnership, and especially NGO-led welfare delivery creates tension and power struggles between different actors. The new authority allocated by the Delhi government on partnering NGOs is contested by elected politicians to indicate that the shift from government to governance does not automatically follow the Indian state’s neoliberal aspirations, but in fact alters it.

The **third issue** concerns diluted programs for empowerment of poor women. Mission adopts the classic development myth that poor women are best agents to lift their families and communities out of poverty. Section 4 examines women’s empowerment as a strategy of governance to prove that these programs work, in expected and unexpected ways, to enable neoliberal governmentality and patriarchal status quo. My criticism of women’s empowerment programs shows that if things are staying the same, but for a few tokens, then how in complex ways, the status quo is maintained.

Section 5 examines the subject-agent diffusion of identity for the women community members who work as community mobilizers at Mission's NGOs. Using feminist economic theories on care work and emotional labor, and development literature on development workers, I trace the meanings and practices that come to re/define empowerment as "poor women" work to empower other poor women like themselves. I argue that empowerment is given new meanings as shallow institutional expectations and women mobilizers' internalized subjectivities as "poor women" come together to circulate the weak relations between the state and the poor.

Section 6 revisits the core issues discussed across all Sections to argue that inclusive and world-class city aspirations, welfare delivery reforms, and women's empowerment programs – are disparate but connected issues that come together through Mission to challenge conventional understanding of how welfare and neoliberal forms of development both converge to take hybrid shapes in zones of poverty in the megacities of the developing South. The dissertation consults an interdisciplinary body of literature on neoliberal development, state-citizen relations, and feminist economics to argue that Mission is trying to introduce techniques of "new paternalism" for poverty management in India. My dissertation shows that pro-poor government projects like Mission are carriers of powerful neoliberal agendas that are constantly modified through encounters with local power plays and unimpressed and over-served development subjects on the ground.

1.13 Epilogue: Cosmetic treatments

During my follow-up fieldwork to Delhi in July 2010, I went to meet Fatima Bi at Wedal colony. The long open sewer in front of her home was still overflowing and the broken wall remained unrepaired. But construction workers were placing cement planks over the sewer. I could smell the refuse escaping from under the planks. The government had decided to cover up the sewer but not to clean it up. This cosmetic development received a mixed reaction from Fatima. She said, “*voh tou bas isko chupanein mein lagein hain, usko saaf karna tou koi nahin chahtaa. Par chalo shukr haii kuchh tou kiya*” [They²⁸ are just busy hiding it, they don’t really care to clean it up. But thank god they are doing something at least]. The Commonwealth Games were less than three months away and the Delhi government was frantically covering up the spaces it could not develop or clean up.

This cosmetic treatment of the sewer also analogized the cosmetic treatment of the poor through Mission’s programs – both being somehow managed to conform with the aspirations of a world-class city. Both showed that the government was doing “something” to ease the problem at hand. The fact that the government was doing “something” at a time when Delhi had to shine itself on the global platform shows that the problems of the poor and the poor as a problem are acted upon when they pose an impediment to the government’s other aspirations.

²⁸ By “they” she was referring to the construction workers *and* the government.

2. WHY NOW AND NOW WHAT?

2.1 But why now?

“But why now is the government even doing this?” – said Prasad, a 65 year-old resident of Wedal slum, while stacking up newspaper cuttings spread across his desk. Having lived in Wedal slum for the past 30 years, Prasad has been at the receiving end of several projects for development or reform of the slum. One such project entailed the looming demolition of his slum colony. Unexpectedly, his fears were put to rest by 2009 when the Delhi government not only devised a new plan for the on-site resettlement²⁹ of select slums, including Wedal, but also initiated Mission Convergence in several slums across Delhi. That hot afternoon in May 2009, when his newspaper collection was unrolled to show me articles on the changes in government’s plans for on-site resettlement and efficient welfare delivery through Mission, according to Prasad, *“sarkaar ne apna mann badal liya.”* (the government had a change of mind), and then he asked: *“but why now...?”*

The fear of demolition, peripheral resettlement, homelessness, and loss of social and economic networks loom large among most slum residents across this rapidly

²⁹ Prasad is one of the few remaining original residents of the slum that can show proof of their residence dating before 1998 to be eligible for an on-site resettlement under the Delhi government’s new public-private partnership for transforming slums into economically lucrative spaces. Under this PPP housing scheme, those who have been residing in Delhi slums before 1998 and those who can pay a subsidized amount would be selected for upgraded housing to be built on the site of the slum by a private corporation in exchange of using the left-over land for profitable businesses. Since slums have fluid populations due to rural-urban migration, less than 25 percent of the residents qualify for such housing and the rest could eventually be rendered homeless when the private builders begin construction.

modernizing city-state.³⁰ But Prasad's question still demands attention. It was not often that a slum resident felt assured that the *sarkaar* had changed its mind. I take Prasad's question as the starting point to investigate the context within which the Delhi government initiated Mission Convergence. Pro-poor policies of the government are not new or sudden. However, the Indian state has failed in its past policies for poverty alleviation and extending basic services to the poor. And Prasad had been a witness to these past failures. What was surprising for Prasad was not that the Delhi government was introducing yet another project in his slum, but the serious enthusiasm with which the Delhi government had focused its gaze towards the poor. As an avid news reader and news collector, Prasad had been following Mission's work up-close and he was convinced that Mission's objectives and the fast pace with which its work was taking shape on the ground were unusual of any governmental project. As of May 2009, he was also convinced that Mission wanted to bring about some necessary transformations in the working of the government. He listed out to me Mission's objectives – community based Gender Resource Centers (GRCs) run by local NGOs were expected to provide welfare services at the doorsteps of the poor in ways never heard of in Delhi; poor women were being provided free and certified vocational trainings at these GRCs; the very definition of poverty had been expanded to include at least a million more welfare recipients in the government registers. What Prasad didn't say was that all this was

³⁰ This threat was especially prominent for those who, unlike Prasad, had no documentation to prove that they had been residing in their slum since 1998, the cut-off date set by the Delhi Development Authority's Jhuggi-Jhonpri Resettlement Scheme (Dupont, 2004; Dupont and Ramanathan, 2005).

occurring alongside the continuous marginalization of the majority of urban poor as Delhi prepared itself to become a world-class city.

The question Prasad asks envelopes within it one of the core questions of my dissertation – why and how do diverse governmental policies co-exist in a city space? With visible economic and governance shifts towards hybrid forms of neoliberalisms, the Indian state is carving its own developmental path while maintaining a strong image of a welfare state. As the development debates move from dependence on state to dependence on self, i.e., from welfare to empowerment and efficiency, the Indian state is not entirely transforming its relationship with the citizens. The relationship continues as state-as-benefactor and citizen-as-beneficiary. But projects like Mission aptly highlight the strategies through which governments are now focusing towards welfare *and* empowerment of the poor while their other policies continue to displace and marginalize the poor further. It is within this context that I attend to Prasad’s question: *but why now?*

This Section pays attention to why the Delhi government initiated Mission Convergence and how Mission emerges from an intersection of neoliberal urban governance and development. The plans for modernizing of city spaces to attract global capital are intolerant of poor people and the marginal spaces they occupy. Solutions come in the form of projects like Mission that introduce new techniques for governing the poor in an attempt “to mediate between the rights of the citizens and the interest of global forces” (Haque, 2008, p. 11). More than mediation, I argue that such techniques enable the government to “reach the unreachable” (Mission motto) through non-state

actors that enable the state to better access, supervise and manage the poor through its partnering community-based NGOs, thus producing technologies of new paternalism.

This Section starts with details about Mission Convergence. Next, it elaborates on the literature of urban reform with special emphasis on neoliberalism. It moves on to describe the interconnected global-local political and economic environments that justified the establishment of Mission. Further, the Section examines the effects of Mission's NGO-oriented representation of the urban poor. After an extensive discussion on good governance mechanisms and its impact on the politics of the poor, the Section ends by asking how pro-poor urban governance and city modernization exercises go together in the context of making a 'world-class city' and 'inclusive city' through a mix of welfare and neoliberal governance.

2.2 Mission Convergence and the inclusive Delhi

Hailing Mission as a unique combination of social security measures for families with an empowerment framework dedicated for women for sustainable growth, Chief Secretary said that it was also an initiative of citizen-government partnership to bring more **inclusive development**. It reinforces that **Delhi cares for its poor, vulnerable, and underprivileged**. (emphasis added)

-

The Hindu, June 3, 2009

The Delhi government is trying very hard to show that it cares for its poor as global economic forces and local disparity overlap in the aspiring world-class city. Mission is its new mantra for extending care to the poor. Emerging as a convergence of two previous initiatives of the Delhi government – *Bhagidari*³¹ and *Stree Shakti*

³¹ *Bhagidari* is a community participation approach to urban governance. It is discussed in detail in the later section.

program³² – Mission’s objective was to efficiently extend the Delhi government’s existing social safety net worth Rs. 700 crores (153 Million USD) (divided in 42 different welfare services) across all vulnerable residents of Delhi and to empower poor women.³³ The aim was to include every poor or vulnerable individual within the welfare (and regulatory) ambit of the government. To meet these objectives, Mission had established 104 “Gender Resource Centers” run by partnering NGOs in several slums across Delhi that serve as one-stop facilitation points for the government’s social welfare schemes. They consist of two parts: 1) *Stree Shakti Kendras* (women’s empowerment centers) where women’s empowerment trainings and legal and health counseling were provided³⁴, and; 2) *Suvidha Kendras* (convenience centers) where the poor were assisted in receiving their welfare benefits. The slum residents popularly called GRCs the ‘*sarkaari center*’ (government center) as a way to differentiate it from the numerous NGO centers that provide similar services, especially for women’s empowerment. “Mission Convergence” therefore seems like an apt name for an initiative that brings together pre-existing schemes and services for the welfare and empowerment of the poor on a single community-based platform.

³²*Stree Shakti* means women’s power. This program was initiated by Delhi government in 2002 in collaboration with 40 NGOs. NGOs held monthly camps for poor women to receive health and legal counseling.

³³ The women’s empowerment component of this initiative initially seems out of place. But poverty alleviation projects for decades have included gender for a variety of reasons (c.f. Boserup, 1970; Cleaver, 2001; O’Reilly, 2006). I dedicate Sections 4 and 5 to this component.

³⁴ According to the Chief Minister’s statement in a news report, five million women have already benefited from these programs (The Hindu, June 3, 2009)

Two policies combine to increase the number of welfare-entitled poor in the registers of the Delhi government. The first policy expands the definition of poverty by including within it non-income based criteria like social, occupational, and spatial vulnerabilities. This stretches the welfare net across approximately four to five million vulnerable people in Delhi in comparison to the previous estimate of three million residing in slums as of 2000 (Kundu, 2004, p. 267), not all of whom were enrolled in the welfare system.³⁵ There is no data publicly available on the exact number of welfare recipients pre-Mission. Governmental structures for serving this swelling number are also expanding due to Mission. The government has established in Delhi's slums what it previously lacked: the GRC as an administrative unit for serving the poor and, most importantly, for including them within the government records and bureaucratic channels.

The second policy change involves eliminating welfare bureaucracy. Prior to Mission, the poor had to run between different welfare department bureaucrats and local politicians to receive welfare. This system took months, often years, before the poor could start receiving welfare. Welfare services vary – some are cash transfers (pension, stipend, scholarship), others provide materials like free medicines, subsidized food, health insurance, low interest business loans, etc, ranging from \$10 to \$20 per month. With the establishment of Mission, GRCs acted as a single window interface between slum residents and the government and provided welfare services at the doorsteps of the

³⁵ Delhi planning commission estimates that in 2005-06, 14.2% of Delhi population was below the poverty line of Rs.621 monthly per capita income (<http://delhiplanning.nic.in/Economic%20Survey/ES2007-08/C21.PDF>)

poor. Through Mission, the Delhi government undertook the challenge of restructuring the bureaucratic and political channels of welfare delivery by engaging NGOs for the same. However, as of May 2010, the authority to identify and enroll eligible entitlement holders for six most popular financial assistance schemes³⁶ of the social welfare department was withdrawn from Mission and returned to the previous system involving Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs). The impact of these changes on Mission's objectives will be discussed in detail in the next Section. Below, I discuss the two prime policy initiatives of Mission in greater detail –expanding the social security net to all vulnerable people, and, simplifying procedures for welfare delivery.

2.2.1 Expanding social security

Delhi is a city-state with deep contrasts. Delhi's per capital state domestic product (SDP) at Rs. 29,231 as of 2004-05 indicates that its economic performance has been the best in comparison to other states in India. Further, even though the percentage of persons below poverty line has declined significantly from 52 percent in 1973-74 to 15 percent in 2004-05, the number of persons living below poverty in Delhi is at its all-time high at 2,200,000 (above 2 million) as of 2004-05. Delhi's rate of poverty reduction at 0.08 percent as of 2004-05 is one of the lowest among all states, only behind Maharashtra and Rajasthan. These are the recent-most numbers available from the Planning Commission, a nodal agency in the Government of India that estimates the number and percentage of poor at national and state levels (Urban Poverty Report, 2009,

³⁶ These schemes are known as Financial Assistance Schemes (FAS). They include the following six popular schemes: 1) old age pension; 2) widow pension; 3) financial assistance to disabled persons; 4) Ladli Yojna; 5) Financial Assistance to Poor Widows for performing marriage of their daughter, and; 6) national family benefit scheme

p.9). There are certain evident flaws in the Planning Commission's calculations of poverty that have been criticized by several scholars and activists (Deaton, 2003; Deaton and Dreze, 2002) for its unmodified poverty line based only on income and that too based on consumer behaviors for the year of 1973-74. This was the main driving force for the revision of the below poverty line (BPL) criterion to include a range of non-income factors impacting lives of people in contemporary times.

Due to its good economic performance, the Delhi government has money in its public coffers to spend towards the welfare and development of its residents. The Delhi state currently spends Rs. 700 crore (153 million USD) each year on various social welfare schemes (Outlook Sept. 2008). However, less than 50 percent of this amount reaches the needy (Project Documents, 2009). In order to address the growing disparity and the abysmal state of poverty reduction in Delhi³⁷, the Delhi government decided to revamp its approach and systems towards poverty reduction. Poverty reduction was to be achieved through enumeration of all the vulnerable people residing in Delhi for the efficient and expansive provision of welfare services and women's empowerment programs to them.

In partnership with NGOs, Mission conducted a massive enumeration exercise (mapping and surveys) in 3 phases starting August 2008 to identify all poor people in Delhi on the basis of their social, spatial and occupational vulnerability (and not based on income, as the conventional BPL approach does) and then assigned partnering NGOs the task to ensure that each identified individual/ household is assisted with availing the

³⁷ Examined in detail in the Delhi Human Development Report 2006

welfare service they were eligible for. The idea behind using “proxy indicators” such as social, spatial, and occupational vulnerabilities to accurately calculate the poor came from a joint study conducted by the Supreme Court and Planning Commission in order to take an actual count of the urban poor (Outlook, Sept. 2008). Based on these suggestions, Mission undertook the first survey in India in order to expand the Delhi government’s welfare net across all vulnerable citizens that were previously unaccounted for in the government records – this making a significant effort towards shifting the image of Delhi’s from an ‘apartheid city’ (Batra, 2010) to an ‘inclusive city’ (Project Documents, 2009).

During the first phase around 538,000 households were surveyed by the GRC staff. In the second phase additional 390,000 households were covered. From the 900,000 families surveyed in both phases, around 515,085 families and 1,094,710 persons were found to be vulnerable and therefore eligible for different welfare services (Project Documents, 2009). This increased the number of welfare entitled individuals in the books of Delhi government. The survey also gave the Delhi government near-accurate data on the number of poor residing in Delhi, the diverse nature of their vulnerabilities, and the exact location and condition of their residence. The surveys specifically paid attention to poor and/or single women, and therefore had clear gendered implications which I explain in Sections 4 and 5.

2.2.2 Simplifying welfare

Through this enumeration exercise based on vulnerability indicators, Mission tried to make the delivery of welfare services efficient in two ways: 1) enumeration

helped the Delhi government create a centralized database of vulnerable individuals and the specific kinds of welfare services they needed, and; 2) enumeration enabled Mission to create a new set of guidelines that required minimal documentation proof for claiming welfare from vulnerable people because their vulnerability has been identified and recorded during surveys.³⁸ Both points have extended welfare services to those who were previously excluded from the same. Through these initiatives, Mission aimed to relieve the needy from the grueling process of accessing welfare. I explain these processes in greater detail in the next Section.

Above, I have highlighted the Delhi government's intentions of making Delhi inclusive through Mission. Mission conveys only partially the changes in government's plans towards the poor. I repeat Prasad's question "*but why now?*" in order to illuminate the larger changes happening in a neoliberalizing India which is aiming to turn Delhi from an 'apartheid city' into an 'inclusive and world-class city'. In the next section, I trace the recent upsurge of urban reform connected at the local and global scale. I argue that the agenda of making Delhi world-class is what pushed the Delhi government to also make Delhi an inclusive city because visible disparity is not a favorable characteristic for an aspiring world-class city. More importantly, as Haque (2008, p. 31) points out, even though developing countries like India are emerging into neoliberal states that tend to diminish democratic citizenship and fundamental rights, the state must

³⁸ The procedures to prove ones welfare eligibility were simplified mainly by allowing two neighbors to testify the years of residency and other such crucial information. The absolute dependence on government issued documents such as ration cards and voter identification cards was discarded because most vulnerable people are not aware about the often confusing procedures of getting them made which often involves long hours of waiting away from work and bribing government staff – most vulnerable people cannot afford either.

make efforts to convince the citizens that the state cares for their welfare and development in order to maintain its legitimacy especially at a time when that legitimacy can be challenged by those being rapidly marginalized through neoliberal urban reforms (c.f. Chatterjee, 2008; Sharma, 2006).

2.3 The literature on urban reform

The vision of a city that promotes rapid global integration of the country is a city which creates environment that attracts foreign investment. For this, the city should be able to provide good living standards, which means cities with adequate infrastructure and low incidence of crime and poverty; should have good governance and be able to mobilize domestic resources to improve physical and human capital base; should offer an environment that reduces the cost of doing business; should have some comparative advantage in producing tradable goods and should have diversified economic base to reduce vulnerabilities.

World Bank, 1999 in Mahadevia 200, p. 14-15

The urge to transform is not unique to Delhi. Cities worldwide have emerged as the prime hubs of economic development and international connectivity where the global and local meet (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). Cities represent the financial stability and investment capabilities of a country and are therefore expected to reinvent themselves in order to meet the new global demands of flexible capitalism (Chatterjee, 2009, p. 144). There is extensive literature on cities in competition with each other for foreign capital investment which argues that capital expansion endeavors further the interest of the elites and comes at a heavy cost to the poor. (Banerjee-Guha, 2009; Batra, 2010, Brenner, 2004; Choudhary, 2007; Harvey, 1990, 2005; Mahadevia, 2008, 2011). In India, cities are seen as growth engines for the entire economy and are expected to provide 65 percent of the total GDP (Mahadevia, 2006, p. 3399). But slum dwellers like Prasad and Fatima and the spaces they occupy have become the staple explanation for

why foreign investment eludes India (Batra and Mehra, 2008). Visible rampant poverty stands in stark contrast to Delhi's growing clean and modern infrastructure catering to global trade and investments. Slums give the impression that the government's lackadaisical policies and practices could possibly also impact the investment a corporation makes in Delhi's economy. Further, fear of crime and pollution and lack of modern basic amenities are linked to the visible manifestation of poverty – both indicating the shortcomings of the local government. So how can these poor people and their spaces be reinvented or transformed? Urban reform projects make an entry to pave way not only for neoliberal development but also for neoliberal governance of the poor (Choudhary, 2007; Batra, 2008). Projects like Mission try to count and categorize the poor and efficiently manage the rising levels of poverty by providing welfare and empowerment services as a safety net and a spring board for the poor in Delhi.

2.3.1. Neoliberal urban development: creative destruction of the poor

Neoliberalism is a form of political economy that advocates free trade, flexible labor, active individualism, and extension of competitive markets that should be achieved by downsizing and reforming the state into a trim yet efficient actor (Harvey, 2007). Neoliberalism assumes that states are inefficient and corrupt institutions that must shrink, while also realizing that a stable and supportive state is a prerequisite for economic development (Corbridge et.al., 2005, p. 41). Neoliberalism has been adopted as an almost universal economic paradigm that will enable developing countries like India to benefit from their alliance with global trade and its ensuing politics. Neoliberalism may be hegemonic at the global scale, but it is customized according to

the national and local political economy. Further, neoliberalism often emerges as a hybrid of complementary and contradictory policies like increase in state support for pro-poor policies, individual self-reliance, and efficient governance through NGOs (Ferguson, 2009; O'Reilly, 2010; O'Reilly and Dhanju, Forthcoming).

Megacities of the global South like Delhi are at the forefront of neoliberalism as spaces that are under-developed but have great potential to polish up and attract global capital through competitive markets, flexible labor, free trade policies, safe political environments, and, clean modern spaces. To meet these expectations, Chatterjee (2009, p. 146) notes that “the neoliberalizing state is compelled to release land, resources and labor from the formal sector of national into the free market sectors of privatization”. Mahadevia (2008, p. 19, 2009, p. 210) points out that such efforts of the neoliberalizing state dispossess the poor of their shelter and livelihood opportunities, thus making the welfare of the poor and neoliberal development exclusive of one-another. One such example of dispossession is the ‘public-private partnership’ (PPP) in land development’, a policy approach for selling ‘dead land’ (ex. slums located on prime government land that generate lower than expected revenues for the government) to private corporations. The government allows, in fact assists, private corporations to buy such dead lands, convert them into profitable housing units (among other kinds of profitable infrastructures), and reserve some of the houses for the economically-weaker population. This PPP policy approach has been widely used in Mumbai and Delhi to convert large slum colonies illegally built on public land into profitable and legal housing colonies, recreation parks, and shopping malls – none of which can be conveniently accessible to

the poor. The small quota of reserved housing for the poor further means the on-site resettlement of less than 25 percent of the “original” residents who have been residing in Delhi before 1998; the rest face displacement without resettlement options. Banerjee-Guha (2009) notes that similar processes are underway in Mumbai as the city’s housing market is restructured to allow privatization of public lands, leading to unlocking of speculative accumulation and also the gentrification of the city.

Harvey (2003, 2005) would agree that such restructurings of land enables global elites to accumulate economic gains by dispossessing communities – thus creating place and class specific accumulation by dispossession (also, Batra, 2008). On the surface, previously unattractive spaces become attractive and begin to accumulate investments while poor get further dispossessed of their basic rights to shelter and livelihood. This process of urban renewal symbolizes ‘creative destruction’ – it is creating development by destroying the spaces, livelihoods, social and economic networks, and lifestyles that are believed to be under-developed (Chatterjee, 2009, p.147). Urban renewal projects expect the city to meet a global standard of capital-attracting modernization while local struggles for shelter, food, and livelihood of the poor are swept under the carpet.

2.3.2. Neoliberal urban governance: from ‘government’ to ‘(good) governance’

An emphasis on the infrastructural renewal of cities comes along with an emphasis on restructuring urban governance. Because the support of the state is important for markets to function efficiently in a stable social and political environment, neoliberal economic shifts and urban development are expected to succeed only if the governments operate on the principles of “good governance” to become efficient, lean,

and entrepreneurial structure of support for the markets. I situate good governance within the framework of neoliberal governmentality – a combination of techniques of domination and discipline with technologies of self-government such that citizens conduct themselves in a manner acquiescent to the state's wishes (Foucault, 1991; Gupta and Sharma, 2006).

With the onset of urban reform, 'government' is transformed into 'governance'. Governance extends the idea of government to encompass state as well as non-state actors such as communities, NGOs and private corporations. The shift "from government to governance" emphasizes greater role to non-state actors to manage institutional arrangements. Due to this shift, hierarchical state power is decoupled from the government and reproduced through multiple horizontal sites and partnerships that operate at a distance from the state (Swyngedouw, 2005, p. 1992). The state takes on a supervisory role while multi level participatory governance techniques devolve decision making and implementation right down to the level of the community. Governance therefore suggests new sets of relationships between citizens, policy-makers and agencies responsible for service delivery (Raco and Flint, 2001). That the fluid nature of the government emerges from its entanglement with non-state or non-governmental social and political actors in a society is a well-established fact (Corbridge et al., 2005; Gupta, 2005; Jeffrey and Lerche, 2000). But the evident shift from 'government to governance' legitimizes and institutionalizes this fluidity as a powerful component of neoliberal governmentality.

The original debate about good governance was cast as the antithesis of state-dominated economic and social development. But now, the debate is less about jettisoning state institutions and more about improving and reforming the functioning of democratic institutions, including the “deepening of democracy” by engaging non-state actors to share government responsibilities (Appadurai, 2001; Weiss, 2000, p. 803). The aim is to ‘re-regulate’ the government such that the government expands itself by inviting NGO partnerships in strong regulatory and service delivery positions while also internally restructuring its own departments to work more efficiently in alliance with NGOs.

Decentralization by transfer of duties from central to local governments (and then from local to non-governmental associations) along with privatization of urban service delivery are the two main components of good governance through which the state can be re-regulated (Swyngedouw, 2005). Decentralization is publicized by international donor organizations as a preferred model for the cities struggling to provide basic services in the face of rapid urbanization (Silver, 2003, p. 421 in Mahadevia, 2008). The World Bank (1992, p. 2) assures that decentralization allows local policy makers to have more effective control over the key processes for successful integration of cities with the global economy. Since the early 1990’s, the state in India has made strong efforts to decentralize its decision making and service delivery through the participation of local bodies. Decentralization of service delivery has become a prominent component of all major government projects and primarily involves partnership with civil society organizations. Good governance strategies of decentralization and privatization are

criticized as distancing the state from its citizens, absolving state's welfare duties, and depoliticizing the struggles of the poor as a technical problem that can be fixed through the efficient intervention of non-state actors (Rose, 1999). I deal with all these criticisms in a later section while examining the relationship between NGOs and the urban poor. But before that, I hold on to the recent interpretation of good governance to show how Mission is partnering with NGOs to "re-regulate" the government and expand (not contract) its welfare services to the poor.

2.3.3 Steering and rowing the boat

Contrary to popular criticisms of neoliberal governmentality, Gupta and Sharma (2006) argue that it is not easy to claim that the contemporary governance in India is neoliberal in nature and has therefore absolved its basic welfare duties. Because the developmentalist state's identity is so closely tied with being a welfare provider, it can decentralize its duties but not back away entirely from its welfare obligations with the onset of neoliberal reforms (Chatterjee, 2008; Sharma, 2006, p. 64,). Gupta and Sharma (2006, p. 277) define the working of Indian neoliberalism as the "multiplying [of] sites of regulation and domination through the creation of autonomous entities of government that are not part of the formal state apparatus and are guided by enterprise logic". These multiple sites might allow the government to spread its domination but it does not automatically exclude the state from its welfare rights towards its citizens. Within the neoliberal context, the government is now expected to steer the boat while non-state actors managing the multiple sites of state's domination and regulation row it (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). However, my research suggests that through Mission, the

government wants to definitely steer but also row the boat in “partnership” with non-state actors. The one-sided flow of information and orders along with the heavy supervision over the NGOs proves that NGOs are themselves regulated and disciplined by the government (Discussed in detail in Section 3). The Delhi government’s partnership with NGOs was not created to contract out the responsibilities of a shrinking government but to expand government control over the NGOs and the urban poor. The Delhi government is doing so by spending more money to enroll more urban poor in its welfare net and by widening its bureaucratic control over vulnerable spaces through Mission. I will demonstrate this ethnographically in the next three Sections.

I argue that the government is steering *and* rowing because NGOs are working to make the government’s functioning efficient, not unnecessary. In line with the second wave of neoliberalism (Smith, 2004), the government is ‘re-regulating’, not ‘de-regulating’ itself through internal restructurings of the welfare system and through regulated engagement with NGOs that assist the government in rolling itself out through a mix of welfare and neoliberal techniques. I use Peck and Tickell’s theory on roll-back and roll-out neoliberalism to examine the hybrid nature of the Indian state. According to Peck and Tickell (2002), roll back neoliberalism enabled some Western states to shrink in favor of robust markets. The states ‘rolled back’ as markets rolled out to justify that free and open markets can take care of disparities in the long run through a trickle-down effect. However, with the failure of roll-back in Western states evident in the recession of the late 1980’s, roll-out neoliberalism was introduced to balance out the disparities introduced by markets by bringing the state back in. But this time, the state came back

forcefully creating new forms of institutions and governmental regulations with the intention of re-regulating, disciplining and containing those who were marginalized by roll-back neoliberalism (Peck and Tickell, 2002, p. 389)

Though roll-back does not apply in the context of India, the concept of roll-out provides a fresh perspective on the new forms of institutions and regulations that are being floated through programs like Mission that extend welfare services over the marginalized and in the process, to also discipline and manage them as pacified subjects. Through these new institutional arrangements, the government is able to re-regulate and actively engage in governing the poor *through* as well as *with* Mission's partnering NGOs.

Below, I investigate the two core urban reform projects – *Bhagidari* and National Urban Renewal Mission (NURM) – that have significant impact on the implementation of Mission. *Bhagidari* is a good governance project of the Delhi government for enhancing civil society participation in local governance for making Delhi an inclusive city. NURM is an urban reform project of the federal government for modernizing the cityscape of sixty-three cities across India, including making Delhi a world-class city. In both projects, it is evident to me that the government tried to establish control over the urban poor through different tactics. Mission is trying to assist the government by extending *Bhagidari* in the slums while also cushioning the blow of NURM on the urban poor through the expansion of welfare services.

2.4 Projects for urban reform: from *Bhagidari* to Mission Convergence

Mission Convergence is an extension of an earlier project based on state-civil society partnership known as *Bhagidari* which means ‘collaborative partnership’. *Bhagidari* started as a good governance program by the Delhi government in 2000 for establishing a working collaboration between different government agencies³⁹ and registered associations like resident welfare associations and trade associations. The main aim of *Bhagidari* was to empower citizens to have a voice in the development of their area. *Bhagidari* won several international and national awards as a model of good governance, the most prominent one being the United Nations Public Service Award in 2005. Scholars who have studied *Bhagidari* assert that it was launched to publicize government achievements, to exert authority, and to introduce a participatory system of governance that makes the citizens believe that they have a voice (Chakrabarti, 2008, p. 98; Harriss, 2005).

In spite of recognition and accolades, *Bhagidari* met with criticism for its intentional exclusion of the poor residing in resettlement colonies and slums (Chakrabarti, 2008; Ghertner, 2011; Harriss, 2005; Mawdsley, 2009). Apart from the claim that slums lack formal resident associations, the government’s logic for this exclusion was that any collaboration with the occupants of illegal land would involve negotiations on the issue of land tenure, which could upset its political base with the non-poor residents living in legal residential areas (Chakrabarti, 2008). Although government agencies continued to provide basic services like water and sanitation in

³⁹ like municipal corporation, water and power companies, Delhi Development Authority

illegal squatter settlements, they wanted to avoid negotiations that may result in provision of land titles. Chatterjee (2004, p. 136) summarizes this rationale well by suggesting that if squatters were given any kind of occupational legitimacy by government, then the whole structure of legally-held property and the connected benefit of formal citizenship would be threatened. Through a contradictory/ circular logic, it was assumed that the extension of a participatory mode of governance to slums would: 1) be impossible due to lack of formal associations that represent the residents; and, b) enable the illegal settlers to make formal demands of government for land title and ownership.

Bhagidari did not reach the poor until 2008, but in the meantime, it did create a politically conscious middle class in Delhi that successfully challenged government decisions⁴⁰ and initiated juridical action against the unaesthetic and filthy spaces occupied illegally by the urban poor (Ghertner, 2008, 2011; McGranahan and Satterthwaite, 2000 (Green vs. Brown agenda)). The recent political interest of the middle class is viewed as a reaction to the rapid economic growth of India which has benefited them the most (Fernandes, 2006). Chakrabarty (2007) claims that *Bhagidari* gave the political voice to the middle class to mimic life of global city and displace the subaltern in the process (c.f. Baviskar, 2003; Mawdsley, 2009). Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) became hegemonic institutions that sought to redefine the use of public space by dislocating the urban poor from their visual proximity (Fernandes, 2006; Chatterjee, 2004). Educated and well-connected middle-class residents used their knowledge of the judiciary for filing public interest litigations against slums, street

⁴⁰ regarding water privatization and electricity tariffs; Chakrabarty, 2007, p. 97

vendors, and informal small industries (Baviskar, 2003; Batra, 2010; Mawdsley, 2009). This new political power of the middle class that was enabled by *Bhagidari* eventually became overbearing for the Delhi government.

While tensions between RWAs and government became pronounced, tensions were also on the rise between the government and the slum residents as a new wave of city modernization between 1997 and 2004 swept away thousands of poor from the core to the peripheries of the city (Menon-Sen and Bhan, 2008). Slum demolitions also gained pace between 2004 and 2006 due to middle class juridical actions demanding the right to pollution-free living (Ghertner, 2008). Between 2004 and 2007, 45,000 homes were demolished in three years, a staggering number in comparison to the fact that 51,461 houses were demolished in the eight years between 1993 and 2001 (Bhan, 2009). The fast pace of urban renewal accompanied by middle class juridical action against informal settlements and economies – both came together to uproot and render homeless the maximum number of poor in the shortest time span in the history of Delhi. The mass of displaced poor were unhappy with the Delhi government, so were the middle-class residents who expected more action and accountability from the government. This led to the defeat of the ruling Congress government in the 2006 municipal elections for ward counselors.

This was also a time when the government began preparations for the 2008 legislative assembly elections.⁴¹ Due to the rising anxiety among the middle-class about

⁴¹ Representatives elected every five years through Municipal ward elections and the legislative assembly elections work in alliance with local leaders and provide the political connections between the poor and the state (Harriss, 2005; Edelman and Mitra, 2006)

the sprawling slums around their neighborhoods and the anger among the poor against the government's continuing demolition drives, the Congress government decided to extend *Bhagidari* to the urban poor as an innovative form of governance aimed at alleviating poverty and empowering the poor. I argue that extension of *Bhagidari* was also a strategy of the Delhi government to reduce the growing collective political power of the middle-class, and also to convey to them that the government was taking steps to manage poverty. Thus began the policy formulation for Mission Convergence. Contrary to its prior concerns about establishing partnership with residents in unauthorized or illegal settlements, as of August 2010, the government has extended itself through NGO run GRCs across 104 slums and resettlement colonies in Delhi. Partnering NGOs played a crucial role in extending government services to the poor through Mission but did not represent the interests of the poor. I elaborate on the role of NGOs in a later section after discussing below the other factors that highlight the union of pro-poor initiatives like Mission with massive urban infrastructural development policies like NURM.

2.5 NURM, the excluded poor, and Mission

With more and more people moving into city slums⁴² and interconnected global markets seeking more economic hubs in the developing world, urban renewal has become a necessity of sorts. Substantial investment in this area is seen as key to maintaining India's high economic growth.⁴³ The first major push for urban renewal in

⁴² An estimated 50,000 people out of the 200,000 who migrate to Delhi every year live in slums (Vinayak 2009)

⁴³ Commonwealth Games in Delhi in October 2010 are seen as one such major urban renewal exercise impacting the material as well as human landscape of Delhi. It is expected to cost the Indian government \$15Billion, seven times its expected cost. 120,000 beggars, 60,000 pavement squatters and 8,00,000 slum

India came with the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM, or NURM as it is popularly known), a \$20 Billion seven year project of the federal ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation. Based on policy recommendations that Asian Development Bank came up with in 1990's for Asian mega cities (Mahadevia, 2008, p. 15), NURM started in 2005 across 63 select cities for: 1) expanding urban infrastructure; 2) reforming urban governance; and, 3) providing basic services to urban poor, (or, providing BSUP). The first two received higher funds from the federal government while BSUP was poorly funded (Mahadevia, 2006, p. 340). In order to tackle urban poverty and proliferation of slums, BSUP's core mandate was to provide land at subsidized rate to the poor. So logically, BSUP funding should have been higher considering the current shortage of 26 million housing units, 98 percent of which are for economically weaker groups (Mahadevia, 2006). However, the government prioritized infrastructural developments (like flyovers, sports villages for Commonwealth Games, airport renovations, recreation parks) over housing for the poor. Mahadevia (2006, 2011) asserts that greater emphasis is given to the expansion of urban infrastructure for the creation of capital-worthy spaces in cities. This in turn means that the poor are only going to be further displaced, not included, through the urban reform exercise proposed by NURM.

dwellers have been banished from the city in preparation for the games (http://www.tehelka.com/story_main46.asp?filename=hub110910Gameon.asp). Besides, government funds for social welfare diverted in preparation for these games. For example: "A total of Rs. 744.35 crore (157 Million USD approx.) originally meant to improve the standard of living of poor sections of the community through various government schemes and programs was diverted to the 2010 Commonwealth Games projects." (<http://www.bbc.co.uk>, July 21, 2010)

Critics view NURM as a neoliberal agenda for the making of world-class cities across India to attract global business and also to set market driven urban development in motion (Banerjee-Guha, 2009; Batra, 2008; Mahadevia, 2011). Batra (2008) describes NURM as bait because the Indian federal government applies pressure on cities to follow specific orders to create more and more capital-worthy spaces in return for funds from the federal pool of money. “The huge money made available under the scheme has forced unwilling state governments to toe this agenda” (Times of India, July 7, 2009, Budget announcement day). Delhi, being a city-state, is also competing for the NURM funds. This means that Delhi government has to convince the federal government that it is following all its mandatory reforms – discarding certain regulations like the Urban Land Ceiling Act 1974 which will allow sale of bulk land to private investors for expanding world-class infrastructure in Delhi; and, applying good governance techniques of decentralization and privatization to improve service provision to the urban poor.

The Delhi government chose Mission Convergence as the nodal agency for BSUP (basic services to urban poor) component of NURM. In order for Delhi government to receive NURM funding for building world class infrastructure, Mission adopted the NURM guidelines for good governance and introduced decentralized, economic, and efficient actors like NGOs to provide basic services to the poor. The faster and better Mission performs the sooner Delhi is sanctioned federal money to make itself a world-class city. Critics like Banerjee-Guha (2009) argue that this entrepreneurial turn in urban governance was a result of the spill-over of the largely neoliberal nature of

NURM (Batra, 2008; Mahadevia, 2008), wherein ‘government’ was to be replaced by ‘governance’ and slow bureaucratic systems would give way to competitive and corporation-like efficient systems run by non-state actors working at the grassroots (Swyngedouw, 2005). The shift from government to governance in the slums of Delhi suggested the “functional impotence” of democratically-elected actors and government bureaucrats that were replaced by Mission’s partnering NGOs (c.f. Banerjee-Guha, 2009, p. 98). The tensions created through these shifts are elaborated upon in the next Section as Mission’s plans to converge all services on a single platform are eventually thwarted by political forces.

The decisions of the Delhi government to modernize Delhi and to initiate Mission are both key to understanding the new strategies used to govern the poor – the removal of the poor is crucial for making space for a world-class city, but the select poor that are to stay in place (in accordance with the government’s slum resettlement policies) must become governable and economically resourceful citizens. The demolition of slums coupled with selective resettlement of slum residents tried to serve two purposes – convert slums from supposedly “dead capital” into lucrative spaces, and; displace a majority of the poor out of the city which could also reduce creation of new slums.⁴⁴

Those who qualify to live within the city could be managed through Mission’s

⁴⁴ The general logic floating in the corridors of the Delhi government is that if all illegal slums are demolished and only “original” slum residents (those living in slum since 1998) are given resettlement, then the poor will be discouraged to set-up new slums with the expectation that the government will resettle them too once their slum is demolished. This logic does not take into consideration the desperation of the poor due to lack of other alternatives that forces them to live in slums. Further, this logic does not correspond with the expectations of the elected and petty local politicians who thrive politically on the votes of slum residents in return for security against demolition, and on their bribes in return for welfare services

partnering NGOs that use welfare services and empowerment programs to impart ideas about the kind of citizen the poor should be in order to find acceptance in an aspiring world-class Delhi. In summary, such contradictory policies create a mirage of change in governmental intentions and give hope to people like Prasad to believe that “*the government has changed its mind*” (c.f. Mahadevia, 2011).

Above, I have discussed the reasons that prompted the implementation of Mission. These reasons are situated between reforming urban infrastructure and reforming urban governance –changes in both come together to alter relations between the government and the urban poor. One such alteration occurs as NGOs become representatives and service-providers of the poor through good governance tactics of Mission. Below I examine the relation of Mission’s partnering NGOs with the urban poor and the uneasy debate this opens up about civil society vs. political society.

2.6 NGOs as representatives of the poor?

As an extension of *Bhagidari*, Mission is based on the principles of partnership between government and citizens. In the absence of any formal associations to represent the slum residents, the Delhi government assigned NGOs as representatives the poor. I argue that instead of conveying the demands of the poor and representing them to the government, NGOs performed only one function – make the government’s welfare services and empowerment programs accessible at the doorsteps of the poor. In order to understand why NGOs fail to represent the urban poor, we must move our attention to the works of Chatterjee (2004), Harriss (2005, 2006, 2007, 2010), and, Mawdsley (2009). These scholars examine the different patterns of politics and governance

emerging from different groups within the city. Elaborating on Chatterjee's (2004) distinction between civil and political society, Harriss (2005) notes that the class of the citizen defines her/his political participation and degrees of successful interaction with the government in India. While the upper and middle class citizens interact with the government through "civil society" organizations, the poor interact through political society.

According to Chatterjee (2004), civil society comprises of educated and well-connected individuals capable of maneuvering the bureaucracy and seeking efficient government services through associational pressures. Political society emerges out of socially and economically marginal areas like slums. It thrives on the language of rights, using agitations and demonstrations as tools in their limited armory, have weak cultural capital but stronger ties to political parties, and struggle to secure basic rights for poorer people (Chatterjee, 2004; Harriss, 2006 in Mawdsley, 2009, p. 244). While the urban poor rely more on political parties to secure basic rights and services (like shelter, health, education), the middle-class have increasingly turned to, and even formed their own "civil society organizations". These organizations work in partnership with the state and even approach the judiciary for securing consumer-oriented services and for maintaining their social and physical boundaries of privilege (Baviskar, 2003; Mawdsley, 2009, p. 244). This is clearly evident in our discussion above on *Bhagidari* and the rising middle class power. Harriss (2006, p. 455) argues that associational activities of a rising middle class enable them to be more involved in tangible political participation, thus dismissing the popular notion that vote-based participation of the poor is what determines city

politics.⁴⁵ Based on the logic of good governance, Mission is promoting a civil society model of governance for the urban poor which could weaken their political networks that have been enabling them so far to make demands of the state as political subjects. The problem with promoting an associational form of governance over political governance is that not only are civil society associations like NGOs run by middle-class people who do not represent the voice of the poor, such associations are more accountable to their donors than to the poor (Crewe and Harrison, 1998).

2.6.1. Mission's NGOs: service providers or representatives?

In the case of Mission, we see that lack of formal associations in slums (like the resident associations) did not push the government to elicit any direct partnership with the poor but instead assigned NGOs as their representative. Mission emphasizes that its partnering NGOs are embedded grassroots organizations that understand the pulse of the community, work for their welfare, and are therefore their best representatives (Interview with Mission staff, January 2010). However, majority of the NGOs operating in slums are not organic to the landscape but transplanted by donor driven middle-class run organizations that provide piecemeal services to its residents. NGOs' provide services in order to sustain funding and to fill a service gap in the slums left by the government. Some NGOs also work with slum residents to advocate for basic amenities like clean water, health, sanitation, and functional schools. But for most NGOs, a package of services based on donor interests defines their work with the slum residents even if these services are not the top priority of the residents. Further, competition

⁴⁵ The recent upsurge of the middle class support for the anti-corruption campaign headed by Gandhian activist Anna Hazare is an example of this.

between different NGOs in the slums to increase their “catchment areas” and beneficiary count for attracting big donors only convinces the slum residents that NGOs have sharp economic motives behind serving the poor. These NGOs are not elected by the poor to “represent” their interest or to serve them. Therefore, Mission’s partnership with such NGO’s as “representatives” of the poor to help the government “reach the unreached” is viewed with mild enthusiasm by the poor.

Not all NGOs are working to fill gaps in everyday amenities and services. Some NGOs also help citizens understand their rights and make demands of the state. For example, Action India is a feminist NGO that works in several slums across Delhi, including all my field sites, to educate and mobilize woman towards their right to a violence-free life but also advocates on right to health, water and sanitation. Center for Advocacy and Research (CFAR) is another such NGO that works with slum residents on a plethora of issues that arise as problems of the community, not as demands of the donors. Another NGO is Hazard Center that works as a think tank and advocacy unit to mobilize action against slum demolition and to demand right to livelihood, affordable and accessible transportation, and property ownership rights. I argue that slum residents make demands of the state for basic amenities and other rights through the works of certain NGOs⁴⁶ and, as has already been discussed by several scholars, also through local leaders and elected politicians (MLAs and municipal counselors). While Mission has partnered with some such powerful advocacy NGOs, most of its other partners are

⁴⁶ The three NGOs mentioned here are founded and operated by concerned educated upper/middle-class citizens and therefore present a deviation from the usually homogeneous claim that middle-class activism and civil society engagement is centered towards securing their own rights and privileges at the cost of marginalizing the poor.

small, donor-dependent organizations that work as contractors or project managers. The nature of the partnering NGOs was such that for several slum residents like Fatima the GRC located in their community remained a “center” that provided services like every other NGO working there. The welfare delivery aspect did help differentiate the GRC as a “government center” from other NGOs as “centers”, but this aspect did not convey to the residents that the government viewed the poor as direct participants in their development. Further, with the withdrawal of Mission from welfare delivery in May 2010, slum residents’ enthusiasm only weakened more and GRCs came to be known as “*silaii-kadharii centers*” (tailoring-embroidery centers).

Recognizing the weak connection between partnering NGOs and the slum residents, Mission emphasizes on community participation to promote the idea of creating an inclusive city that cares for the voices of its poor. Also, participation of the poor is a core objective of Mission through which it has been defining its success so far. Partnering NGOs work hard to mobilize the poor to participate in its various programs. Owing to its undisputed popularity among donor institutions (especially World Bank, c.f. Cleaver, 2001), participation emerged as a “new ideology” almost two decades ago (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). Community members are viewed as ‘participants’ who are not only beneficiaries but also a decision-making “partners” within a project. Mission project reports claim that poor are partners of the government but do not explain how this partnership is created or what it entails. During the everyday workings of Mission, this partnership takes various forms. Mission’s NGOs seek participation of the poor by engaging them as volunteers to publicize Mission’s activities in slums, by conducting

mohalla mapping exercises with local leaders (locally known as ‘*pradhans*’) in order to determine the socio-economic status of slums residents, and, most importantly, by employing community members as staff at the GRCs. Partnering NGOs hire community residents as surveyors, community mobilizers, vocational trainers, and office staff. Paid labor provided by slum residents is often translated as “community participation” in Mission documents. But this participation is seen as a job by community members, not as a democratic and direct engagement with the government (Section 5 elaborates on paid labor of community members). In summary, slum residents as partners of the Delhi government are no more than passive recipients of Mission’s various programs. These programs are neither chosen nor run in consultation with the poor, and neither do they produce the expected benefits for the poor in the long run, as I examine in Sections 3 and 4.

2.6.2 A critique of participation and NGO representation

Contrary to popular development belief that participation in Mission’s programs will lead to empowerment and poverty alleviation, an expansive literature argues forcefully that participatory approaches are Janus faced. Blaikie (2000, p. 1044) asserts that participatory approaches are simply a cloak on the development business as usual and do not change any power relations (Crewe and Harrison, 1998). Mosse (2001, p. 32) suggests that participation “remains a way of talking about rather than doing things”. Participatory approaches are also criticized for promoting a naïve and homogeneous understanding of the community sans the relations of social and economic powers that shape it. Cleaver (2001, p. 46) notes wryly that communities are expected to possess

certain latent powers that development practitioners can unleash only through participatory approaches. Participation is expected to transform the community into a cohesive and responsible entity that can develop itself independently while the state enjoys a shrinking of its responsibilities (Paley, 2002). Zerah (2009) argues that community participation is embedded in local politics. It reshapes forms of power relations within communities such that the influential members are empowered while reinforcing poorer members' reliance on middlemen (Zerah, 2009, p. 872). Corbridge et al. (2005) argue that participatory approaches make it appear as if the poor have the social or economic power to assert themselves in ways a development scheme imagines, when in reality, they do not. Although participatory approaches may be called a success, the poor are left dissatisfied because schemes do not function as needed or promised, and previously negotiated checks and balances between the state and citizens are also disabled by participatory approaches. The result is that citizens' relationship to the Indian state does not change due to participatory approaches—the state remains distant, episodic, and seen through intermediaries (Corbridge et al., 2005, p. 150).

Good governance projects like Mission seek citizen participation through established NGOs which follow formal work practices as regulated partners of the government (c.f. Mosse, 2005). Such partnerships tread over pre-embedded political networks of slum communities with the purpose of replacing its chaos of everyday complex politics with simplified, associational memberships of a technical nature. Based on extensive empirical data, Harriss (2006) argues that working poor people are progressively denied the possibility of engaging in politics as self-realization as NGOs

take over governmental roles. The spaces invented by the poor to practice their democratic citizenship with the state are taken over by associational spaces where the poor are invited to participate (Miraftab, 2009). Partnerships between civil society organizations and the government has been criticized as dangerous for the poor as it empowers the middle-classes and elites to promote their agendas, to pose as experts with solutions to the problems of the urban poor while closing down the spaces of urban politics occupied by the poor. NGOs become intermediaries between government and the poor, another layer that further distances the poor from their governments even when the idea is to bring government services closer to the people. Mahadevia (2008, p. 49) and Benjamin (2004, 2008) criticize innovative governance techniques based on decentralization as leading to elite capture of urban governance and politics, which further causes a “democratic deficit” (Swyngedouw, 2005). Corbridge et al. (2005) find that because NGOs control access to state resources, they develop the regulating powers of the state; they too produce governmentality (Gupta and Sharma, 2006).

However, these good governance techniques are not absolute failures. Corbridge et al. (2005) suggest that good governance be critically analyzed. They agree that good governance could deflect attention from real issues of social inequality but cannot be entirely dismissed as a depoliticizing practice. According to Corbridge et al (2005, p. 186), the movement from politics to making public administration efficient is itself a political agenda which wants to broaden the scope of common person’s empowerment rather than take away their political agency. Good governance works especially well in creating counter spaces for interaction between the government and the poor in places

where none previously existed. Especially in the context of community participation, Kesby (2005) is in agreement with Corbridge et al. He states that critics have failed to appreciate participation for its ability to provide an alternative space, new ideas, and life changing information to counter everyday power struggles to those who have larger pressing issues in life other than how best they should resist the villainous powers residing in participatory practices (Kesby, 2005, p. 2044). Based on his work with SPARC NGO in Mumbai, Appadurai (2001, p. 37) claims that participatory practices can disable power relations, reduce patronage relationships, and open up opportunities for empowerment of the poor, thus deepening democracy through invited spaces. Appadurai's claims of deepening of democracy through participation of the poor in community-based institutions have been criticized (Zerah, 2009) but still give hope, along with Kesby and Corbridge's assertion that good governance is not an entirely hollow endeavor.

In the context of Mission, we see that decentralization of government welfare service delivery to partnering NGOs emphasized on treating the poor as entitlement holders and partners of the Delhi government – this has enabled a reinterpretation of the traditional nature of government and its relationship with the urban poor. As the government extended its control over the poor through enumeration and welfare-empowerment services provided through NGOs, NGOs temporarily replaced local elected politicians, and became intermediaries between the government and the poor (c.f. O'Reilly, 2010). Whether these intermediaries actually depoliticize or repoliticize the urban poor – that will be the focus of our next section.

2.7 Depoliticizing or re-politicizing the poor?

The above discussion on good governance as a neoliberal governance technique allows us to ask how good governance impacts the poor. The main question here is whether Mission is empowering slum residents by introducing a more efficient system of governance, or, whether Mission is depoliticizing the relationship between the poor and the government by introducing NGOs as an additional layer of bureaucracy? Mission uses the language of good governance to shift the political framework within which the poor have been accessing government services. By decentralizing welfare delivery to NGOs, Mission is trying to establish a stronger sense of citizenship among the poor. The urban poor are informed of their welfare eligibility as their right, not as their dependence on the government. However, in spite of these positive changes, what demands examination is whether Mission's programs implemented through partnering NGOs empowers the poor to voice their demands of the government, or, does Mission's good governance strategies limit them to accessing welfare benefits?

I argue that through good governance projects like Mission, the Delhi government extends its authority and control over its urban poor *and* partnering NGOs through Mission. The Delhi government uses Mission to engulf the urban poor within its administrative and ideological reach through enumerations, empowerment programs and welfare service deliveries. The aim, I argue, is to manage poverty and create governable subjects of an aspiring world-class Delhi. I suggest that through Mission, the Delhi government is trying to reposition the politics of the poor in ways that would wean their supposed dependence away from political actors like democratically elected members of

legislative assembly and municipal counselors. The intention is to redirect governmental responsibilities to non-governmental institutions so that the government can be lean yet efficient. Demands made through political systems usually emanate from a political expectation of the government as the main welfare provider or *maai-baap* (mother-father, i.e. primary caregiver). Politicians come together to form the government and sustain their votes by promising to fulfill constituents' demands. Some such demands, like the protection from slum demolition in return for votes, are in direct contradiction to the government's aspirations for making Delhi world-class. However, in order for the government to be lean yet efficient supporter of larger neoliberal development ambitions of the city, their political influence over constituents must be redefined and in fact shared with non-governmental actors. This occurs by promoting a good governance agenda that promises efficient service delivery, minimal bureaucratic hassles, and citizen participation in decision making. These promises make government services accessible to the poor but offer short-sighted technical solutions to complex political issues. Beyond welfare and vocational trainings, I argue that the government remains episodic and inaccessible for these urban poor as partnering NGOs become embroiled in everyday logistics of service delivery and successful number crunching that weakens their focus on the holistic empowerment of the poor as entitled citizens of the city.

Good governance projects like Mission re-position marginalized people as entitled citizens who have the right to receive government services. However, such projects also indirectly depoliticize the poor by further distancing them from making demands to their elected politicians for other pressing issues like sanitation, water,

education, and housing. Because Mission concerns itself with only a section of services for the poor which are provided through partnering NGOs, when the poor need other services they must still turn to their elected politicians and their local political networks with the slum leaders. With the shift of significant and powerful welfare services from politicians to NGOs, and the introduction of NGOs as an extension or intermediary of the government to access these welfare services, the political and economic authority of the local and elected politicians over the slums was threatened and the political link between poor-as-citizens and politicians-as-democratically elected representative stood temporarily disturbed, thus weakening ability of slum residents to make forceful demands across the hierarchy of local and elected representatives (Benjamin, 2004, 2008). Also, growing tension and conflict between politicians and partnering NGOs over the legitimate authority to serve the poor only further marginalized the poor and shunted them aimlessly from one actor to the other (discussed in greater detail in Section 3).

One might argue that Mission effectively disabled the undemocratic and shallow patron-client relations that depend upon the vote bank politics between the politicians and the urban poor. In agreement with Benjamin (2004, p. 183), I argue that these relationships are not simply a matter of vote in lieu of favors (security and amenities). The slum residents practice a ‘politics of stealth’ (which I would also call “political *jugaar*” in colloquial Hinglish) to establish a constructive relationship that produces democratic outcomes for the poor and other slum residents living on illegal land. In essence, even though patron-client relation might overtly seem undemocratic and

opportunistic, they are utilized by the urban poor to practice their rights through democratic channels to seek tangible outcomes (Benjamin, 2004, 2008; Ghertner, 2011)

Welfare delivery is a prime component through which patron-client relations are established in most slums across Delhi. With the transfer of welfare delivery authority from elected politicians to Mission's NGOs, the dense network of patronage ranging from local leaders, middlemen, welfare department staff and elected politicians was weakened. Mission's efforts in bringing order to the messy politics of the poor and in motivating their associational partnership with the government through partnering NGOs therefore also held the possibility of severing the messy but democratic ties of the poor that have been putting forth their rights and demands for a decent life in the city. The efficient inter-sectoral institutional arrangements emplaced in the slums of Delhi for the (neoliberal) "good governance" of the poor therefore hold the possibility of limiting the rights of the poor to the city to welfare and empowerment programs that could have little if any impact on those living in constant fear of displacement, homelessness, lost livelihoods, and circuitous poverty.

2.8 Discussion and conclusions

For over two decades, a 'holistic' approach to development was promoted by international institutions. This approach expects governments to become more 'socially interventionist' as well as 'globally competitive' in an internationally connected economic system that promotes privatization and deregulation (Smith, 2004, p. 170). A marriage between social welfare responsibilities and globally-tied economic growth means that the government must create innovative institutional arrangements. In Delhi,

such arrangements have been implemented in the form of *Bhagidari*, National Urban Renewal Mission, slum redevelopment, and Mission Convergence. These arrangements are expected to come together to provide a combined framework for the welfare of its people and for the simultaneous neoliberal expansion of its economy.

Following Castree (2006) and Ferguson (2009), I do not assume that Mission falls within some kind of a generic neoliberal framework. Instead, I pay particular attention to the nuance and hybridity that scholars like Harvey (2005), Jessop (2002), Peck and Tickell (2002), and O'Reilly (2010) expect researchers to seek in their understanding of different forms of neoliberalisms, or the absence of its key criteria (also O'Reilly and Dhanju, Forthcoming)⁴⁷. It is important to view Mission from a critical neoliberal lens because Mission was established to balance-out the impacts of neoliberal policies on the urban poor, and Mission also holds certain mixed characteristics of neoliberalism and traditional welfare governance which together allow us to show the hybridity involved in contemporary development policies. By examining Mission's objectives and practices within a neoliberal framework, we can see that the Delhi government's long-term aim is to turn the poor citizen-subjects into self-empowered neoliberal consumers who remain within the control of the state and yet do not depend upon it for their development and welfare in the long run. Table 2.1 below compares the common characteristic of urban neoliberalism with Mission's core objectives.

⁴⁷ key criteria include privatization, marketization, deregulation, commodification of basic amenities, lean government structure, reduced welfare funding (Haque, 2008).

Table: 2.1.
Urban neoliberalism vs. Mission Convergence

Common characteristics of urban neoliberalism (Leitner et al. (2007, p. 4)	Common characteristics of Mission Convergence
<p>Public services are decentralized</p> <p>Decisions are driven by cost-benefit calculations instead of social welfare and equity</p>	<p>Mission enables the Delhi government to decentralize public service delivery to NGOs</p> <p>Decision to initiate Mission not entirely driven by cost benefit calculations to reduce welfare.</p> <p>Decision driven by the recognition for improving and extending social welfare services, not for reducing them.</p> <p>Some cost benefit calculations come into play to replace old channels of welfare delivery in favor of NGOs as community-based providers</p>
<p>Government bureaucracies are replaced by quasi-public agencies</p> <p>Quasi-public agencies are given the responsibility of economic development</p>	<p>Mission partners with quasi-public agencies like NGOs but these NGOs are not roped in for replacing government bureaucracies, only for strengthening and expanding them.</p> <p>On the contrary, NGOs assist government agencies like welfare providing departments to make their services efficiently accessible to a larger mass of urban poor.</p> <p>Mission's stated goal is not just economic development of urban poor but also the strengthening of poor people's citizenship rights to government services and empowerment of poor women.</p>
<p>All residents are expected to be entrepreneurial and prudent</p>	<p>Mission aims to make the urban poor entrepreneurial economic actors through vocational trainings alongside enrolling them into government's extended welfare coverage.</p>

A quick glance at these characteristics and one would assume that Mission is the formal carrier of urban neoliberalism for Delhi. However, as can be seen through the comparison, Mission is far more nuanced and contradictory in its political economy. On the surface, it meets certain characteristics like – decentralization of public services, cost benefit calculations, entrepreneurial expectations of urban poor. But it adopts these characteristics in order to efficiently extend government funding and channels for welfare and empowerment of the urban poor, not to shrink governmental responsibilities.

I locate Mission as an exclusive hybrid of neoliberal-welfare arrangement designed and managed by the state and implemented by partnering NGOs for the social and economic reform of the urban poor and of their politics (from messy/multiple/democratic/patron-client to organized/ associational). Mission as a pro-poor policy is not unique to Delhi or India, nor is partnership with NGOs and devolution of government services specific to Mission. But there are specificities of how the global and local political economy of development come together and meet with the realities in the slums of Delhi, the offices of the Delhi government, and the practices of partnering NGOs – these specificities deserve attention to understand the objectives and outcomes of good governance pro-poor projects like Mission in an era where neoliberal economic aspirations are contradicting their objectives.

As several scholars (Ahmed, 2011; Harvey, 2005; Jessop, 2002; Molyneux, 2008) suggest, neoliberalism may be hegemonic at the global scale, but it is further nuanced and fragmented by national and local politics. Context is significant for the forms and outcomes of neoliberalism (Bebbington, 2004; Leitner et al., 2007). Molyneux

(2008) observes that social policies provide us rich grounds for recognizing that there is no such thing as actually existing neoliberalism and that variation of the same oscillating between thick and thin liberalisms only confirm that local political, economic and social pressures shape each policy. Molyneux (2008) asserts that the terrain of policy – social or economic – is influenced by competing politics, existing institutional structures, and governing parties in ways that do not allow for actually existing neoliberalisms to ever take shape through the policy.

In this Section, I have examined the different institutional arrangements (*Bhagidari*, NURM, slum re-development) of the Delhi government in juxtaposition with Mission to show that urban reform in Delhi is taking certain unexpected forms that can be located between welfarism and a new form of “roll out” neoliberalism (Peck and Tickell, 2002). Even though roll-out neoliberalism emerged as a response to roll-back neoliberalism of the 1970’s in Western Europe and the US, it has much to offer for our understanding of the kind of neoliberalism we are witnessing in Delhi today. By extending government services and empowering the citizenship claims of the urban poor, the practices of Mission expect the Delhi government to be seen as an effective welfare state. But is Mission only concerned with enhancing the welfare capabilities of the Delhi government for its urban poor? How does Mission situate itself alongside other institutional arrangements? Are these arrangement connected? Are they assisting one another in a larger project? As mentioned above, I adopt Peck and Tickell’s conceptualization of West-centric ‘roll out’ neoliberalism (2002) to explain Delhi

government as a welfare state practicing ‘roll out’ neoliberalism.⁴⁸ Peck and Tickell (2002, p. 389) assert that contrary to the generic understanding of neoliberalism, roll out neoliberalism expects the government to extend itself out as socially interventionist for reforming and expanding welfare reforms, urban order, and community regeneration. Through this interventionist agenda, new institutions and mode of delivery are created and new technologies of government designed, leading to the co-management of poverty in partnership with NGOs and poor communities (Molyneux, 2008). However, the socially interventionist rolling out of the government is expected to serve one ultimate function - “extend the neoliberal project, to manage its contradictions, and to secure its ongoing legitimacy.” (Peck and Tickell, 2002, p. 396)

I employ Mead’s influential discourse of ‘new paternalism’ to explain Mission’s role in the extension of the ‘neoliberal project’ mentioned above. Mead describes “new paternalism” as the “close supervision of the poor” (Mead, 1997 cited in Green, 2002, p.23). Extension of welfare services are used not simply for helping the needy but mainly for controlling the patterns of behavior of the poor (Green, 2002, p.23). As the responsibility for delivery and quality of services is decentralized to NGOs, new paternalism also spreads itself over service providers. By sustaining, and in fact spreading their control further, new paternalism operates within a “neo-liberal, contractual framework” wherein the government continues to be positioned as paternalistic rather than as laissez-faire (Everingham, 2001, p. 112; Keevers et al., 2008). Government becomes a disciplining father figure for the NGOs and the poor. It

⁴⁸ Without ever experiencing ‘roll back’ neoliberalism as was the case in US and Great Britain of 1970s

requires NGOs to enumerate the poor for the purpose of enrolling them “into a network of administrative surveillance procedures” (Ingamells, 2007, p. 244) and to “instill the appropriate motivations and social habits” (Everingham, 2001, p. 118) in welfare recipients. I argue that that through Mission’s grassroots engagement with the urban poor, the Delhi government tries to establish a new paternalism that could enable it to function as a welfare state operating on the principles of ‘roll out’ neoliberalism.

3. POWER PLAYS

3.1 Introduction

In the previous Section, I use theories on neoliberal development and good governance to show how global and local political economies came together in Delhi to justify new institutional arrangements that simultaneously exclude and include the poor in an aspiring world-class city. In this Section I ask, what happens when these new arrangements come to life? To answer this question, I will attend to the impact of Mission's policies and practices on two core stakeholders, both of which have been serving the poor in varying capacities even before Mission: 1) the Delhi government constituted by elected politicians and government officials; and, 2) 104 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) selected by Mission as partners for delivering governmental services to the poor. Mission started in August 2008 with the objective of implementing two programs in the slums of Delhi – welfare delivery⁴⁹ and women's empowerment. In this Section, I will focus exclusively on the impact of Mission's delivery of the welfare services on the abovementioned two stakeholders. I examine Mission's women's empowerment component in Sections 4 and 5.

I present ethnographic evidence to explain the processes through which Mission's policies tried to alter the power dynamics of state and non-state actors

⁴⁹ There were a total of 42 welfare schemes provided by 8 different Delhi government departments. Apart from the six controversial Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS) from within these 42 schemes, Mission also gradually focused on certain federal governmental schemes like Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna (RSBY, 'National Health Insurance Scheme'), Swarn Jayanti Swarozgar Yojna (SJSRY, 'Golden Jubilee Self-Employment Scheme') and Suvidha Cards ('Convenience Cards' that are now being linked up with the national-level Unique Identification Number, known as UID or 'Aadhaar Card', Aadhaar means 'Basis').

engaged with the welfare of the poor in Delhi. I show that government-NGO partnership and especially NGO-led welfare delivery creates tension and power struggles between different actors. The “good governance” practices of Mission put in place for managing the poor through non-state actors are challenged and eventually weakened by the traditional networks of political and bureaucratic state power pre-existing in the slums of Delhi. Such disturbances in Mission’s working also prove that welfare of the poor is a contentious issue that is not mainly concerned with the poor but with the authority over the political and economic power that accompanies serving the poor.

Within the larger framework of making Delhi a world-class city, I ask what influence these conflicts and disturbances have on Mission’s neoliberal technologies of pacifying and governing the poor? In this Section I show two things: 1) how an unhealthy competition between partnering NGOs and politicians emerged due to Mission’s entry into welfare delivery; 2) how changes in Mission’s policies impacted the Delhi government’s ability to manage its poor citizens *and* its partnering NGOs.

This Section is divided into seven sections. The first section delves into theories of NGO-state partnerships and ‘governance-beyond-the state’ to explain the politics of such partnerships entrenched in tactics of governmentality. The next three sections provide ethnographic details about changes and challenges faced by both stakeholders due to the shift in welfare delivery. The fifth and sixth section elaborates on the changes in the NGO sector due to Mission. The last section discusses how new institutional arrangements enable the Delhi government to manage the poor and the NGOs, and ends with a brief conclusion.

3.2 State, NGOs and neoliberal restructuring

According to a recent study by the Government of India, there are more than 3.3 million NGOs in India, i.e., one NGO for every 400 people in India with more than Rs. 18,000 crore (\$4 billion USD) in funding coming from the Indian government (Indian Express, July 7, 2010). Roychowdhury (2008) asserts that the NGO sector has gained priority as a domain for welfare and redistribution over the years in India, especially since the 1980's. Roychowdhury states (2008, p. 603-604),

The market is indifferent towards welfare, the state views welfare and redistribution as political issues and yet is either disinterested or disinclined towards these issues. It is here that the civil society steps in to fill a gap.

Roychowdhury's usage of the term 'civil society' to refer to NGOs seems limited. But Kamat (2004, p. 157) asserts that NGOs have transformed the concept of civil society from a space where competing private interest and individual desires co-existed alongside market forces, to a space where organizations are created to fill the service and welfare gaps left by the state. Kamat (2004) also reminds us that NGOs do not exist in a vacuum in the civil society and that they are situated in a nexus with the private property relations, the capitalist market, and the changing nature of the state in the contemporary neoliberal era. Following a Foucaultian notion of governmentality, I understand civil society not just as the voluntary sector (Tocqueville) or the third sector other than state and market from where social struggles and hegemony originate (Gramsci), but as "an arena for state intervention and a collection of actors engaging with and relating to the state" (Lemke, 2001 in Swyngedouw 2005, p. 1996; Sending and Neumann, 2006).

Neoliberal restructurings of the government have made NGOs an integral part of the welfare state's apparatuses in the developed as well as developing nations (Kamat, 2004; Kodras, 1997; Salamon, 1987). Fisher (1997) notes that developing countries are especially viewed as undergoing a quiet associational revolution as NGOs expand in numbers and functions, and introduce wide-ranging formal and informal linkages with other NGOs, state, private corporations, and international organizations. In India, NGOs have become a predominant solution to the development ills of the state to such an extent that, as Nagar and Raju (2003, p.3) point out, "NGOs have become an arm of the government [but also] the government has become the biggest NGO".

To note the rise of NGOs as new governance institutions, we must first understand that services for the welfare and development of the citizens have been conventionally understood as the prerogative of the state. In fact, the state derives its legitimacy from its citizens by concerning itself with the development and welfare of its citizens (Corbridge et al., 2005; Foucault's notion of biopower, 1991). But 'development' is not just a machine for eliminating poverty and empowering citizens. "It is a machine for reinforcing and expanding the exercise of bureaucratic state power" (Ferguson, 2006, p. 273). Scholars assert that dispersed networks of social actors and non-state institutions assist the state with its processes of governance and especially with expanding and consolidating its control over populations (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002; Foucault, 1991; Gupta and Sharma, 2006; Mitchell, 1991; Rose, 1996). NGOs are one of the most popular non-state actors that have been assisting the state in the expansion of its

bureaucratic control and in its simultaneous alignment with the ideals of neoliberal governance (Dolhinow, 2010; Sharma, 2006).

This trend of devolving service delivery to non-state actors has been described by Swyngedouw (2005) as ‘governance-beyond-the state’— a neoliberal governance technique that creates new institutional arrangements of ‘governing’. These new arrangements include the private economic actors as well as civil society in policy making, administration, and implementation of public services that were previously provided by the national or local state (Swyngedouw, 2005, p. 1992). Most of the scholarship on state-NGO relations asserts that the state is materially/ infrastructurally/ economically/ manpower-wise shrinking from its welfare responsibilities and leading to the increase of NGO-led service delivery (Kamat, 2004; Miraftab, 2004; Roychowdhury, 2007). Expansion of the latter has automatically come to mean the shrinking of the former. However, new institutional arrangements of governance do not mean that non-state actors have taken control and the state has shrunk into an entirely passive object (Sending and Neumann, 2006). Because the state itself devolves service delivery to NGOs in the first place, it is therefore the state that enables new power relations to emerge from informal and distanced channels of governance. Government therefore authorizes the shift towards governance to produce diffused and multilayered political power relations between the state and the citizens.

In her ethnographic study of a women’s empowerment project run through a Government-organized NGO (GONGO) in rural north India, Sharma (2006, p. 78) shows that even though such structures indicate the shifting of government

responsibilities to non-state actors, these actors are not independent of the state but actually work as instruments of extending governmental rule over larger sections of the previously unreached populations. Sharma rightly suggests that such structures of governance involving non-state actors allow for “reconciliation between the developmentalist and neoliberalizing facets of the Indian state, enabling the state to continue to perform its legitimizing development duties by building the capacities of various actors to ensure their own basic needs” (2006, p. 78). This is also what we see happening in Delhi wherein the Delhi government promotes Mission as a “government” project which expects partnering non-state actors to expand government’s services *and* bureaucratic control *and* ongoing political consent over the poor (I discuss these below). For the efficient expansion of the government ideology and infrastructure in the slums of Delhi, the Delhi government trained NGOs and authorized them to run community-based GRCs in exchange for regular funding. Thus, large sections of the civil society were now working on the orders, guidelines, and expectations of the government to count and serve the mass of urban poverty in Delhi.

A shift in the delivery channels of welfare services have given rise to two radical debates: first, the role that state-NGO partnerships play in restructuring the welfare state (Trudeau and Veronis, 2009, p. 1120), and; second, the role that state-NGO partnerships play in creating a “democratic deficit” or lack of democratic accountability (Swyngedouw, 2005). Since NGOs originated to fill the service gap left by the state (Robinson and White, 1997), and also to advocate for the democratic rights of the

citizens (Edwards and Sen, 2000), both these debates are relevant in understanding the changes in the NGO sector and in the nature of the state.

Kamat (2004, p. 156) suggests that the debate on NGOs is always pitched within an atheoretical framework of state versus civil society wherein the left think that NGOs will erode the state and the neoliberals think that NGOs will help create a more democratic state (Cammett and MacLean, 2011). Some scholars view NGOs as solutions to inefficient welfare delivery, non-participatory and hierarchical government programs, and therefore facilitating democratization (Fowler, 2000; World Bank, 1991, 2004). Others believe that NGOs are promoting the ‘new policy agenda’ through programs and partnerships that focus on neoliberal economics and providing depoliticized solutions to deep political problems that could be better addressed by seeking alternatives to development (Edwards and Hulme, 1996; Fisher, 1997, p. 442-444).

Urging scholarship to look beyond the two paradigms, Kamat (2004, p. 157) insists that NGOs should not only be theorized in the context of their relationship with the state but also “in relation to the global economic and political process that involves an overall restructuring of public good and private interest”. She argues that the rise of NGOs and particularly the strong funding flow from state and international actors should raise alarm bells – why is the state diminishing its welfare responsibilities while also paying non-state actors to take on the same responsibilities? Kamat senses that the state-NGO debate should focus on the under-theorized nexus between NGOs, transnational capital, and global circulation of neoliberal governance (c.f. Roy, 2011). Like Kamat (2004), Swyngedouw (2005, p. 1993) suggests that the “empowering *gestalt* of such new

governance arrangements” should be situated within the powerful global neoliberal political-economic order (also, Escobar, 1995; Harvey, 2005; Kamat, 2004; Mayer, 2007; Sharma, 2006; Townsend et al., 2004).

Mayer shows how this works out in the specific context of urban poverty. Mayer (2007, p. 99) points out that under conditions of neoliberal urbanism, zones of urban poverty are seen as potential hubs of investment; development programs are floated by the state with the entrepreneurial logic of transforming these zones through a cost-effective partnership with civil society actors like NGOs (also, Mahadevia, 2008; Zerah, 2009). As community-based NGOs are pulled in to manage poverty, their funders control their agendas and everyday practices so that they perform one task – manage the poor through a plethora of services that eventually help them manage their own selves. NGOs therefore provide multiple (redistributive and empowerment-oriented) services that are expected to come together to ensure that the poor take the responsibility for creating their own exit routes out of their poverty.

I agree with Kamat and Swyngedouw that new institutional arrangements should be located within the global neoliberal political economy to know their intended impact on state-citizen relations. As I already examined in Section 2, new institutional arrangements like Mission emerge out of the nexus of global and local capitalist interests to redefine the Indian state as a neoliberal “roll-out” state. I reassert here that such arrangements do not shrink the manpower, funds, or material visibility of the state but further expand through NGOs to better manage and govern its poor citizens. In this Section I show how such arrangements meet with roadblocks and alterations and yet

come to serve and govern the poor in expected and unexpected ways in the backdrop of neoliberal urban governance. The reason for roadblocks and alterations this lies in the local political economy of traditional state actors and institutions that have been serving the poor in the post colonial democratic India. The traditional state actors constitute two sets of actors that work together: 1) the members of legislative assembly (MLAs) that are democratically elected by the citizens once every five years, the non-elected but powerful local leaders that serve as links between the MLAs and the citizens (mostly in illegal or unauthorized settlements), the middle-men that act as a common link between the MLAs and the welfare-providing departments, and; 2) the upper-level bureaucrats as heads of the eight welfare-providing departments of the Delhi government, and the lower-level officials and clerical staff that operate the welfare department's files and forms.

I argue that it is important to locate new institutional arrangements within the context of global neoliberal political economy⁵⁰ *as well as* the local political economy of the traditional state actors and institutions to understand more clearly the un/changing state-poor relations in the slums of Delhi. It is at the level of the slums that we see how old and new institutional arrangements for serving and governing the poor challenge one another and truncate the state's aspirations of reaching the unreachable through its new and exclusive arrangements for governing the poor.

⁵⁰ I use the term 'political economy' in an anthropological sense to refer to the relationship between the global and local decisions of economic development and their impacts on the political and economic networks that serve or administer the citizens.

It is important to ask here: how exactly would the poor be managed through these exclusive arrangements if Mission were to be successful? Mission's success would mean a complex coming together of bureaucratic control and political consent over the vast and messy terrains of poverty. By 'bureaucratic control' I specifically mean the power that the extensive enumeration of the poor and their subsequent entry into the registers of the government can have on targeted welfare delivery and on their continuing micro-supervision through technologies that are currently being developed – like the Family Vulnerability Index and the Suvidha Card (UID, Aadhaar card). Such technologies assign greater power of information in the hands of the state and can have negative repercussions for those living illegally on public lands in the era of fast paced urban neoliberal development. Such technologies can also have positive impact on the ability of the poor to efficiently access their entitled services and to make demands of the government. In agreement with Cruikshank's theory on liberal governance (1999), I argue that welfare and empowerment programs work to produce self-interested citizens who are willing to regulate their actions as per the will of the state (Cruikshank, 1999). The success of Mission would mean that efficient NGO-run programs would continue to maintain the government's bureaucratic gaze and political consent over the zones of poverty – counting the poor through recurrent surveys to update its records (as already planned by Mission), serving and training the poor to rise above poverty, and continuously reminding them through material and manual presence of GRCs that the government cares for them. In light of the above expectations, I now turn to focus on the

everyday practices of Mission as they originated and eventually entered into conflict with other actors.

3.3 Ethnography of change and conflict

Several development projects in India are funded by the government and implemented by NGOs. However, the uniqueness of Mission Convergence lies in the processes through which it has evolved. From a women's empowerment project which started in partnership with a handful of NGOs in 2002 as *Stree Shakti*, it expanded as a poor cousin of *Bhagidari* in 2008 to deliver welfare schemes to vulnerable people through 104 NGO partners,. Mission expanded phenomenally in terms of activities undertaken and staff employed. In 2002, as *Stree Shakti*, Mission was operating 40 temporary monthly camps with a minimal staff. As of 2008, Mission employed approximately 1200 people at the level of the Mission headquarters and partnering NGOs, has built infrastructure in the form of Gender Resource Centers in 104 slums.

Mission's core objective was to restructure welfare service delivery. Mission started by openly challenging the welfare department's practices on two fronts: 1) treating the poor as 'beneficiaries' and not as entitled citizens who have the right to receive governmental support; and, 2) maintaining a confusing system for determining the eligibility of welfare recipients which promoted corruption. There was a lack of coordination between eight different welfare providing departments which resulted in duplication of schemes and no uniform eligibility criteria. Unclear guidelines, overlapping channels of authority, requirement of multiple document proofs, and

uncooperative department staff rendered the welfare system inaccessible to the majority of the poor, and Mission intended to cleanse this system (Figure 3.1 below).

As discussed below, some local leaders, elected politicians, and welfare officials (mostly lower level staff) used it as a technique to make money off welfare-seeking citizens by taking advantage of the loopholes in the system, and to garner political support from welfare-granted citizens. Interviews with slum residents reveal that they paid middle men (local leaders and MLA's *chelas*) to navigate the confusing welfare system, or stood in long lines of the welfare department, bribed its staff, made several rounds of the MLA to get their forms attested, and then waited for months or year to get welfare services. Most informants mentioned that MLAs played an important role in sanctioning their welfare services. Welfare forms submitted through the MLA took less time but more money as people had to pay a bribe to the MLAs' assistants (known as *chela*, meaning 'devout follower' in colloquial Hindi) for their forms to be attested by the MLA and deposited with the welfare department. Some slum residents revealed during interviews that they knew for certain that this money was shared between the MLA, his assistant and the colluding welfare department staff. In summary, welfare could not be accessed without knowing the 'right' people and without paying for it and that automatically excluded the poorest people from receiving welfare. A parallel system of welfare delivery was being operated through a network of actors in the most undemocratic manner. This was the story of welfare delivery prior to Mission Convergence (as illustrated in figure 3.1).

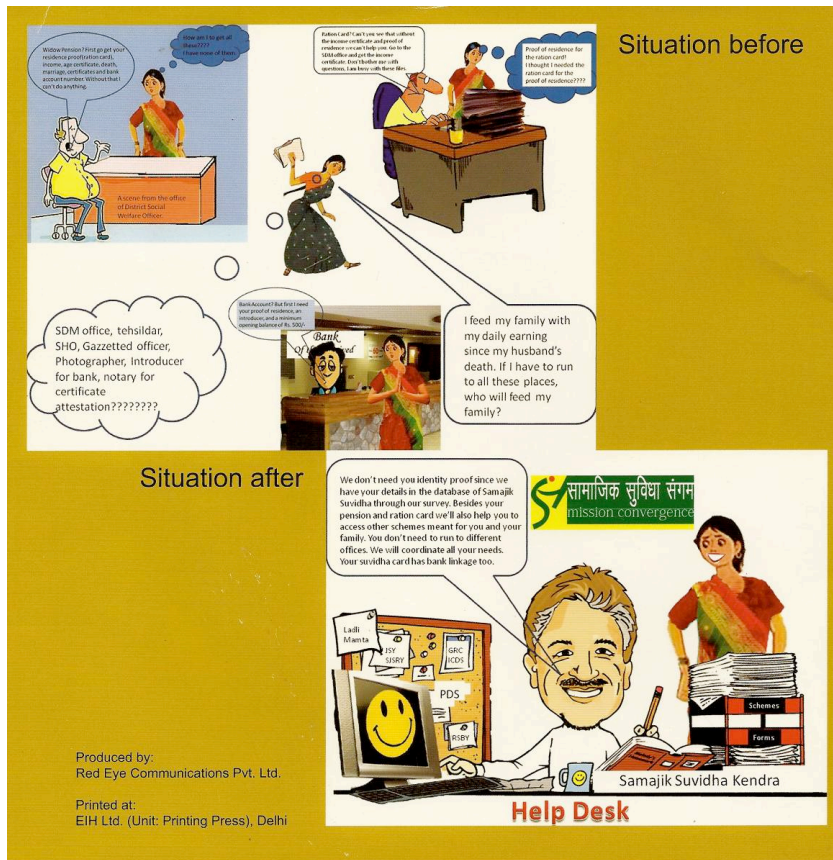


Fig. 3.1. Situation before and after. Pre-Mission a poor woman is running between government departments, meets with grumpy government department staff, and loses her daily wage due to time-consuming department rounds. Post-Mission, the woman visits only one center and one helpful person at the GRC located near her house where she can access all information and receive information with welfare services.

A revision of this system meant destabilizing the political economy that had mushroomed around the welfare system in Delhi. Since 2008, each GRC operated by Mission's partnering NGO served a population between 100,000 to 150,000 in the low-income areas of Delhi. The role of partnering NGOs was to conduct surveys to identify the socially, spatially, and occupationally vulnerable population in their specific

catchment areas⁵¹ and then to enroll them for the welfare schemes they were eligible for. Upon the completion of surveys, GRC community mobilizers were given the task of visiting each vulnerable household in the community, informing them about their welfare eligibilities, helping them get their required documents and paperwork ready, and submitting them to a district level body known as the District Resource Center (DRC) that forwarded them to the social welfare department. At this point, the role of NGOs ended and the role of government's welfare departments started. From here, each form was further channeled to one of the eight welfare providing departments where the final sanction of welfare service (cash or kind) was made. Instead of the poor people, NGO staff were now running between the different channels for welfare delivery. The pressure for efficiency was maintained through extensive procedures of weekly report submissions, monthly surprise field visits, and staff evaluations by the Mother NGOs and the Mission director who further reported the progress to the Chief Secretary and the Chief Minister of Delhi.

3.4 Resisting change

As is evident here, Mission eradicated the role of politicians from the processes of welfare delivery. Partnering NGOs were beginning to eliminate people's race between welfare offices and politicians and made services available at their doorsteps. Politicians and welfare staff resisted changes in welfare delivery in ways that deterred and subsequently altered Mission's objectives. In the sections below, I explain each point of

⁵¹ ⁵¹ A Mission induced term used by NGOs and government alike to describe the geographic area that is assigned to one GRC. This area is usually 25,000 households or a total population between 1,00,000 and 1,50,000. However, many GRCs in north east Delhi have a catchment area with a population of 2,00,000+.

resistance in detail and buffer them with voices from the field. MLAs' and NGOs' responses has been divided here in three phases. Phase I is between August 2008 and October 2009 when MLAs were only gradually realizing what Mission's work on welfare delivery meant for the loss of their political and economic powers. Phase II between October 2009 and May 2010 when MLAs consolidated political support and began openly criticizing Mission for its interference in welfare delivery. This was the most crucial phase that changed Mission's practices and outreach in several ways. Phase III is May 2010 onwards when MLAs won back their power to deliver welfare services and social welfare departments also reverted to their original work processes. Table 3.1 below provides a timeline of these changes.

Table 3.1.
Main events. Three phases of changes in Mission's policies

Phase 1 Aug. 2008 – Oct 2009	Phase 2 Oct. 2009 – May 2010	Phase 3 May 2010 onwards
<p>Cabinet approves Mission.</p> <p>Mission viewed as an extension of <i>Bhagidari</i> to the poor.</p> <p>Mission hires 100 NGOs as partners.</p> <p>Partnering NGOs start operating Gender Resource Centers in low-income areas across Delhi.</p>	<p>Partnering NGOs deliver welfare services at doorsteps of poor, but with minimal results.</p> <p>Fewer poor go to MLA offices for welfare schemes.</p> <p>MLAs foresee a blow on their political patronage.</p> <p>Politicians and welfare departments start criticizing NGO work.</p>	<p>Political pressure works and welfare delivery is reverted back to politicians.</p> <p>NGOs reverted to “<i>silai-kadhari</i>” centers.</p> <p>NGO staff angry, but does not unite to seek change.</p> <p>NGOs lose goodwill and trust in community.</p>

Phase 1 Aug. 2008 – Oct 2009	Phase 2 Oct. 2009 – May 2010	Phase 3 May 2010 onwards
<p>Phase I and II of mapping and surveys enumerates vulnerable people in Delhi.</p> <p>GRCs use survey data to start delivery of welfare services to the needy at their doorsteps.</p> <p>Vocational trainings, health and legal camps are noted as successful in Mission reports</p>	<p>Department delays sanction of Mission's welfare forms.</p> <p>Public gets restless and blames NGOs for delays.</p> <p>Delhi government includes all three welfare delivery channels – politicians, welfare department, NGOs.</p> <p>Politicians resist changes to welfare rules</p> <p>Politicians and NGOs blame each other of corrupt and undemocratic practices</p> <p>Politicians unite to pressurize the Chief Minister to discontinue NGO deliver of welfare delivery</p>	<p>NGOs focus on women's empowerment programs, developing family vulnerability index (FVI), making federal health insurance cards (RSBY) for eligible slum residents.</p> <p>NGOs currently expanding programs to include federal scheme for self-employment loans and training for women to enter non-traditional and better-paying trades/professions.</p> <p>Mission currently expanding GRCs to generate community participation in We Can campaign, to prepare groups of active volunteers for community development</p>

3.4.1 Phase I: NGOs replace politicians

Mission Convergence was launched on August 14, 2008 after receiving the approval of the Delhi's legislative assembly in March 2008. At that time, MLAs did not foresee any power struggles arising out of Mission. They assumed that since Mission emerged out of a women's empowerment project, it will continue to focus primarily on women's empowerment and similar activities, which according to the politicians, were politically non-threatening in nature (interview with cabinet minister, December 2009). However, tangible evidence of power struggles between politicians and partnering NGOs started as soon as NGO community mobilizers began reaching the homes of eligible welfare recipients and the crowds of welfare seekers reduced at the MLA offices

and increased at the GRCs (Figure 3.2 below). Community mobilizers were publicizing in slums and resettlement colonies that welfare eligible families would not have to follow any of the old procedures to access welfare services. Instead, welfare services would be made available to them at their doorsteps. Forms, approval signatures and stamps that were previously required and made available through welfare department or MLA's office were now going to be provided by NGOs.

MLAs from Wedal and Sethu complained during our interviews that their authority over welfare services that previously helped them maintain contact with their constituents was now being "privatized". Shrinking with these lines was not only the political authority of the politicians over their constituents but also the ability of welfare department staff to corroborate with local actors and seek bribes. One welfare service delivered to one poor person meant a monthly transfer of \$20 from the government's treasury to the poor person's bank. But the networks and processes through which those \$20 worth of welfare finally reached the poor person were embroiled in relations of money, social capital, and political clout. With around three million welfare recipients and approximately one to two million more becoming eligible for welfare services after the revision of the poverty line and the enumeration exercises undertaken by Mission, the economic and political loss of the politicians and department staff was even more. The local leaders at slums (*Pradhans*), politician's assistants, and several other kinds of middle-men also experienced a loss of their income. With so much at loss, monetarily and politically, politicians and department staff resisted Mission's involvement with welfare delivery by employing diverse strategies.



Fig. 3.2. Long lines at the GRC. Residents from nearby slum and resettlement colony waiting for their turn at a GRC (blurred name of GRC on board to maintain confidentiality).

Of the 42 different welfare schemes of the Delhi government, MLAs were most concerned about six pension schemes that provide between \$10 and \$30 per month in the bank accounts of at least one million eligible individuals. An MLA has several developmental tasks to accomplish, including infrastructural development in his/her constituency. But control over pension schemes is most critical for MLAs, especially for those with slums and resettlement colonies in their constituency. Within six months of Mission's work and publicity on the field, MLAs' authority to authenticate and approve welfare forms had been weakened by partnering NGOs of Mission.

Sukhi is a Hindu male NGO coordinator in north east Delhi. He has been working in Jaan Colony for over 10 years even before mission established a GRC with his NGO in 2008. He noted the changes in welfare delivery and said,

Earlier, there were too many levels, and that means too many confusions for a poor person to maneuver before he could even think about getting pension...there was bribing involved at some levels and long waits at others. They had to do a lot of running around before, but now we run to their houses...we tell them whether they can get old age pension or widow pension based on the survey data and then we help them with filling the form, completing their paperwork, submitting their form at the department...Mission has completely changed the way poor people get welfare now...

Sukhi's description of changes in welfare delivery does not point towards the changes in relations between elected politicians and slum residents. Neither does it suggest any tensions between partnering NGOs and politicians (MLAs). But Mahesh, who is the MLA from the same area where Sukhi works, is clearly upset. Mahesh was a fifty-five year old Hindu male from a middle-class background. He had agitated against the emergency era of 1975-1979 imposed by the then prime minister of the Congress led-government. Mahesh is an opposition party MLA and had been recently elected from the constituency for the third term. I went to seek an interview appointment with him when he told me that,

The government is going private...it is wasting money on NGOs in the name of *Bhagidari*...what are we sitting here for if the [welfare] schemes will be given out through NGOs? ...I used to personally supervise that the right people get the scheme...why would these NGOs take so much pain? They will keep getting their money from the government but we won't get votes if we don't give people what they want.

For Mahesh, Mission (which he calls “*Bhagidari*” here) was “privatizing” the government by using NGOs to replace politicians in the welfare delivery process. He believed that politicians can better serve the poor because they were politically accountable for their performance to them, something that the NGOs lacked. Other MLAs that I interviewed similarly criticized NGOs for intervening in their responsibilities. One of them was Ramesh, the Congress party MLA from Sethu constituency. His office is located near the Sethu slum infamous for its large garbage recycling businesses. The levels of poverty and deprivation in this slum were alarming. Ramesh was born in a poor Hindu family and became a politician due to his “*interest in social service*” (Interview, Dec. 2009). During interview, Ramesh was empathetic with the poor and also told me that he was aware of the rampant corruption in the welfare delivery process. He blamed his own assistants and political leaders in the slum for being corrupt and also thought that people’s ignorance gave unnecessary power to these local actors. But he was not convinced that NGOs were the solution to the rotting welfare system. He had a different idea of how NGOs should be used for improving welfare delivery. He said,

It is the duty of a government to look after the well being of its people. Welfare provision should not be given to NGOs. Their duty should be to identify the needy and tell us. That’s all, the rest we are capable enough to manage. After all, that is why people elect us!

Ramesh was laying down certain clear distinctions between NGO vs. government responsibilities by suggesting that ultimately it is the government that works as the ‘provider’ and ‘implementer’ while NGOs can only give secondary support. Ramesh

called himself the ‘government’, a democratically elected provider for his constituency. In contrast, he viewed NGOs as informed yet informal mechanisms that could peripherally assist him but must not interfere with his welfare responsibilities. Ramesh was concerned about the loss of his political authority over the poor that could follow excessive NGO intervention in welfare delivery, even if those NGOs were working to implement the programs of the Delhi government – the same government that he constituted.

The director of Mission was a forty year old Hindu woman from a politically connected middle-class background. She was a well respected high ranking bureaucrat in the Delhi government. She was known for her clean and innovative administration practices which had in the past systematized the functioning of other haphazard government departments. She painted a radically different picture about the role of NGOs in serving the poor. In one of her interviews to One World South Asia⁵², when asked what value NGOs added to the project, she said,

The government has its strengths and limitations. It can provide regulatory mechanisms, funding support, resource support, linkages, technical support, oversight mechanism. The civil society organizations, on the other hand have a lot of strength in terms of bringing to the government certain areas of flexibility and outreach in terms of community participation, engagement, and mobilisation...we found that engagement of civil society organizations has been far more beneficial than a normal governmental channel. Also these organizations have managed to reach out to such areas which were not covered in government system. Unlike government, the flexibility in the operation and cost effectiveness was what made us engage the NGOs and other community organizations.

⁵² <http://southasia.oneworld.net/weekend/on-a-mission-to-empower-the-urban-poor>

Mission director viewed NGOs as cost effective partners who can do what the massive governmental machinery cannot – establish direct contact with vulnerable people. Unlike Ramesh who thought that NGOs should only assist the government reach the unreached, the director asserted that the government can only assist with funding and technical support to NGOs who have the competent mechanisms and networks in place to reach the unreached in ways not possible for the government. Her ideas of government-NGO partnerships were influenced by her education in public administration at a US university where she was exposed to concepts like integrative and inter-sectoral systems and to examples of good governance as collaborative and efficient relationships between governments and NGOs for delivery of government services to marginalized people. What the director perhaps intentionally refused to take into consideration was the fact that in India serving the poor was a political exercise that enabled different state actors to maintain their political legitimacy and class power over the poor.

Raman was a sixty-five year old Hindu man. He was a powerful ruling party MLA and a cabinet minister for welfare in the Delhi government. Raman had been the most stubborn critic of Mission since its establishment. He viewed Mission as an insult to his authority and a public questioning of his work practices. Raman refused to collaborate with Mission for a smooth transition of welfare systems and this slowed down Mission's work significantly. He was convinced that all NGOs are corrupt and incompetent and that their sole aim was to make money. He said,

Now Mission is saying that NGOs will do the work of the government! How can that be possible? NGOs are so corrupt. Everyday several NGO people come to

my office saying, “sir, please help us get this project...it has a lot of money in it.” I tell them that you will get the project if you are worth it, why come and beg to me? So this is the situation of NGOs in Delhi! And we expect these NGOs to work with the government? To rectify the government? Ha! What a joke!

That some NGOs are corrupt is a known fact. But upon asking him whether the government was any less corrupt, Raman and I got into an argument. Raman reluctantly accepted that welfare department staff take bribes but he was certain that the poor welfare-seeking people were to be blamed for this because they don't want to stand in long lines and want their work done faster (I elaborate on this conversation in a later section). He refused to comment further on the poor welfare delivery system that actually makes these lines longer and forced the poor to seek faster results through bribes. But he was certain that the NGOs were not doing anything to cure this system either. He said, *“It is wrong to assume that the government is reaching the poor through these NGOs. The truth is that NGOs are extending their pockets through these mission-like projects.”* On being asked whether MLAs were willing to follow Mission's practices for reaching vulnerable populations at their doorsteps, Raman said,

How can an MLA trace each and every vulnerable person in the community? If a person is poor and expects welfare benefits then he should go to the MLA. *Mujhe bataao, kuaan pyase ke paas jata hain kii pyasa kuen ke?* [Tell me, does the well go to the thirsty person or the thirsty person to the well?]

Raman's views were contradictory to Mission's philosophy of making the government reach the doorsteps of the poor. He also likened Mission to an immovable and undemocratic object around which the needy must flock for receiving the welfare doles. Raman expected the poor, despite their lack of information/ awareness (and time

and money required to reach the government and prove ones poverty) to ensure their own welfare. Contrary to Raman's views, Mission was formulated with the vision of making government accountable and accessible to the poor. On August 14, 2009, during Mission's one year anniversary and award ceremony, Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, Tejindra Khanna noted that,

Earlier the onus was on beneficiaries to gain access to their benefits. Through Mission Convergence, efforts are being made to deliver the knowledge and benefits of the schemes directly to the people.

Mission's slogan of "reaching the unreached" was antithetical to the views of the cabinet minister who asserted that the poor were responsible for reaching out to the government if they wanted welfare services. His views highlight the rift between the Delhi government's aim to reform welfare for the benefit of the poor (among other not so obvious intentions) and, Delhi's politicians' opposition to the same. In essence, Mission's efforts to show that the Delhi government cares for its poor translated into the fear of loss of political powers for the elected politicians that constituted this government.

3.4.2 Phase II: Politicians, departments and NGOs co-exist

In order to appease the agitated MLAs, the Delhi government (mainly the Chief Minister) altered Mission's policies regarding welfare delivery such that it accommodated the old and new channels of welfare delivery: 1) MLAs, 2) social welfare department, and 3) partnering NGOs. It was left upon the welfare-seeker to decide which channel s/he wished to use to avail welfare. However, for any form that was approved through the MLA's office, verification was to be conducted by Mission's NGO staff to

cross-check the legitimacy of the approved welfare recipient. The MLAs questioned the authority of the NGOs to conduct verifications and complained to the Chief Minister that Mission's NGOs were intentionally blocking all forms approved through the MLA office. The parallel functioning of the three channels of welfare delivery meant that all three channels must try even harder to establish their authority as the prime service provider for the poor.

We could have expected that competition between them would have pressurized them to outperform the other such that welfare delivery could have become more efficient and free from corruption. However, contrary to these expectations, the competition between politicians and partnering NGOs turned unhealthy as they criticized the other as corrupt, inefficient, biased, and undemocratic provider. On the one hand, partnering NGOs claimed that their lack of interest in vote politics and their roots in the community enabled them to serve the poor better than the politicians. NGOs claimed that it was the failure of the politicians to serve the poor in an efficient manner that prompted the Delhi government to assign that work to the NGOs. On the other hand, politicians questioned the legitimacy of NGOs and claimed that NGOs were driven by the sole intention of sustaining their flow of funds, and also cannot be directly held accountable by the poor because they are not the democratically-elected representatives of the poor. Interestingly, the lack of a political voting relationship with the slum residents was interpreted either way by both actors, therefore exposing the multiple complex interpretations of vote politics in the slums of Delhi through which each actor tried to establish its legitimacy in its catchment area or constituency.

Prominent politicians Raman openly claimed that NGOs were nothing but '*paise banae ka dhandha*' (money-making business) that often begged politicians to help them get government projects. In retaliation, partnering NGOs adopted ways to challenge these accusations. For example, the project coordinator of Sharan GRC located in Wedal slum was a young Hindu man named Rajan who had been working in the NGO sector for almost a decade. He dug out previous welfare records of their MLA and found that 90 percent of welfare recipients were actually Hindu, middle-class people who did not reside in any slum and either knew the MLA personally or were his ardent supporters. The MLA here was a Hindu man from the opposition party and was known for his anti-Muslim sentiments. Wedal has a 75 percent Muslim population, majority of which was eligible for welfare services of different kinds. However, Sharan GRC staff found that welfare services were being diverted elsewhere through MLAs' corrupt practices. Rajan was visibly angry when he said,

Is this disgusting or what? People are dying here for want of 500 or 1000 rupees [\$10 or \$20] a month and this MLA is actually giving away this money to his friends! This is not a unique case. This is what you will find in each and every constituency. No wonder they [the Delhi government] want NGOs to step in [to deliver welfare services] now. We are an NGO...we are not interested in getting votes. So we go and help the ones who really need help. And when we do that [provide welfare to needy], we are defamed, our faces are colored black by accusations that we eat money. We eat money? And who is saying that?! The king of all money eaters who has been feeding his middle-class friends for the past ten years!

During later discussions, he mentioned that he was disappointed that in spite of such a scandalous find, he was unable to initiate any legal action against the MLA because a Mission official at the headquarter refused to publicize this issue fearing that it

will further deteriorate their relations with the politicians. Rajan was aware that NGOs were encroaching into MLAs' territories but felt that it was "*...high time somebody changed this rotten system*". In comparison to other partnering NGOs who knew of MLAs' corruption in their field area but did not highlight them, Rajan had taken the MLA head-on and wanted to prove that NGOs were sincere service providers for the poor. But Rajan quickly realized that Mission official was concerned with going beyond the acceptable zones of intervention or changing a system that had proven itself to be detrimental for the social and economic progress of the poor. For Rajan, this was just one of the many events that proved that the Delhi government would not allow Mission's NGOs to challenge and override the politicians that constituted the government. MLAs had the authority to withdraw their political support to the chief minister or to change their party – possibilities that kept Mission at bay from locking horns with the politicians.

During this phase, as the government tried to accommodate all three actors rather unsuccessfully, NGOs and politicians continued to prove each other as corrupt actors. These were the complaints that NGOs and MLAs voiced to their clients/ constituents and to the Chief Minister of Delhi. But corrupt practices of the politicians and of the NGOs were not news for the slum residents. Their multiple past interactions with the politicians had proved to them time and again that most works would not be done without paying a bribe. The residents did not indicate to me any knowledge of NGO staff seeking bribes but some did share that they were aware which NGOs mis-utilized the money that they received from the funders. Shantaram, an elderly Hindu resident of Surja slum, believed

that there was not much difference between NGOs and government because according to him, “*janta kii sewa mein karoroon ka munafa hai. Sab haath marte hain jab mauka milta hai.*” [Serving the poor means profit worth millions. Everyone opens their hand (to get some money) when they get a chance]. Interestingly, “*jantaa kii sewa*” or more commonly “*samaaj sewa*” is a term that is used by both NGOs and politicians to refer to their passion for social service. The use of narratives of corruption by NGOs and politicians did not shock the poor but only reinforced the fact that corruption was an inevitable reality they must deal with in order to access services from either. I must add here that because of rampant corruption poor people themselves engaged in corrupt practices to get their voter card or similar documents made, to access basic amenities like electricity and water, and even to meet the right officer to complain against corruption. The cycle of corruption is explained above by Raman. During interview, I asked Raman about the rampant corruption in the welfare department. This is how our interaction proceeded there onwards,

Raman: What corruption? What is your proof?

RD: I have heard from hundreds of slum residents that they have to pay bribe to the welfare officer to get any work done.

Raman: Who are these people? What are their names? I want to meet them personally and I want them to tell me the name of each officer they have bribed.

RD: I am sorry but I cannot share with you the names of my informants.

Raman: [cuts me short, does not really want to know the names, becomes impatient] See, you don't understand this but people are always complaining for this and that. And you only tell me, what are the officers to do if the poor people go to them and say, “*sir ji, mera kaam pehle kar do please, yeh lo sau rupay.*” [Respected sir, please attend to my work first and here take these 100 rupees (\$2)]. Stop blaming the staff. The poor people are no less. In fact, they are not even poor. How else would they pay the bribe and corrupt these officers? If these people don't pay then the officers won't ask (for bribes). They (people) keep paying and they (officers) keep getting!

I agree with Raman because bribery had become a social norm (Gupta, 1995) but I criticize Raman's accusation that poor people are the ones propagating practices of bribery. Many people think that bribing the right person will help them bypass tedious and inefficient government mechanisms (Gillespie and Okruhlik, 1991, p. 78-79 in Gupta, 2005, p. 7; Parry, 2000, p. 28). In that context, I would agree that people encouraged corruption by using bribes to get their work done. But the government department staff's expectations of bribe was exactly what kept those who couldn't pay bribes away from accessing government services, thus further increasing social inequality (Gupta, 2005; Heston and Kumar, 2008).

Narratives of corruption in the slums of Delhi are so common that they almost always accompany any discussion on government, politicians, and government services. Gupta (1995, p. 389) asserts that the widespread discourses of corruption help the citizens "construct the state symbolically and to define themselves as citizens". I extend Gupta's argument by suggesting that discourses of corruption help poor citizens recognize that they are marginalized citizens in the eyes of the state because their lack of money to bribe the officials and access the governmental services makes them invisible for the state and the services of the state are distanced from them, layered by the near-institutionalization of corruption. It is the inability to access government services and the entangled relationship between the state (government institutions and politicians) and the poor citizens that was used by NGOs to attract the goodwill of the poor. The intention of the NGOs to use corruption as a weapon against the politicians was to remind the poor that simpler and less expensive solutions awaited them if they supported NGO's in their

service delivery. But people like Shantaram were also aware that if not through seeking direct bribes from the poor, NGOs also engaged in corrupt practices by misusing donor funds for their personal benefits. As the common proverb in India goes, “*yahaan koi bhi doodh ka dhula nahin hai*” [Here no one is bathed in milk (the whiteness of milk signifies purity or sincerity)]. After several months in the field coupled with interactions with staff at PMU and MNGO (supervising authorities), I also learned that several partnering NGOs siphoned parts of Mission’s funds by paying lower salary to staff, organizing sub-standard health and nutrition camps and selling bulk of medicines for the health camps into black market. However, Mission was very careful in picking its battles. As a Mission staff explained to me,

We can’t go after them because then we will not be left with many partners. And it is not easy to select, train and do all that investment in them only to fire them after some time. We must develop their capacity and strengthen our own monitoring systems.

The staff’s explanation made clear that the new institutional arrangements could be relatively better than the old system but were definitely not the ultimate panache to serve the poor effectively and efficiently as expected. Nonetheless, Mission was trying hard to sustain a steady force of well-trained NGOs that would follow orders and work on deadlines without resisting or quitting its partnership.

Amongst complaints and accusations, the three actors continued sharing the task of welfare delivery. NGOs had the maximum outreach among the poor as they interacted with the community members at their homes. NGOs’ work gave poor people hope that they will begin receiving welfare services without additional hassles. However, their

hopes were mostly short lived. Below, I provide some ethnographic details from poor people and partnering NGOs.

Sunita was a 40 year old Hindu widow. She had been living in Sethu slum for over 10 years. Sunita collected recyclable garbage and sold them in the wholesale *kabaadi* market (*kabaadi* means ‘one who deals in garbage’). She possessed no official documents as proof of her poverty (usually a BPL ration card) or proof of her 5+ years of residency in Delhi – two important proofs required to avail welfare services in the pre-Mission system. She had never availed any welfare services from the government and was unaware that she was eligible for the \$20 widow pension. While conducting door-to-door surveys, her name was added to the list of women eligible for widow pension by Mission staff. Sunita has not started receiving her pension as the documents were in the process of being verified but she was hopeful. She said, “*Had these people not come to do my survey, I would have never known about the 1000 rupees (\$20) that I could get every month!*”

Sunita’s neighbor was 30 year old Muslim man named Babar Ali who operates a local phone booth from his *kuccha* house. He overheard our conversation and joined in to tell his own story. Babar Ali said,

I had polio when I was young. I got to know through our *pradhan* that I can get handicap pension. But the procedure was long and involved bribing many people. So I gave up...but just yesterday the NGO people came home and got a form filled. I paid them nothing! They said I should start getting my pension within three months.

Both these cases show that partnering NGOs’ work at the grassroots made it possible for the welfare-entitled to be added into the welfare system. But this addition

did not translate into smooth or quick receipt of welfare for Sunita or Babar Ali as partnering NGOs faced obstacles from the welfare department. Mansoor, a 35 year old Muslim male community mobilizer with Divya GRC in Jaan slum said,

We go to people's homes and convince them that they will start getting their pension soon. But our applications are not being processed by the welfare department. They keep sending them back to us saying that the form has some shortcoming or the other. If this keeps happening then we will lose community's trust...they will think that we are also as lackadaisical as the government.

Residents in slums and resettlement colonies do not understand the entire system through which welfare is processed under the new system introduced by Mission. During informal discussion with slum residents who had been contacted by NGO staff for welfare services, the residents said that since NGO staff collected the welfare forms from them, they assumed that the NGO, not the department, was responsible for its timely processing. For several poor people, NGOs had become the face of welfare delivery. By delaying sanction of welfare forms, politicians and welfare departments were trying to salvage their power-profit nexus by creating a rift between the community and the partnering NGOs. Mansoor's concerns with delayed services and negative public image were shared by staff in all four partnering NGOs in my field sites. NGOs appealed to the chief minister and the chief secretary to take action against defaulting welfare department staff but that did not yield any results. The NGOs gradually realized that despite their "partnership" with the Delhi government, they had few powers to actually move its monstrous and rotting welfare machinery.

Bipin, a 24 year old Hindu male community mobilizer working with Karya GRC in Sethu is a resident of the adjoining resettlement colony (GRC works in his community

as well). With the recurrent changes in Mission's guidelines to accommodate the demands of all three actors, Bipin was himself confused with these multiple guidelines. He talked extensively about how multiple channels had further deterred the process of providing welfare services to the needy. He said,

The social welfare department prioritizes the forms that come from the MLAs. Forms from GRCs are thrown right down the pile (of forms awaiting sanction). It has been six months since we started collecting people's pension forms but not a single case has started receiving money...people come and ask me, "arre bhai, kyaa hua hamare form kaa? Tumhare bass kii nahin to form vaapis kar do. Hum MLA ke paas hi jama karva denge. Tou kya hua agar wahaan paise lagte hain...kam se kam kaam tou ho jata ab tak hamara!" [oh brother, what happened of our forms? If you can't process them then return them to us. We will submit it with the MLA. So what if we have to pay there. At least our work would have been done by now].

Since Bipin lives in the same community where he worked, he said that people would often stop him on his way to ask about the status of their forms. *"When I say it will take some more time, they get angry and ask me if I want a bribe to get them their pension."* Bipin's experiences reveals that people's perception about how welfare should be delivered does not change despite Mission's efforts of changing the same. Some still believe that bribing concerned officials, be it MLA's assistant or NGO staff, would get them quicker results. Bipin's comments also reveal that most people were not aware of the obstructions that the NGOs faced from competing actors despite NGO staff's efforts at publicizing the same.

The initial weakening of politicians' absolute control over welfare delivery not only created conflict and unhealthy competition between NGOs and MLAs but also led to certain interesting developments in the mandate of the politicians. During a meeting of GRC project coordinators with their supervisors at the District Resource Centers

(DRCs) in December 2009, coordinators discussed their growing tension with the MLAs in their respective areas. Satpal, a 35 year old Hindu male project coordinator of Delhi Charities GRC mentioned during the meeting the reversed strategies that were being used by the MLA in his catchment area. Satpal said,

Before the MLA used to tell people that get lost, I don't have any forms. He would give no more than 100 forms out for pensions and all. But now the same MLA is giving out lots of forms because he sees competition in GRCs which are going to people houses and getting forms filled. But now, since MLA is giving more forms and most of his forms are processed in time [by the welfare department], GRCs are coming in bad light because our procedures are taking much longer in getting any pension to anyone.

Many GRC coordinators also pointed out that a parallel system of service delivery was being operated by local touts who falsely posed as GRC staff and extracted money from the community. The coordinators agreed that these touts were being encouraged, if not planted, by the community leaders and MLAs. Slums are carefully monitored for new actors by such leaders, and the touts could have clearly not missed their attention. During field visits, I often heard community residents informing the mobilizers about being approached by such individuals, but none of the four GRCs could catch such touts. Touts were seen by GRC coordinators as enterprising individuals who profited off the scheming local leader's intentions to defame the GRCs. Satpal and several other coordinators present at this meeting talked openly about the "threat" and "competition" that the GRCs posed for the MLAs. Informal conversations over several months with GRC staff revealed to me that they took pride in being perceived as a threat by the politicians. My interviews with politicians however did not openly indicate this,

though they did expose a kind of time-tested animosity and distrust between the two actors that had only strengthened with the establishment of Mission.

Beyond doling out more forms to the slum residents and encouraging touts to defame GRCs, some MLAs were also devising other more visible strategies to gain public support. MLAs receive Rs. 2 crores (444,000 USD) from the Delhi government for a period of five years as development funds to enhance the infrastructure of their constituency. Prior to Mission, this development fund was inadequately used by some MLAs in poor areas because provision of welfare services sufficed to keep them connected with their constituency. After Mission was implemented, certain MLAs began to focus on these development funds. Yoonus is the *pradhan* of Jaan slum and also a Congress party worker. He works closely with the MLA here and was surprised when the MLA started taking interest in development works in his constituency. I asked Yoonus what the MLA thought about Mission. Yoonus said,

Of course Mr. Zafar is feeling threatened. His power is slipping away...So he is coming up with new ways to connect with his constituency. Now he goes to break a coconut even at a freshly repaired side lane in the colony. Earlier, most of his development funds would be returned unused to the government.

Vimla, a low-income fifty year old Hindu woman who worked in a non-partnering NGO with branches in Wedal and Sethu had also witnessed similar changes in other MLA's mandate. She believed that Mission indirectly acted as

...a wake-up call...a sign of MLAs understanding that their power can be challenged [by the work of Mission's NGOs] and that more needs to be done as people's representatives.

In a bid to sustain their vote bank, some politicians started directing their focus on building roads and gardens in their constituency but they also continued to feel threatened. With a shared feeling of threat came the solidarity across ruling and opposition party MLAs to devise passive and active strategies of protesting against Mission.

I received an e-mail in February 2010 from a key informant working with a partnering NGO that a group of ruling party MLAs had gone to the office of a high ranking bureaucrat and threatened him to stop Mission's intervention in welfare services. This bureaucrat had been deeply involved in designing Mission's mandate and in promoting it as a strong platform for efficient welfare delivery. I could not triangulate this information and I don't know how the bureaucrat responded to this threat. Neither did any Mission staff voluntarily bring this incident up with me during my follow-up visit in July 2010. The events that followed make clear the power of the politicians and the inability of the bureaucrat and even the Chief Minister to sustain Mission's initial objectives.

By the beginning of 2010, MLAs began to actively opposed and complained to the Chief Minister about Mission's intervention in six crucial schemes. The remaining 36 schemes were not popular among the masses owing to their low publicity and inability to provide immediate cash benefits and were eventually merged down to 19 schemes. Unlike other activities of Mission, MLAs' protest against Mission never made it in newspapers. But the Mission headquarter, partnering NGO offices, and MLA offices were abuzz with the uproar that was being created by MLAs to get rid of

Mission's intervention in social welfare delivery. There was a lucrative political and economic system at stake that needed to be protected by both actors – MLAs and NGOs. And since Mission was set up on the foundation that welfare departments and politicians are inefficient service providers that must be replaced with new institutional arrangements, it became clear that only the loss of one could translate into the success of the other – there was little scope for their equal co-existence in the system of welfare delivery.

3.4.3 Phase III: Politicians replace NGOs

In this section, I provide extensive details based on government documents, newspaper articles and ethnographic data collected during July 2010 to show the processes that led to the radical shift in the Delhi government's decisions regarding welfare delivery to the poor. On May 6, 2010, the Chief Minister called a special meeting of all MLAs to address their grievances regarding Mission and to discuss proper implementation of welfare schemes. Mission staff understood well by now that the MLAs were trying to oust them from welfare delivery and therefore prepared a special presentation highlighting the crucial role of MLAs in Mission's activities. The intention was to make MLAs feel included as crucial actors in the new welfare delivery system. Mission director presented this power point presentation at the meeting in which one of the slides stated "Mission needs the support of our honorable MLAs" and went on to elaborate on at least five ways including "mentoring GRCs" and "identification of vulnerable families in respective area" (project documents accessed in July 2010). However, the presentation was not well received by the MLAs, especially opposition

MLAs who blamed the government for “outsourcing” various important governmental functions to NGOs, thus limiting the role of elected representatives. They questioned the Chief Minister regarding “serious irregularities in implementation of the program” (DNA, May 7, 2010). A senior opposition MLA also complained that in the last one year not a single person has been granted old-age pension through Mission (DNA, May 7, 2010). However, Mission’s data suggests that this was not true. As of February 2010, GRCs across all nine districts of Delhi had filed 11,229 welfare forms with the welfare department but only 3,414 of these forms had been approved by the department, i.e. less than 37 percent of the total forms submitted were approved (District-wise status of sanctioning of schemes, Mission document, accessed in January 2010). These false allegations by the MLA were lost in the tensed environment of the meeting. Most MLAs were either not aware or were blatantly lying about of Mission’s achievements. The figures presented above also indicate that the social welfare department actively obstructed Mission’s welfare delivery.

A heated debate between the chief minister and the MLAs ended with the Chief Minister telling the MLAs that, “*why are you blaming NGOs for being corrupt? You all also equally corrupt!*” (Interview with Mission consultant, July 2010). This statement by the chief minister reveals that corruption was not even considered a valid ground for criticizing the NGOs because of the common knowledge (among MLAs, NGOs, citizens) that politicians were also very corrupt. The parade of accusations against the Delhi government and the NGOs overruled the details about Mission’s achievements or

willingness to include MLAs into the new system. The chief minister found herself in disagreement with the MLAs but had to make a feasible political decision.

Following this meeting, the Chief Minister withdrew Mission from the delivery of six crucial welfare schemes, also known as financial assistance schemes (FAS) which collectively received a total governmental funding of Rs. 4,568,700,000 (\$99,319,565 USD) in the 2010-11 fiscal year (Mission documents from Planning Unit, accessed in January 2010).⁵³ This meeting was extensively covered by the print media. Jansatta (May 8, 2010), a prominent Hindi daily, carried a story under the following title, *“pension yojna ab phir se vidhayakoon ke adhiin.”* [pension schemes now back with the MLAs]. In a highlighted column were some large numbers like, “more than 250,000 people receive old age pension. 60,000 people receive disability pension. 40,000 women receive widow pension” (Figure 3.3). These numbers would relieve anyone of confusion on why the MLAs were fighting to get these schemes back within their purview. The minutes of the meeting of May 6, 2010 meeting (accessed in July 2010) reported that the role of NGOs would be deeply truncated. NGOs would not deliver popular welfare services but would only provide peripheral support to the MLAs by conducting surveys, generating database (for helping with budget allocation of different schemes), generating awareness about different welfare schemes, and delivering direct services for women’s empowerment. The minutes also stated that “the department of social welfare shall attach one cadre officer with every partnering NGO to monitor the activities being

⁵³ These schemes are known as Financial Assistance Schemes (FAS), also popularly known as ‘pension’ schemes among my informants. They include the following six popular schemes: 1) old age pension; 2) widow pension; 3) financial assistance to disabled persons; 4) Ladli Yojna; 5) Financial Assistance to Poor Widows for performing marriage of their daughter, and; 6) national family benefit scheme.

conducted at these centers.” With this addition, the government had essentially changed the game. Mission’s NGOs that had previously aimed at making the department efficient and to replace the politicians in welfare delivery were now going to be monitored by the welfare department as per the demands of the politicians.



Fig.3.3. Pension schemes go back to the MLAs. Source: Jansatta, May 8, 2010.

Mission’s partnering NGOs were expected to bring government services to the doorsteps of the poor in the most efficient and participatory manner. However, as of May 2010, Mission had become a back office (almost like a business process outsourcing unit, or a BPO), a cheaper (in comparison to the government bureaucracy) support unit where the mundane and labor-intensive processes of surveying the poor and

spreading awareness about services were conducted while the face-to-face politically and economically lucrative interactions between the poor and the government occurred, like before, in the offices of the MLAs and the welfare department.

“Mission” and “Convergence” are two words. The initial objective of Mission was to seek convergence of all 42 social welfare schemes and to bring them, alongside women’s empowerment programs, to the doorsteps of the poor through GRCs. These services converged at the GRCs in August 2008 but were forced to separate in May 2010. Mission as it stands today is a platform that provides different women’s empowerment programs alongside informing slum residents about welfare schemes, and enrolling slum residents into certain federal schemes for their free health insurance or free identity card (RSBY and UID respectively).⁵⁴ These free federal schemes (especially RSBY) still maintain a continuous interaction between the GRCs and the community, but not of the same degree as the welfare schemes.

During my follow-up fieldwork in July 2010, I conducted an informal follow-up interview with the Delhi government’s cabinet minister Raman. When I asked him why the MLAs withdrew their support for Mission, which started in the first place only after seeking approval of the Delhi legislative assembly (constituted by 70 MLAs), he said,

When Mission was proposed to us in 2008, we all MLAs thought that it was an extension of the prior *stree shakti* [women’s empowerment] project of the government. These NGOs had played a vital role in it. So we thought they will

⁵⁴ RSBY provides Rs.30,000 (\$650) worth of free medical treatment at any of the government-approved private hospitals. This scheme was launched in the face of poor public health facilities. UID or Aadhaar card is a national-level scheme of the Government of India to create an all-inclusive identity card for each citizen. This Aadhaar card is expected to work through technologically connected systems across different government departments to allow the citizen to avail different government services without going through political and bureaucratic channels. The data collected through Mission’s three-phased door-to-door surveys are expected to be included in this database.

also do similar good work with the welfare service. But they have only filled their pockets. You have been studying this project...tell me, do you think they have accomplished anything? In fact, they took away our responsibilities towards our people and messed up the (welfare) system even further.

Raman and other politicians had clearly misjudged the impact partnering NGOs could have on their political economy. In the process they also highlighted that programs for women's empowerment were not taken seriously by them. But the politicians were quick at acting against NGOs. Between 2008 and 2010, NGOs emerged as strong partners of the government, disturbed the traditional nexus of welfare delivery, shook the powers of elected MLAs, and went back to (a little more than) their original functions of women's empowerment. The expansion and contraction of Mission essentially translated into the expansion and contraction of the social and political capital in the catchment areas of its partnering NGOs. With the recent changes in Mission, partnering NGOs have covered a full circle. Like most other NGOs working in vulnerable areas, Mission NGOs also became known in the community as centers for women's empowerment organizing the usual vocational trainings, health camps, and self help group formation for women. However, unlike most other NGOs, the large platform through which Mission operated its programs involved the participation of more than 400,000 women in its different programs. I discuss the impact of GRCs across Delhi slums on empowering a large mass of poor women in the next two Sections. The truncating of NGOs' services in welfare delivery challenge theories on the ability of state-NGO partnerships to produce distanced and depoliticized relations between the state and the urban poor. I discuss this core finding in detail in the last section.

3.5 Angry NGOs: losing welfare, losing face

While politicians hoped to regain their power over their constituents with the sanctioning and delivery of welfare services, most partnering NGOs were visibly upset with these changes as of May 2010. There are three main reasons for this: 1) NGOs lost trust of several community members who had come to depend upon them for the doorstep delivery of their welfare services; 2) NGOs also lost a sense of authority and importance in their catchment areas; 3) Certain NGOs and NGO staff with political aspirations lost a platform for connecting with the community.

Partnering NGOs were furious with the Delhi government's decision to truncate Mission's work with welfare delivery. Prema is an activist with Humana NGO and has worked with slum communities in north east Delhi for over 20 years. In 2008, her NGO partnered with Mission and she became the project officer. Prema spent countless hours with her community mobilizers convincing the poor slum residents that the government had woken up to the needs of the poor and therefore a new system had been devised to get them welfare services through NGOs. She explained to them that they were entitlement holders, not beneficiaries, and had the right to make demands for welfare services of the government. I had observed Prema publicizing Mission's objectives on multiple occasions. Her impassioned conversations with slum dwellers gave them hope that the revised system for welfare delivery through NGOs would ensure quick and easy assistance. But following is what she shared with me in July 2010, after Mission had been excluded from delivery of FAS schemes,

We are left with no face to show to our community. Everything we said to them (about efficient doorstep delivery of welfare services) has now become empty

promises. They (community) are feeling betrayed. We are feeling betrayed. Mission started with grand plans of reaching out to the poor. But all these plans have fallen flat now...just when Mission was stabilizing and NGOs were beginning to reach out to the community, the politicians created a ruckus. Now the community is back at the mercy of the old system...and there is no way we can ever win back their trust.

The loss of trust or face in community was felt by the staff of several partnering NGOs. But the NGOs didn't unite to resist these changes, and neither did the affected welfare-entitled individuals. With the withdrawal of six FAS schemes in May 2010, Mission had been demoted to a "women's center" or a "*silai-kadhai center*" (tailoring center), terms many NGO staff used to share their disapproval of the changes. It is interesting to note that the withdrawal of six welfare schemes (and the subsequent unchallenged withdrawal of the remaining "unpopular" schemes) had destabilized Mission and obscured its objectives of 'reaching the unreached'. It did not matter anymore for the partnering NGOs or the politicians that Mission still had a material presence in the midst of slums and resettlement colonies, that Mission still delivered women's empowerment services to a significant population, that Mission still provided connection to popular and relevant schemes like RSBY and SJSRY. The rhetoric of making Delhi an inclusive city through Mission's programs had as if evaporated with the withdrawal of these six schemes from Mission. It is also noteworthy that just like the MLAs, the partnering NGOs also maintained their focus on the six schemes. Like the MLAs, they too knew that the best way to connect with the community was to provide them services that give them immediate cash benefits. And just like the MLAs, they too

considered women's empowerment programs a side activity with minimal political gains in comparison to the welfare services.

Mission NGOs had gained popularity and power by being affiliated with the government and delivering important government welfare schemes. More popularity in catchment area translates into increased utilization of services by community members which in turn meant larger numbers of beneficiaries to be shown to current and prospective donors. It is similar power that some NGO staff, especially project coordinators, saw themselves gaining had Mission continued with FAS delivery. Daman was a 30 year old Hindu male and works as project coordinator of Karya NGO, one of the most reputed Mission partners. His father was a local political figure and he too had aspirations of joining politics. During an interview with him in November 2009 (while Mission NGOs were delivering welfare services), we discussed his responsibilities as the coordinator of Mission's project for his NGO. He had a clear vision for himself and how Mission would help him achieve that. Daman said,

Daman: The only reason why I chose to work with this project is because I want to enter politics. Mission is a government project and so it is a very powerful project.

RD: powerful in what sense?

Daman: Powerful in the sense that it can provide immediate welfare assistance to those who need it the most. And since we (NGOs) work hands-on with the community and try to get them their pensions without them having to stand in lines or waste money on bribes, we establish a relationship of trust with these people. They know our names and remember our faces...now, not only pension but many people come to me with other grievances as well...like a family dispute or a case of fight with neighbors...they come because they know me and my work. All these connections will help me in the long run when I decide to contest for elections.

Daman viewed Mission as a platform for achieving his political aspirations. Because he himself lived in a low-income colony and he had grown up witnessing the power an MLA could have in disbursement of welfare funds. Daman understood well how informal and formal political networks worked in such community settings to connect the poor with their rights. In his view, his work with Mission was preparing him well to become a part of these networks and to understand the workings of the government. He was confident that this preparation would launch him as leader.

After Mission's withdrawal from FAS delivery, I conducted an informal follow-up interview with Daman in July 2010. Even though the Gender Resource Center he coordinated was bursting with different vocational activities for women, he said he was dissatisfied with his job. I asked him why and he said,

Anyone can run a center like this one...there are several such centers already running in this slum area. What was unique about this center was that it also provided welfare assistance. But with that taken away, we are like any other NGO in this area. Even though we are funded and supervised by the government, our worth has diminished in the eyes of the people. The only way we can still remain politically motivated with people is by making them aware about their welfare rights, that they can demand services from their MLA...with our help of course.

Daman talked about leaving this job because he didn't enjoy the same power he once did. Like Daman, several other coordinators were also disillusioned with their once powerful positions now turned weak. The three NGO staff whom I informally interviewed in July 2010 did not show enthusiasm about the ability to continue to positively impact the lives of the poor through their other works. They had understood the power of the politicians and also that the Delhi government would not take the risk

of supporting NGOs above the politicians. The enthusiasm with which Mission had started in 2008 had weakened in the face of political pressures and the inability to challenge embedded political actors and systems – however corrupt and inefficient. Despite still being responsible for delivering other services, Mission experienced an almost self-professed demotion to a “women’s center”.

Interestingly, along with feelings of loss and anger, certain NGO staff also felt relieved with the recent changes. I had witnessed the pressure that the coordinators and community mobilizers felt on a daily basis while welfare delivery was still their responsibility. NGOs’ performance was under the constant scrutiny of MLAs and departments who claimed that Mission was a wasteful parallel system. Such accusations further pressured the NGO staff into performing beyond their capabilities or resources (discussed in detail in Section 5).

Krishna was a young, enthusiastic coordinator with a partnering NGO named Humane.⁵⁵ He had witnessed more and more pressure being put upon himself and his staff to showcase the success of Mission. Even though he had enjoyed the popularity and goodwill that came with delivering welfare schemes in slums, he told me during a discussion in July 2010 that he was relieved with the change in Mission rules. He said,

In a way this [change] is good. We were overworked. Our community mobilizers were going mad trying to identify the vulnerable and fill their forms...there was too much pressure from top to show that Mission can be a success. And who was suffering? We, NGO staff! We had to get at least a 100 forms filled and sanctioned every month irrespective of the fact that the guidelines were still unclear. Besides, the pressure to make Mission a success was solely on us. Was the social welfare department ever forced to sanction forms in a timely manner?

⁵⁵ Humane was one of the GRCs that were not in my field but I had still had opportunities to interact with its staff. The other such GRC was Delhi Charities.

Were they ever told that you will not get your salary if you didn't sanction 100 forms a month? We were given such threats! So in a way this is great news for us. We can keep doing our women's empowerment trainings and still get paid the same salary.

Until May 2010, the performance pressure on NGOs was so intense that staff turnover was abnormally high. For example, at Divya GRC at Jaan colony, community mobilizers were ordered to bring in ten filled FAS forms every day. The time it took the mobilizers to identify and reach one house, convince them about their benefits, and seek relevant paperwork – these activities took at least between one to three hours for each case as per my own field observations. Low salaries, long hours of work along with unreasonably high expectations meant that few staff members could do as expected or sustain their employment for longer than 6-8 months. Those who depended on their salary to feed their family continued to work. This in turn impacted Mission's performance. The common complain across NGO staff was that only NGOs were facing the pressure of performance while other equally crucial actors like welfare providing departments were not being supportive of Mission. This throws light on what the government could and could not control. NGOs were funded by Mission and therefore could be told what to do and how. Welfare providing departments were an integral part of the government and had set bureaucratic work practices that could not be changed without long bureaucratic proceedings chaired and approved by busy actors like the lieutenant governor or Chief Minister. The departments did not share a donor relationship with Mission and therefore could not be pressured into working according to its expectations or regulations. On the contrary, because of the loss of political and

economic nexus that the welfare department shared with the MLAs, the staff at the department only further obstructed Mission's work. As such, in spite of pressure from the chief minister and chief secretary who began to closely monitor these departments and urge them to cooperate with Mission, the departments continued to delay Mission's work of welfare delivery by creating additional obstacles.

Due to changes in Mission's policies, the nature and level of interactions between partnering NGOs and community members reduced significantly after May 2010. One of the main reasons for decrease in interactions was that NGO staff found it difficult to explain to the community about the changes in FAS delivery. As mentioned above, since much of the staff in Mission NGOs resided in or around the same areas where they worked, they had no respite from questions, doubts, and accusations raised by people whom they had promised speedy welfare delivery. Hundreds of filled forms that now remained stacked in one corner of the NGO office meant hundreds of queries and complaints that the NGO staff had to bear with everyday. Figure 3.4 below illustrates the bundles of returned forms to a GRC. Partnering NGOs lost much of their goodwill and trust that they had built over the years in their respective communities. The withdrawal of FAS from Mission weakened their patronage with the community. In spite of facing several roadblocks, NGOs continued to partner with Mission. In the next section, I will discuss the reasons that sustained NGO partnership in Mission.



Fig. 3.4. Bundles of returned forms at a GRC

3.5.1 Why do NGOs want to partner?

Empirical evidence suggests that NGOs and Delhi government are tied in a mutually beneficial relationship through Mission. Amid concerns of growing depoliticization of the NGO sector and claims of its ability to salvage the government, NGOs are actively pursuing partnerships with the government due to three main reasons. First, running a GRC means a constant source of income for the NGO. The government pays Rs. 150,000 (\$3,400) per month to each partnering NGO to run the Gender Resource Center. This constant flow of income sustains the NGOs compared to short-term projects (O'Reilly, 2010).

Second, the NGOs are able to establish themselves even more prominently in their catchment areas. With a government project in hand, these NGOs get the authority

to invoke a sense of authenticity, importance, and urgency in their work among the community members. NGOs post photographs of their interactions with high ranking government officials and the chief minister on the main notice board of the GRC as a way to confirm that they are a partner with the government. Curiously enough, even though the government has failed to provide basic services to the urban poor, there is a near unanimous subservience and respect towards it (maai-baap attitude, c.f. Corbridge et al., 2005; Gupta, 1995; Sharma, 2006). Anything with a government stamp becomes trustworthy in the eyes of many citizens who think that private companies can just uproot and leave overnight but the government cannot.⁵⁶ Such trust in the government shows that it is likened to an object that is so large and omnipresent that it can neither be dismissed nor replaced, nor expected to take flight. Similarly, partnering NGOs funded and supervised by the government were viewed as credible entities in comparison to non-partnering NGOs that continued to struggle to win the trust of the beneficiaries in a physical and social terrain filled with NGOs. Publicity banners, staff identity cards, visitor cards, photographs, handling of welfare forms and spoken words during interaction with community members were used as symbolic markers to convey to the common public in slums that NGOs are an avatar of the government. The term ‘government’ is synonymous with large-scale presence, permanence, and security in the

⁵⁶ This point was clearly conveyed by the staff at Jaan GRC as we all discussed over chai the different life insurance policies available in the market. A particular private insurance company used a popular Bollywood actor as its icon of trust. But Shameem, a young Muslim woman community mobilizer here was convinced that this actor did nothing to convince the slum residents about the trustworthiness of the company. She said, “*who knows when they will pack their office and run away? Will these people then go knocking at the mansion of this famous actor? There have already been so many cases like this. That is why people don’t trust these private companies.*” The male community mobilizer, a 35 year old Muslim, agreed with Shameem and added, “*now look at Life Insurance Corporation (LIC). It is a government company and so people take it with their eyes shut.*”

minds of the common person. (It is the same logic that makes Indians admire government jobs as a symbol of prestige and assurance of stability or upward class mobility). Like the government, these “government stamped” NGOs were also viewed by some community members as more powerful and stable than other non-partnering NGOs.

A third reason for the NGOs’ willingness to carry on with their partnership was Mission’s ability to make its events high-profile by inviting important people like the President of India, Chief Minister of Delhi, cabinet ministers, Bollywood actors, and media. Until May 2010, the Chief Minister of Delhi considers Mission a “flagship project” and attended several Mission events that require the compulsory attendance of partnering NGOs. In her speeches during these gatherings, she would remind the NGOs that they were doing great service for their nation and that their efforts will be recognized during award ceremonies for best performing GRCs. She said, *“Remember, you are the core of ‘Team Delhi’...so work hard and win a position for yourself in the society.”* She evoked the sentiment of a unique opportunity for selfless service and greedy publicity in the same line. Publicity received at this level helped NGOs build their credibility in their respective catchment areas and, most importantly, in the development sector – which further translated into easier access to larger projects funded by national and international development agencies.

I attended some such events organized by Mission. Post-events, NGO staff would feel re-energized to serve the government. Photographs taken in such events would make their way in large print on the main notice board of the GRC for the community to view.

As Daman (the aspiring politician) of Karya GRC said, *“Who would have thought that people like us [NGO staff] could one day share the stage with the Chief Minister of Delhi! This is an honor that one can get only in such projects...”*

The social, economic and political connection available at these events had given way to a snowball effect that attracted other NGOs to the government. On August 14, 2009, Mission celebrated its first anniversary. The President of India was the chief guest of the ceremony and she herself handed certificates and handsome cash prizes to NGO and government workers of Mission. On August 15, the newspapers carried award pictures which immediately found their way onto the main notice boards of successful NGOs. Mission soon began receiving scores of applications from other NGOs eager to become partners. Mission’s events and their publicity had been so effective that a high-ranking staff at Mission headquarters was irritated with the amount of time she has to spend answering complaints and accusations of favoritism from NGOs that failed the GRC selection test. She said,

...these NGOs file charges of corruption against us under the Right to Information Act if they are not selected. They claim that we select only those NGOs that can give us hefty bribes...And we have to spend days every month just answering these. This is an absolute waste of our time!

The staff’s frustration was triangulated one day in the field when I met with an ex-partner NGO that had been blacklisted by Mission due to financial discrepancies. The head of this NGO was a talkative man who informed me that he had filed a Right to Information (RTI) application to know why his NGO was not selected initially. He said, *“... then the RTI did its magic and we got the GRC in a few months!”* It was evident to

me after talking with other GRC staff that this NGO was notorious for its corrupt practices and that is why Mission did not want to select it as GRC. However, it appears that Mission decided to give this NGO a chance instead of going through the cumbersome RTI process of explaining their decisions.

Such competition among NGOs to partner with Mission indicates that the government had successfully created a willing army of non-state actors to serve its agendas for/to the poor. Through Mission, the government had absorbed majority of the civil society within its developmental ideology and machinery with the exclusive intention of counting, categorizing, serving and governing the poor in Delhi.

Publicity and red carpet treatment to partnering NGOs gradually reduced with the challenges they met from MLAs and welfare department staff. During follow-up fieldwork in July 2010, it became clear that Mission will not have its annual award ceremony in August 2010. Nonetheless, applications from interested NGOs to partner with Mission continued to pour at their headquarter because Mission still provided a stable source of income and a stamp of reliability as a “government-run center”, thus proving once again the staying power of the ‘government’ in the minds of the poor and those who serve them. Having established the reasons that prompted NGOs to partner with Mission, I will now examine the how the changing rationality of government is redefining civil society as an object as well as a subject of government (Sending and Neumann, 2006, p. 652).

3.6 Changing the NGO sector: from advocates to contractors?

For the Delhi government, the problem of the urban poor needed to be given a

clear solution—a solution that had its basis in managing the poor by collaborating with those who were already providing them services. A need for managing the poor into becoming citizen-subject assumes that they were not already managed. And that perhaps they were not if we were to look at the poor from the lens of the political society (Chatterjee, 2004). A managed or “tamed” citizen would be one who self regulates herself into becoming what the state expects her to (Cruikshank, 1999). The poor in slums are seen by the state as untamed and un-regulated subjects simply by virtue of their illegal occupancy and dependence upon paralegal mechanisms to avail basic services.

The primary problem that concerned the Delhi government was its inability to establish itself at the level of the slums due to lack of efficient service-oriented administrative structures like those of the NGOs. Government dispensaries, community halls, public schools and even elected politicians are public service institutions but are unable to prove themselves as effective development actors in the same everyday and accessible manner as some NGOs did. An NGO staff sums up the difference between government and NGOs,

There are no long lines here and we are polite to them. We don't ask for paperwork, we provide unconditional services and we are located inside their community. The government is not like this.

In comparison, the government is difficult to access, provides inefficient services (ex. poor quality education in public schools, poor facilities in public hospitals, long waits for welfare) and its paperwork is too complicated for the non-literate poor to understand. As discussed above, with one NGO for every 400 people in India, NGOs

are the more convenient and efficient development actors that had come to overshadow the visibility of the government in the slums of Delhi prior to Mission.

As a result, a consortium of 104 best performing NGOs, most of which were already working in the slums and resettlement colonies, were hand-picked by the Delhi government to work with Mission as its partners. With this partnership, the government co-opted a significant percentage of the prime development actors and institutions in Delhi. NGOs were now paid and supervised by the government; in short, they were development contractors hired by the government in order to expand the government.

NGOs have been used as development contractor by the government in the past. What is unique here is the coming together of more than 100 NGOs on a common platform to restructure government's services for the urban poor. As one newspaper report states, *"the GRCs are being pitched as the face of the government at the community level, and are the main interface between the two."* (The Hindu, August 14, 2009). A big chunk of the NGO sector in Delhi is already a part of Mission and the rest are following as Mission expands to all vulnerable areas. This partnership has changed the NGOs in significant ways. As Rajan, coordinator of a GRC named Sharan NGO says:

Earlier, we used to be always protesting against the government. We were the voice of the common man. We used the Right to Information Act to challenge corruption in government...but there is no escaping the fact that the government has tied our hands by giving us these GRCs. All NGOs that took on GRCs are handicapped. We may oppose certain governmental policies and the way it functions...but can't do anything about it. After all, the government has become our employer.

In a similar vein, Bilal, a staff in a Mother NGO that supervises GRCs points out:

What has changed is that all big NGOs in Delhi have become partners with the government through Mission. So now there is little civil society voice left to raise issues like recent hike in transport price etc. not a single NGO said anything in Delhi! The NGOs are now working with the government. They have also become a part of the government. So they don't say anything against it like they did before. NGOs have started to think like government and work like government.

Rajan and Bilal express discontent at the changing nature of NGOs. According to them, Mission has altered the ideological bend of the NGO sector as a whole in Delhi. They both lament a loss of advocacy and activism in the NGO sector. A growing body of scholarship on NGOs explores the relationship between the neoliberal state, the market and the NGOs to show that boundaries between the three are blurred and that NGOs often become convenient machines to bring forward ideologies of neoliberalism at the grassroots. It is here that NGOs find themselves differentiated from their past identity as advocates and activists working with the people rather than serving the people as their clients (Edwards and Hulme, 1996; Kamat, 2004; Kapoor, 2005; Fisher, 2006; O'Reilly, 2011a, Townsend et al., 2004). As Nagar and Raju (2003) point out, NGOs cannot be entirely blamed for joining the bandwagon of neoliberalism because neoliberalism is increasingly becoming the only bandwagon passing through the town. NGOs are merely following the trend and ensuring that their economic benefits improve in a sustainable manner through this trend.

A quick examination of the 104 partnering NGOs clarifies that majority of them are small-scale project-based awareness or service dissemination units for larger national or international projects and therefore have mostly maintained a safe distance from the government. Their previous and current projects (alongside Mission) showcase that very

few NGOs ever locked horns with the government, thus leading to an insignificant loss of advocacy or activism when partnering with Mission. As Kamal, the high-ranking staff of an MNGO says on being asked about loss of civil society voice,

NGOs don't represent the civil society. They only represent the objectives of their donors. Most don't even know the meaning of advocacy. Advocacy is what big NGOs...like international NGOs can afford to do. Other NGOs do business, not social work. Most NGOs working with Mission are small. They want funds for survival, not for changing the system.

Kamal views advocacy as the privilege of the well-established NGOs while smaller NGOs are consumed in the everyday business of development. He discounted the ability of smaller NGOs to raise a voice against the government because in order to survive, they need funding from this very government. In his mind, an NGO can do either one of the two – work with the government, or challenge the government. On the contrary, Ankita thinks that NGOs nowadays are diverse in their work. She is the director of an influential but small NGO named Humana that has partnered with Mission since its policy deliberation phase. On being asked whether being Mission partners deters her NGO to highlight government's lapses, she said,

Of course my NGO can still criticize the government if and when required. See, you must understand that NGOs don't do just one thing. Like we are not just Mission's partners. We have at least four more projects going on simultaneously and some of them are actually about encouraging public action against certain government policies like slum demolitions and the nonsense Commonwealth Games. Who is stopping us from criticizing the government? All that we expect to do is make the government accountable; it doesn't matter whether that happens by working as partners or as critics of the government.

Ankita does not see any ideological tensions emerging from the NGO-government partnership through Mission and does not hesitate to claim that “*NGOs are*

making government cautious - they are watching [the government] and will raise hell if needed". On being asked whether "all" NGOs have the desire or capabilities to "watch over and criticize" the government, Ankita suggested that NGOs, by virtue of being "non" governmental, are creating alternative spaces which can be utilized for a variety of things – be it service delivery on behalf of the government or criticism of governmental policies. Her outlook towards the NGO sector was positive because she ran a successful NGO which had been able to engage with the government in multiple ways, unlike other smaller NGOs that survived from one funded project to the other. For such smaller NGOs, Mission came as a respite because it is a long-term project that could provide continuous funding, and therefore should be secured by working *with*, not against the government. During fieldwork, I did not come across a single non-partnering NGO that was not awaiting an opportunity to partner with Mission. And neither did any GRC in my field sites indicate that they were contemplating ending the partnership.

As welfare delivery channels for the Delhi government, partnering NGOs faced significant changes in their everyday work practices (c.f. O'Reilly, 2010, p. 183; Townsend et al., 2002; Trudeau and Veronis, 2009, p. 1120). For the first time in Delhi, 104 NGOs of different capabilities, resources and political orientations were working on a common platform with the government. In the process of using NGOs to expand welfare services in the slums of Delhi, the government used techniques of monitoring and supervision like accounts keeping, weekly and monthly report submissions, surprise visits in the field, regular training workshops, and of course by funding them. Being a government-run project, Mission' partnering NGOs were expected to absorb the

hierarchical and bureaucratic structures of the government. All partnering NGOs were divided into a hierarchy across three categories. This hierarchy reflected a changing NGO sector. NGOs had never found themselves categorized into hierarchies but were now adopting a government-like structure and the accompanying culture of supervision-subordination while also being expected to maintain a corporate-style competition between one-another to outperform the other and climb the hierarchy (awards and publicity served towards this end, as examined in an earlier section).

The use of NGOs (Mother NGOs and DRCs) to supervise the GRCs imposed a hierarchy over all partnering NGOs through which NGOs began to regulate one-another to ensure their compliance with the government's expectations. This is the essence of neoliberal governmentality wherein the government enables a web of regulatory transformations such that each stakeholder is closely monitored by the other and ensures that they conduct themselves as per the expectations of the state. On the surface, it seems that Mission was promoting "governance beyond the state" (Swyngedouw, 2005) by using non-state actors to replace government as a provider. Following Foucault, I argue that the Delhi government was blurring the boundaries between government and governance and in fact producing "government-oriented governance" wherein new technologies of governance were designed, implemented, and heavily regulated by the government. These new technologies create new relations and channels of critical supervision between the different non-state actors such that the authority of the government became automatically embedded in their everyday practices.

3.7 Discussion and conclusions

Scholarship on governance has been conventional in its approach towards understanding changes in state-civil society relations (Held and McGraw, 2002). The generic argument hints towards a zero-sum game wherein the non-state actors are taking over state authority and essentially weakening state power. But the conception of governance-beyond-the-state is not simply limited to an analysis of the types of actors involved and the shifts in their authority. I argue the changing nature of the civil society should be located within the Delhi government's overarching agenda of creating a world-class and inclusive Delhi and the political economy of its slums.

It is now an established fact that global trends towards capital accumulation in urban centers around the world are impacting the ways urban governments are changing their techniques of governing their citizens, especially the poor citizens who do not automatically fit within the neoliberal development paradigm (Banerjee-Guha, 2009; Batra, 2010; Harvey, 2005; Mahadevia, 2008). But what demands more exploration is the disturbances and alterations faced by this neoliberal agenda in the face of stiff political opposition from the same actors that constitute the neoliberalizing state. The tug-of-war between politicians and NGOs for the political economy of welfare of the poor in Delhi is so intense that it creates the effect of the Delhi government losing its ability to actually care for its poor. However, despite unexpected changes, in fact because of these changes, the Delhi government has been able to accomplish a technique of neoliberal governmentality through which partnering NGOs are regulated by the government, politicians are able to maintain their power, and the Delhi government is

able to avert any political dilemmas. The agenda of good governance still stands strong as the NGOs continue to operate from the GRCs emplaced within each poor community to enumerate the poor, inform the poor about welfare services, provide other effective schemes, deliver women's empowerment services to poor women, and basically continue to function as the grassroots extension of the Delhi government. Though the partnering NGOs have lost the goodwill of some community members, their partnership with the government does not shrink their ability to exploit the government funds and infrastructure for their own benefits like extending beneficiary count for their other development programs running alongside Mission, economic stability, and improved opportunities for more donor funding from other sources. Despite the truncating of NGOs' engagement with welfare delivery, the Delhi government has achieved control not only over a significant part of the NGO sector (through funding, supervising, awards) but has also continued to extend its reach within the homes of the poor as the NGOs continue to count and serve them at their doorsteps.

In this Section I have traced the ways in which state and non-state actors face transformations due to the introduction of a new institutional arrangement to serve the poor. I have elaborated on the power struggles for welfare delivery between politicians, welfare department, and partnering NGOs. These power struggles highlight the complexity involved in extending welfare to the urban poor. As the Delhi government tries to clean up its welfare mess to make Delhi a world-class and inclusive city, a series of highly political and economic relations are thrown into disarray. How different actors reorganize their power and scramble to serve the poor – this is the story of a

neoliberalizing welfare state caught between new and traditional arrangements for serving *and* governing the poor.

4. APNI ROZI KII MAHEK

4.1 Introduction:

“Apni rozi kii mahek” (The sweet smell of her income). This is the title of a newspaper article on successful self-help groups run by poor women living in resettlement colonies on the peripheries of Delhi (Jansatta, August 23, 2009). These women previously resided and worked in the heart of Delhi but were resettled after their slums were demolished in 2008. With the slums, their social and economic networks were also demolished. This article tells the story of poor women rising from the rubble and creating a new life for themselves through their participation in Mission’s women’s empowerment programs. They formed a self help group and started a micro-enterprise for making and selling jewelry items. Now, their success is defined by the sweet smell of their income.

This newspaper article is a fable, a feminist fable to be more precise (Cornwall et al., 2008).⁵⁷ These poor women are mythologized as hard-working, strong-willed, and responsible individuals who flourish under a women’s empowerment project of the Delhi government. The Delhi government that previously shunned them into the peripheries now wanted to empower them. In many ways, this small article summarized the evident contradictions in the Delhi government’s policies as it continues to demolish slums to create a world-class Delhi for attracting neoliberal capital, and simultaneously, has also established Mission Convergence to reach out and care for those very poor

⁵⁷ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/7632240.stm>

people it renders unreached (Mahadevia (2011) calls this the “paradigm of deliberate confusion”). By participating in Mission’s women’s empowerment programs like self-help groups, the poor women were expected to make the best of their situations and to work towards alleviating their poverty through entrepreneurial engagements. But the conditions under which poor women were expected to weave their feminist fables were harsh. Lack of basic amenities and economic opportunities potentially pushed women towards participating in Mission’s programs, but these programs did not empower women to understand and challenge the government policies and other structural issues that continued to marginalize them.

Such “feminist fables” were not restricted to the margins of the city alone. The head shot of a woman with a confident gaze, wearing a bright red *bindi* on her forehead invites you at every GRC in several slums and resettlement colonies across Delhi. From the peripheral resettlement colonies to the large slums inside the city, this woman has become an icon for Mission’s women’s empowerment programs. GRCs offer a package of free programs ranging from vocational trainings to medical and legal aid for the “holistic empowerment” of poor women.⁵⁸ Despite the stated and ideological emphasis on their “holistic empowerment”, Mission focuses more prominently on their economic empowerment – for poor women to experience the “sweet smell of their income”. The newspaper article that I mention above hints at the impacts Mission’s programs are

⁵⁸ “The Woman Empowerment Component is aimed at holistic development of the marginalized vulnerable women through interventions in the areas including Literacy, Health, Livelihood. Under a well structured programme, the GRCs provide Non-Formal Education, Vocational Training and Skill Development, Health and Nutrition through camps and clinics and are also instilling virtues of thrift and micro credit through formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs). The SHGs play a much wider role ranging from that of community peer groups to pressure groups. “ (<http://www.missionconvergence.org/women-empowerment-component.html>)

having on the lives and livelihoods of some poor women. I claim this reported piece of success as “fables” not because I am unconvinced that participating women have improved their economic status through Mission’s programs, but because these improvements are misjudged as sole and strong indicators of their holistic empowerment. I unpack these claims below.

Ethnographic evidence from my fieldwork indicates the following concerns with such fables: First, that women’s empowerment as a feminist agenda for building political agency and conscientization, awareness raising, challenging structural violence, and articulating women’s basic rights are sidelined by the sweet smell of women’s own income, thus also sidelining the structural issues that perpetuate gendered poverty (and hence the need for such programs) in the first place. Second, these fables also indicate the conventional practices undertaken by development projects to calculate and popularize their success while leaving untouched issues that can be politically and socially controversial for them. Third, the feminist fables hint at the ways in which development programs circulate shallow ideas about what women’s empowerment should mean, and the end results it should generate. Though these ideas arise out of real issues on the ground, they don’t fully integrate the social, political and economic complexity that come together to maintain economic and gendered discriminations from the contradictory and confusing policies of a neoliberal state and the status quo of the patriarchal society. Therefore, I want to make clear that my concern with women’s empowerment is not limited to the question of patriarchy (as is usually expected); it also

warrants attention to how neoliberal urban development policies have been sustaining the poverty and subordination of the targets of such programs.

In this Section, I critique the very premise on which the Delhi government decided to introduce programs to empower poor women. My aim is to examine the possibility of a co-existence of neoliberal governmentality and patriarchal status quo that influence women's empowerment programs to meet "other" objectives. I ask: why did the Delhi government initiate uniform women's empowerment programs for all poor women in Delhi? And, how does this program impact the government's intentions of making Delhi a world-class city that is also inclusive and caring towards its poor. By using NGO-run Gender Resource Centers (GRCs) to extend a conventional set of women's empowerment services that were already being provided by several other NGOs across the slums of Delhi, I argue that Mission's practices intended to: 1) make legible for the government the previously uncounted and poorly managed poverty in Delhi, and; 2) make visible the "caring" nature of the Delhi government; and, 3) make self-regulated economic subjects of the poor women by using partnering NGOs to conduct their conduct as per the intentions of the neoliberal state (As discussed in Section 3, NGOs too became instruments and effects of the circuits of neoliberal governmentality).

Foucault (1991) argues that disciplining the subject to self-govern is the most effective and powerful form of governance. Further, Cruikshank (1999, p. 40) asserts that "constituting the need and interest of others to fulfill their human potential is a mode of governing people." Therefore, the question of whether the state is conducting the

conduct of the citizen or whether the citizen is acting in self-interest – becomes obsolete. It is through the panoptic of creating responsible, self-governed subjects that I am analyzing Mission’s women’s empowerment programs. I assert that establishment of women’s empowerment programs across Delhi slums should be examined from the lens of governmentality to understand the nuanced link between the Delhi government’s aspirations to produce a world-class city that can attract global capital, manage its poverty, and show that it cares for its poor.⁵⁹ In this Section, I examine women’s empowerment as a strategy of governance to prove that despite its well-meaning and holistic intentions, its programs work, in expected and unexpected ways, to enable an unproductive coexistence of neoliberal governmentality and patriarchal status quo.

This Section is divided into six sections. In the next section, I provide details about the women’s empowerment program after which I examine feminist and development literature on approaches to empowerment and then delve into theories on governmentality and empowerment. In the subsequent sections, I will provide ethnographic details on the workings of Mission’s women’s empowerment programs and end with a section of discussion and conclusions.

4.2 *Stree shakti*⁶⁰ in the slums of Delhi

In general, empowerment means the ability to modify unequal power relations. Mission’s women’s empowerment programs implemented through community-based GRCs include: vocational trainings, self-help group formation, non-formal education,

⁵⁹ “to evolve the image of Delhi as a ‘**caring**’ city” – the exact phrase used on Mission’s website, <http://www.missionconvergence.org/survey.html>

⁶⁰ *Stree Shakti* means women’s power. Mission’s current women’s empowerment program is an expansion of a prior Delhi government initiative known as *Stree Shakti*.

free legal counseling, free medicines and medical check-ups, and free nutrition camps – only for poor women. Based on recent updates from a key informant, I learned that the self-help groups are in the process of being developed as platforms for: 1) linking up the groups with the federal government’s Swarn Jayanti Swa Rozgar Yojna (SJSRY) self-employment scheme that will provide trainings in marketable vocational trades (like nursing, home help, driving, welding, information technology) and loans for small businesses. The SJSRY-Mission link-up is currently in its planning phase; 2) mobilizing women group members to offer their voluntary services for community development (I don’t have the details on what this entails), and; 3) mobilizing women group members to create advocacy groups like *Mahila Mandals* (women’s committees) and youth groups that will incorporate, among other activities, a popular “We Can” campaign to end violence against women.⁶¹

The 2009 project report (Journey of Partnership, 2009) elaborates on the achievements of the women’s empowerment programs. Below is a section from the report. This section is titled “GRCs: Expanding horizons” (emphasis added),

- Total GRCs functional as on November 2009: **94 [104 as of August 2011]**
- Total number of women vocationally trained by the GRC in the year 2008: **25,986 [72,000 as of August 2011, explained below]**
- Total number of women benefitted under health camp in the year 2008: **125,121**
- Total number of women benefitted under nutrition camp in the year 2008: **70,906**
- Total number of women benefitted under Non Formal Education in the year 2008: **7,934**
- Total number of women benefitted under legal awareness in the year 2008: **66,560**
- Total number of Self Help Groups formed in the year 2008: **565**

⁶¹ This campaign was designed and funded by an international organization named OXFAM. It was taken over by the Government of India until 2005 when its funds ran dry. Currently, Mission is trying to incorporate the design and programs of the campaign within the existing institutional space offered by Mission’s SHGs.

These official numbers total up to an impressive 400,000 participants and are presented as proof of women's empowerment in annual reports, publicity brochures, meetings, and workshops of Mission. But my research shows that these numbers do not represent the complete picture on the ground – the number of women attending different camps and trainings might be correct but not the assumption that all participating women have equally “benefitted” through these programs. Participation and empowerment are two different things.

Information about number of successful cases was not collated at the level of the Mission headquarters or the monitoring Mother NGOs. GRCs kept some basic information about successful cases of vocational trainings, mostly in the form of “successful cases studies” pasted on their notice boards. Nitin, a 28 year old Hindu male, is the monitoring officer with a mother NGO that supervises the work of several GRCs. One of his main tasks was to evaluate the progress with vocational trainings at the GRC. Nitin informed me that an approximate total of 700 women have graduated from across the four vocational trainings provided at the four GRC in my field sites since the trainings started there two years ago. Each training class enrolled 200 women across its four trades and each batch graduated in six months. Therefore, across the 104 GRCs in Delhi approximately 72,000 women have received training in trades like tailoring, beautician, or basic computer education over the past two years. Nitin noted that at the most there were 5-7 successful cases from each batch of 200 at each GRC. For example, Nitin shared that Karya GRC at Sethu slum was able to place 5 of its trained women in some form of job. That means an average “success” rate of 3 percent, wherein success is

defined by Mission as a trained woman earning more than Rs.3000 (\$66) per month. I discuss concerns with this “success” criterion in a later section. Despite the low success rate, Mission continued to engage with at least 400,000 women through trainings, camps and self help groups across 104 slum areas in Delhi.⁶²

Mission documents are brimming with the assertion that poor women are the best channels to effect change in their families and communities. The focus is specifically on poor women (and not poor men) because the government believes in the feminist myth that poor women are accessible and responsible actors that can empower their families and communities by empowering themselves (Cornwall et al., 2007; Molyneux, 2008). According to Mission documents, poor women are Delhi government’s “partners” in alleviating poverty and in also making Delhi an inclusive city. The face of a woman with a confident gaze is used as Mission’s icon in most project documents. The photograph of another strong-willed woman in a Mission report (2009) announces that poor women have undertaken a “journey of partnership” with the Delhi government (Figures 4.1 and 4.2). Both these faces represent an underprivileged yet strong woman, a willing partner of the Delhi government who empowers herself, finds solutions to end her poverty, and also showcases the Delhi government’s efforts at including the poor in an aspiring world-class city.

⁶² I have calculated this number based on the abovementioned Journey of Partnership report (2009), updated information from monitoring staff, and by estimating an increase in the total number of women who have participated in the different programs since 2009. I am certain that 400,000 is a conservative estimate but I provide this in the absence of any current official data from Mission.



Fig. 4.1 Mission's icon for women's empowerment

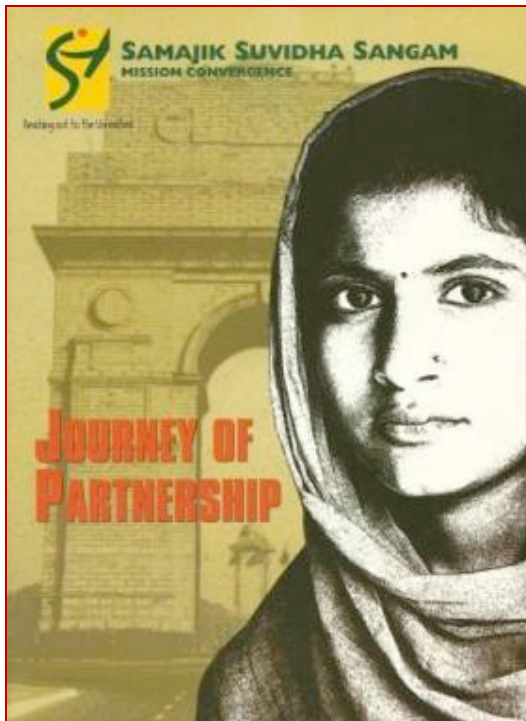


Fig. 4.2. "Journey of partnership". This photograph illustrates a partnership between poor women and the Delhi government. Source: Annual Report, Mission Convergence, 2009

Also, Mission documents are abundantly clear in their assertion that women's empowerment is the answer to poverty alleviation and the inclusion of the poor in a city's social and economic life (c.f. Moser, 1993; UNDP, 2003). The following paragraph holds excerpts from Mission's official statement on women's empowerment (emphasis added).⁶³

Women are central to Mission Convergence Program with focused interventions designed for their economic, social and psychological empowerment. **The programs are developed on the universal premise that women are central to any development agenda for true and lasting development. Women form the nucleus of the family, community, society and nation. An empowered and enlightened woman will ensure that her family benefits from her, and will unleash a chain reaction that would push development agenda up the scale to encompass all in its entirety** ... The journey of women's empowerment starts from the individual to the family, from there to the community then to society and finally to the nation. **Individual and family are the major challenging areas to address the issues of women and girls.** Promoting community participation to hammer in gender equality and to bring about positive attitudinal and behavioral changes towards issues of women and girls is thus fundamental to Mission Convergence Programme.

This official statement justifying the need for women's empowerment programs shows vividly that Mission is aiming to do two things: 1) express that women are the best agents for transforming family and community; and, 2) express that women's empowerment is hindered by family and community. Mission's programs are therefore seen as the solution to empower poor women and to do so in ways that also change family and community's perceptions and behaviors about women's rights and capabilities. However, my ethnographic research examined in a later section reveals that on the ground, Mission's women's empowerment programs emphasize on the economic

⁶³ <http://missionconvergence.org/women-empowerment-component.html>

development of poor women and their families without fully addressing their gendered socio-familial conditions. I assume that the recent planning around incorporation of rights-based We Can campaign through SHG groups would help bring issues of gender discrimination to the fore. However, I will rely on my observations and data collected during fieldwork in 2009-10 to reveal the then situation on the ground.

One could argue that women's economic empowerment could eventually trickle down to end their social discriminations and other forms of subordination. But evidence from micro credit efforts focusing on the economic empowerment of poor women in patriarchal societies proves to the contrary (Goetz and Sengupta, 1996; Kabeer, 1998; Mayoux, 1999). Further, Batliwala's (1994) research on the Integrated Rural Development Program in India shows that women's economic strength does not automatically make them powerful. As women get busy with becoming economic resources their gendered responsibilities to empower self and family increase and they are left with little time to question their gendered subordination (c.f. Rowlands, 1997, p. 132; Dhanraj and Batliwala, 2004). Mayoux (2002) argues that gender, caste, class, and culture are prime determinants in how social relations play out in enabling or disabling women to gain power out of their economic achievements. Poor women's economic achievement or empowerment must be even more critically examined within the paradigm of exclusionary neoliberal development as slum demolitions, limitations on informal livelihood opportunities, peripheral resettlement or homelessness, and a general environment of class-based marginalization engulfs the aspiring world-class city.

My purpose is not simply to prove or examine whether the empowerment programs of the Delhi government implemented by partnering NGOs are good or bad, liberatory or conformist, but to argue that such mass-scale women's empowerment programs of the government are laden with limitations as well as unexpected possibilities (Foucault, 1982, p. 231; Sharma, 2006, p. 90). My aim is not simply to prove that Mission is a neoliberal program that wants to produce pacified and discipline subjects, but rather, to raise questions about the kinds of citizen-subjects that are produced through programs of women's empowerment in a neoliberalizing India. In the next section, I first draw on feminist and development literature to chart the journeys through which women's empowerment as a strategy of development has evolved so far. Next, I examine practice theories on the structure-agency bind and then move on to the theories of governmentality to highlight whether and how empowerment projects produce governable and "other" kinds of subjects.

4.3 Approaches to empowerment

The low status of women in India attracts a continuous flow of gendered development interventions. Gender inequalities in access to basic services like health, education, nutrition, and employment favor men over women. Further, such discriminations have promoted imbalanced sex ratios across majority of India (Agarwal, 1992; UNDP, 2003). In Delhi, the sex ratio in 2004 was 823 females per 1000 males (Delhi Planning Department, 2009).⁶⁴ As such, the majority of development programs today incorporate women into their agenda (Boserup, 1970; Cornwall, 2003; Kabeer,

⁶⁴ 'Gender revolution in national capital'. The Pioneer. August 13, 2009.

1996; O'Reilly, 2003). The inclusion of women in the development paradigm is neither new nor confined to India. In fact, as I demonstrate below international efforts by north and south feminist scholars and activists since the 1970's have ensured the inclusion and gradual but weak mainstreaming of women into development policies across the world. Below, I first summarize the feminist attempts at placing social relations at the center-stage of women's empowerment, and then provide a brief critique of why this attempt failed to effect social change.

Prior to the 1970's, development programs largely ignored the need for women-specific programs. The main development trend of the 1970's was poverty alleviation, and women had not yet been discovered as a solution. Boserup (1970) used a liberal feminist perspective to critique development theories of that time to argue that women should not only be seen as welfare recipients, mothers and wives, but also as individuals with productive potential to positively impact the development agenda. The United Nations Decade for Women (1976-85) highlighted the role of women in the economic and social development of their countries and communities (Boserup, 1970; Cornwall and Anyidoho, 2010; Moser, 1989, p. 1799; Rowlands, 1997). This led to a radical shift from welfare-oriented, family-centered programs which targeted women as mothers, to an emphasis on the economically productive role of women. This was known as the Women in Development (WID) approach, and with it began the widespread development trend focusing on women as previously untapped economic resource. Income-generating projects for women gained popularity overnight (Moser, 1989, p. 1800). Women began to be seen as 'instruments' and 'resources' that could help meet

developmental needs and carry the burden of modern economic development, but the social structures that caused women's subordination remained unquestioned (Rowlands, 1997).

After WID, several other approaches invaded the development landscape but women's economic productivity continued to be promoted as panacea for poverty alleviation, and also as a tool for women's empowerment. The Gender and Development (GAD) approach was framed in the 1980's by collectives of feminist groups as a critical response to the WID approach as uncritical in its use of woman as a productive economic category without focusing on the social inequalities they continued to experience (Batliwala, 1994; Kabeer, 1996; Moser, 1993). Concerned with the dynamics of gender relations, GAD went deeper than seeing women as instruments or resources for development, and sought to mainstream gendered power relations that lead to women's subordination in most societies. It examined the value systems that defined the sexual division of labor. On the ground, GAD efforts produced results; 1980's onwards, empowerment approaches moved from WID to GAD as development practice now resonated with empowerment as "...a process of transformation involving both the acquisition of capabilities and the changes in subjectivity that enable agency to be exercised" (Molyneux, 2008, p. 783). Paulo Freire's theory of critical consciousness (1972) also found popularity in several women's empowerment programs, including the *Mahila Samakhya* program of the Government of India that was initiated in 1989 in eight states across India for rural women's empowerment for gender equality and social change (Anupamlata et al., 2004; Sharma, 2006). The mainstreaming of gender power

relations did not however succeed in producing favorable environments for social change. I discuss these criticisms in detail later. Below, I first present the prominent frameworks within which most women's empowerment programs have come to situate themselves.

4.3.1 Liberal and liberating approaches to empowerment

Beyond WID and GAD, the inclusion of women in the development paradigm involved many other frameworks. Adding nuance to Moser's work on practical and strategic gender needs (1989, 1993) Sardenberg (2010, p 233-234) proposed liberal and liberating approaches to empowerment. She argues that it is important to distinguish between the two approaches because they help us understand different ways empowerment can be recognized to effect change in accordance with the cultural and social norms that restrict women. The liberal approach focuses on individual growth and on the rational actions of social actors (Romano, 2002). It is atomistic and in the process of attending to the individual, it completely misses out the power relations that bolster structural discriminations to remain unchallenged. Sardenberg (2008) claims that, quite like the practical gender needs proposed by Moser, liberal empowerment is depoliticizing and technical in nature. However, unlike practical gender needs that focus primarily on the fulfillment of basic everyday material necessities more relevant for women living in poverty, liberal approach looks at their individual development in accordance with their cultural norms and traditions. The 'liberating empowerment' approach, in contrast, situates power relations at the center. Its core objective is to question and transform the patriarchal domination of women by focusing on women's

organizing for collective action while also attending to the importance of the empowerment of women at a personal level (Sardenberg, 2008, p. 18-19). The focus therefore is on intrinsic (Kabeer, 1999) and extrinsic grounds of empowerment in order for women to attain self-determination as well a collective agency for questioning patriarchal structures. In summary, while the liberal approach softly nudge society to make space for women, a liberating approach pushes social norms to change and address power disparities in gender relations. Below I discuss Mission's work in the context of these approaches.

Women from conservative families allowed to step outside home to attend tailoring classes at GRCs so that they can start their own business– this is an example of an atomistic liberal approach to empowerment; and women coming together through self-help groups for campaigns like “We Can” to know their rights and to challenge gendered violence in the process – this would be an example of a collective liberating approach to empowerment. The energetic woman consultant in-charge of tying the We Can campaign with the SHGs calculated during an interview that twenty SHGs with a total of 400 women in each of the 104 GRCs across Delhi would mean a strong base of around 40,000 women which could be put to better use than “*just meeting to save some money*”. She believed that the implementation of this campaign at such a large platform would be a “*preventive not curative intervention to handle women's violence and other related issues*”. The consultant viewed SHG for the sole purpose of economic betterment as an incomplete strategy for women's empowerment. While the consultant was excited about this introduction, she was well aware of the limitations it could face

by being a part of Mission's rigid institutional arrangement. She said, "*there is a difference between a project and a campaign and this [campaign] should be seen beyond limitations that a project faces.*" But the consultant was hopeful that the campaign will lead to greater rights awareness within the otherwise mundane economic practices of the SHGs. I use the distinction between 'liberal' and 'liberating' empowerment as proposed by Sardenberg (2008, 2010) to recognize the nuanced potential of Mission's women's empowerment programs to produce varying degrees of desirable changes in women's lives.

In the following section, I briefly discuss the popular development discourses that continue to define women as instruments of development. I argue that even though the partnership between feminist and development theory has made progressive leaps from WID to GAD and other nuanced approaches, remnants of the WID framework (alongside project pressures to show tangible success) continue to guide discourse and practice in the development sector in ways that weaken the call for women's strategic needs for empowerment. Further, Wallace and Coles (2005) argue that the GAD agenda too eventually watered down as women started to be seen as a "problem" that could be solved through technical frameworks and action plans.

4.3.2 Women as victims, heroes, and weapons

Development discourses have met with criticism for assuming that women are easy-to-mobilize, responsible, sincere, caring, and hardworking, and therefore must be viewed as sustainable developmental solution against poverty (Cornwall et al. 2004, 2008; Kabeer, 1996; Molyneux, 2008; Mohanty, 1991; O'Reilly, 2003). This mass-

inclusion of women as favorable development subjects has been criticized by feminists for not only sidelining women's struggles for strategic and liberating empowerment but also for decontextualizing it in ways that leave the unequal power relations intact (Cornwall and Edwards, 2010; O'Reilly, 2006, 2011b). Further, the interpretation of women as reliable development subjects has also created strong widely circulated "women as victims" myths, i.e., all women living in the peripheries are "poor, powerless, pregnant" (Cornwall et al. 2004, p. 2; Mohanty, 1991; Win, 2004). The participation of these "victim women" into development projects is therefore seen as an achievement of projects like the state's anti-poverty campaigns.

The "women as victims" myth is paired with "women as heroes" myth to suggest that women are in fact the best development solutions/instruments against their poverty because they are responsible, hard working, and easy to mobilize. Such myths that circulate women as victims and as heroes have led to the inclusion of women in several development projects. The GAD approach deepened the agenda for gender mainstreaming in the development sector for which "institutional packages", frameworks, tools, and trainings were created to better understand and serve the complex relations of power and position faced by women (Wallace and Coles, 2005). However, these frameworks often get embroiled in the "project mentality" that oversimplify and dilute the agenda for social change, as is also evident in the consultant's concern with the incorporation of the We Can campaign into Mission as a "project".

Nonetheless, development projects continued to put both myths to best use for motivating women to empower self, family, and community. The economic and social

development of a family and community therefore came to rest on the poor women as she was mobilized to become a ‘weapon against poverty’ (DFID 2006: 1). Molyneux (2008) argues that the design of state-sponsored women’s empowerment programs, like the one she studies in Mexico called *Opportunidas*, marginalizes the role of men to empower the self and family while playing an active role in feminizing responsibility and obligation for managing poverty; women are made to do more to ensure household survival while men do less (Chant, 2006). Similarly, through Mission’s most popular women’s empowerment programs like vocational trainings and self-help groups, an entrepreneurial strategy of development takes precedence over women’s exercise of agency (Wilson, 2008). Instead of liberating women, these programs work to enable relatively liberal practices for women to realize their potential as entrepreneurial and responsible individuals that have the potential to lift self and families out of poverty.

As “weapons against poverty”, such programs try to train women’s labor to meet their practical needs while also developing their capabilities and skills to experience a liberal version of empowerment, but they also feminize the responsibility as well as solutions for poverty alleviation. There is no doubt that poor women want skills to meet their practical needs, but as I will show in a later section, programs and trainings for developing skills mostly operate in isolation of women’s social and economic realities and therefore often fail to produce a mass of skilled women prepared or willing to alleviate their poverty based on self-interest and interest of the neoliberal state.

Addressing women’s practical needs is easier to implement and manage through women’s empowerment programs as they yield tangible results for both – poor women

and their benefactors. In comparison, liberating empowerment demands commitment for the time and energy of women willing (and capable) to look beyond their immediate practical needs, and delve into certain socially contentious practices. Perhaps that explains Mission's decision to hybridize women's empowerment in phases – free trainings and camps first established Mission in the community as a safe women's-only space (now known in community as “*silaii-kadharii* center”, indicating “mild” service delivery), and; the W Can campaign being incorporated into SHGs at this later stage when communities have been served by GRCs for at least three years. Policymakers and grassroots workers alike shy away from programs that focus exclusively on the political dimensions of empowerment, expecting rightly that women's empowerment as an exercise for political awakening and collective action could threaten embedded power structures of patriarchy, class, and caste, and therefore weaken their goodwill within the community or even threaten to shut the project (O'Reilly, 2010). As Cornwall et al. (2004) argue, in order to make empowerment palatable to the mainstream, its radical transformative agendas are diluted and “empowerment” means individual women having a little more money. Cornwall and Anyidoho (2010, p. 145) state that due to the technical and apolitical nature of the vastly popular liberal empowerment approach, implementers realize that women's empowerment becomes a hyperbole where ‘power’ is missing and what remains is ‘em-ment’ – empowerment without any power. This, according to Batliwala (2007) is ‘empowerment lite’, a vague copy of the real thing with a little of its element but none of its zest. Feminists have been disappointed with the rapid emulation of liberal empowerment and consider it a dilution of the gender agenda

that demands collective transformation of political, societal and economic relations (Cornwall et al., 2007; Sholkamy, 2010).

Cornwall and Edwards (2010) remind us that empowerment is a complex process and cannot be achieved through quick and easy technical solutions because they do not even touch upon the roots of women's oppression. As such, they suggest that women's empowerment programs should divert its current emphasis on accommodating or adding women within the inequitable existing structures as instruments of development, and should focus more on changing structures that create the need for development interventions in the first place.

Why, despite progress in understanding the current limitations and future scope of women's empowerment, have we been stagnant and discriminatory in our development practices? This question is a part of the larger question of structure-agency bind, and whether feminist engagements have the potential of escaping this bind. Feminists have taken as their core agenda the need to question dilutions of women's empowerment agenda and maintain empowerment as a radical strategy for social change (Anupamlata et al., 2004; Cornwall et al., 2010; Dhanraj and Batliwala, 2004; Nagar, 2000; Nagar and Raju, 2003). In the section below, I examine how poststructuralist theories on power proposed by Foucault and practice theories proposed by Bourdieu and Giddens have provided the foundations for feminist scholarship to not only recognize the relations of power that maintain the structure-agency bind, but also to challenge this bind in favor of a more nuanced politics of gendered agency (Ortner, 1996). Later, I examine Ortner's subaltern practice theory as a feminist project for recovering the "intentional

subject” from the circulations of the structure-agency bind to argue that the subject is not entirely muted by the hegemony of a supposedly cohesive structure as proposed by the above theorists.

Foucault, Giddens and Bourdieu are placed within the category of poststructuralists. In general, one can see common trends in their analysis of power within the structure-agency bind. They believed that structure and agency (Giddens) or the field and the habitus (Bourdieu) can only exist in relation to one another. While structure is the overarching social system based on rules and laws that limit an individual, agency refers to the capacity of each individual existing within this structure to make her own rational choices. Though Giddens proposes clearly in his theory of structuration that the agency is not a ‘cultural dope’ and has the ability to effect change within the structure, Foucault and Bourdieu have been blamed especially by feminists for explaining the nature of power in the mechanisms of oppression but for not providing a solution for its transformation (Lawler, 2004; McNay, 1992).

Foucault’s definition of power guides our understanding of women’s agency – prospects and limitations. He rejects the idea that power is anchored in macrostructures or ruling classes and is repressive in nature. He observes that power is productive and is everywhere in modern society; power relations are necessary precondition for the establishment of social relations which are unstable and changeable. Power operates through the hegemony of norms (Diamond, 1988; Foucault, 1980; McNay, 1992). Like Giddens, Foucault believes that the individual can resist the governmentality employed for maintaining social order through the techniques of self governance (enabled by the

productive and disbursed nature of power), yet he reminds us that although practices of the self are freely selected by the individual, at a basic level these practices are defined by the social context (Diamond, 1988; McNay, 1992, p. 68). Feminist critique of Foucault's model of power highlights how he only calls for an exposure of systems of power relations but does not push towards transformation, perhaps because of his own positionality as a white western male whose understanding of power is not from the perspective of the dominated and is therefore skeptical about transformative effects for social re-organization (Hartsock, 1990). As such, Foucault's model of power, though widely used within feminist theory to understand the nuances of its production and hegemonic adoption, can be effective for a feminist political agenda and specifically for a theorizing for women's agency only if it is able to provide the possibility of transformation to counter hegemonic hierarchies (Hartsock, 1990).

A Marxist theorist, Bourdieu (1986, 1987, 1990) proposes two core ideas that are crucial for social science till date: 1) the interrelation between social, cultural and economic capital and 'symbolic violence' as a means to hegemonize power relations arising out of capital-class nexus; 2) the concept of 'field' and 'habitus' and the doxic⁶⁵ nature of the habitus which enables its unquestioned submission to the field within which it gains its meaning. In essence, habitus determines actions of subject and production of agency. But since habitus is determined by social factors, agency is also produced *within* pre-existing social relations. Therefore, the agency (that is intersected by relations of class, gender, caste, religion, age, and nationality) is never really able to

⁶⁵ Doxa means the self-evident nature of things that are therefore not questioned.

evolve as a foundational resistance to the patriarchal structure. Lawler's (2004) research on British working class women highlights that the agency's cooption by the structure poses a threat to the validity of resistance – even if the agent/subject does resist, what gets counted as resistance are only those forms of contestations that are approved by bourgeois observer/authority/power. Bourdieu's concept of the habitus is criticized by Bulter (1999; also Butler and Scott, 1992; Ortner, 1996) as nothing more than materialistic determinism which does not offer a theory of agency but merely that of social reproduction. However, Bourdieu does propose that habitus can act against the structure if conditions within it arise such that they no longer obtain. His theory on the capital-class network has been extended by feminists and other scholars to argue that social, political, and cultural capital can work together not only to extend hegemony of the elites but also to enable the dominated class to use their capitals and create cracks in the structure (c.f. Jeffrey et al., 2005). This extension has often meant putting the “intentional subject” and her agency at the center of the practice theory – a concept that was largely marginalized by practice theorists like Bourdieu and Giddens (Ortner, 1996).

Bourdieu (1990) and Foucault (1980) contend that resistance and domination co-exist, that resistance is complicit with power. Further, as Lawler (2004) reminds us above (following Foucault), if resistance depends upon the authority of the field/structure to be even called resistance, then how can it possibly destabilize the same structure that enables its existence in the first place? In doing so, Lawler highlights the field-habitus bind that allows women to act but only within structures that absorb

women's actions instead of allowing them to alter them. The theory of structuration discussed below throws more light at the circuitous nature of this bind.

Giddens theory of structuration asserts that all social actors, no matter how oppressed they are, have some degree of agency which produces social change while also reproducing social structure (Giddens, 1984). This, he calls the duality of structure. He argues that action and structure cannot be analyzed separately, as structures are created, maintained and changed through actions, while actions are given meaningful form only through the background of the structure. Giddens overt recognition of the agency comes as a relief for feminists. However, like Bourdieu, Giddens theory of structuration does not pay special attention to gender and the distinct ways in which gendered subjects interact with the rules and resources within specific societies. Also, contrary to earlier excitement over the theory of structuration, feminists are quick at pointing out that, like Bourdieu (1990), Giddens too prioritizes the power of the structure over that of agency (Ortner, 1996), thus also asserting for feminists that the rules of the patriarchal structure assume the un-intentionality of the doxic agency to operate beyond the structure.

4.3.3 Subaltern practice theory

The poststructuralist practice theory has helped feminists like Ortner (1996) to develop a "project" that draws out the possibility for women's "intentional" agency by problematizing the formidable bind of structure-agency. Ortner (1996) argues that the poststructuralist concern with "being constructed" has sidelined the "making" point of view of the actor who intentionally resists, negotiates, or appropriates the structure. She

criticizes practice theory for not attending to the calls for action and change by subaltern groups (like of feminists and post colonialists) in favor of a myopic and rigid view of the structure as a machine that operates in isolation of the intentions and desires of the subjects. Ortner warns against defining the structure as a “totalized” and “hypercoherent” object in favor of a more nuanced interpretation where multiple rules and regulations exist alongside multiple intentions and desires (she calls these “serious games”). Taking inspiration from Gramsci’s practice of politics, Ortner suggests that one can look for “...the slippages in reproduction, the erosions of long standing patterns, the moments of disorder and the outright “resistance”” (1996, p. 17). This, she calls the ‘subaltern practice theory’. Ortner notes that while poststructuralism excluded the intentional subject, subaltern practice theory offers a complex, fragmented, and expanded view of the hegemony of the structure and puts the desire back in human intention to change the picture (1996, p. 11).

Feminist theorists unanimously agree that women’s empowerment must entail a process of change in which patriarchal relations are challenged, so that men’s traditional control over women ceases (Batliwala, 1994; Magar, 2003). More precisely, Kesby (2005, p. 2050) defines empowerment as a “non-linear process that involves an individual as well as a collective journey of awareness, politicization, reflection, and action for change”. He argues that empowerment remains incomplete if it does not develop into collective forms of struggle for challenging hegemonic formations (Kesby 2005, p. 2051). In a similar vein, Kabeer (1999) argues that women must be able to make strategic life choices, and that is possible only by questioning the societal

regulations against women's oppression. Kabeer (1999) defines empowerment as "...the process by which those who have been denied to make strategic life choices acquire such ability". In these definitions of empowerment, feminist scholars believe in the role of critical consciousness (Freire, 1972) and "intention" (Ortner, 1996) that must lead to collective and individual action to first understand and then challenge structures of oppression, to disturb the status quo, and to question gendered relations based on power, control, ownership, and capabilities.

Finally, I bring forward Rowlands' (1997) theory of empowerment. Rowlands, like Kesby, is clear that in the context of gender and development, empowerment should be viewed as a process (not as an end result) that varies according to the personal experiences and cultural, political, economic, historical, and geographical locations of an individual (1997, p. 129). She further asserts that despite different situations that produce different meanings of empowerment, the core value of empowerment hinges on gaining self-respect in order to challenge internalized oppressions – the first step towards challenging structural violence. Rowlands (1997, p. 13) takes further Kabeer's claim that people must develop the ability to make strategic choices (1993) and asserts that there are multiple factors – internal and external – that impact individual's ability to make strategic choices in the first place. Following Gramsci and Bourdieu's conception of hegemony and doxa respectively, Rowlands highlights that women cannot recognize or maximize their opportunities unless they do not attend to the following three dimensions (1997, p. 15): personal - confidence in self and in ones capacities, undoing internalized oppressions; relational - ability to negotiate and influence relationships at domestic and

community level; collective - finding common agenda and working to end oppression, in a collective and cooperative spirit, not competing. Rowlands is most effective in recognizing the internalized as well as structural oppressions that feed one-another to reproduce gendered inequality, and also offers tangible pathways for the making of the intentional subject.

The challenging of “hegemonic formations”, as Kesby (2005) points out, is the core objective of empowerment. However, I bring back Lawler (2004) here to argue that if resistance is in fact complicit with power, then, how does a feminist agenda help achieve women’s empowerment? I argue that between Ortner’s (1996) subaltern practice theory that allow the intentional subject to realize empowerment between the cracks of unplanned disorder and planned resistance, and, Rowlands’ (1997) call for the systematic ‘personal-relational-collective’ workings to overcome internalized and structural oppressions, hegemonic formations can be resisted, authority can be weakened, and the structure-agency bind disturbed. Despite my feminist convictions that social change for gender equality is possible, I am also aware, and therefore demonstrate in the next section, how development projects for women’s empowerment like Mission operate within the confines of the hegemony produced through the co-existence of the techniques of neoliberal governmentality and patriarchal control. The use of empowerment therefore develops as a tool for governmentality with the intentions/expectations of mobilizing and training poor women as governable subjects that must “conduct their conduct” to alleviate their poverty to fit within the aspiring world-class city. The “intention” therefore is pre-defined by the state on the basis of

producing a citizen-subject who assumes the harmonious conflation of self-interest and state interest.

4.4 Empowerment as a governance technique

Empowerment has become a popular strategy of neoliberal governance and development (Chatterjee, 2004; Cruikshank, 1999; Gupta and Sivaramakrishnan, 2010; Molyneux, 2008; Nagar and Raju, 2003; Sharma 2006). In today's era of neoliberal development, empowerment as a call/tool for political conscientization and radical mobilizing against oppressions is being popularly replaced by empowerment as a technical development intervention designed by experts to produce governable subjects (Cornwall, 2010; Sharma, 2006). Empowerment is therefore gaining popularity as a technique of governmentality – of programs or strategies that shape the actions of others (Cruikshank, 1999).

Foucault's theory of governmentality (1991) exposes the ways in which states try to produce citizens best suited to fulfill its agendas and to propagate its ideologies. Governmentality is defined as diverse processes by which conduct of a population is governed by different institutions, discourses, norms, identities, and self-regulation. In sum, governmentality propagates “the conduct of the conduct – myriad ways in which human conduct is directed by calculated means” (Dean, 1999:10). Cruikshank (1999) argues that schemes for the welfare and empowerment of the subjects, for correcting their deficiencies, are a manner of governing – a technique that relies on voluntary compliance of the subjects (not on violent coercion) to help people help themselves, or

to convince them to conduct their conduct in their own interest as per the state's expectations.

Feminists have shared a troubled relationship with the state. Marxists feminists especially have situated the state as the prime actor in perpetuating class and gender divisions of power which maintained social relations oppressive to women because states are captive to particular socio-spatial orders (Chouinard, 2004, p. 230; Silverblatt, 1991). The feminist struggle against hegemonic forces therefore included the fight against the state as a patriarchal construct ("man in the state", Brown, 1992) and a partner of the capitalist market that is unwilling to examine unequal gendered relations of power, control, and subordination (Chachhi, 1991; Heng, 1997; Kandiyoti, 1991; Sunder Rajan, 2003). Feminist scholars have been wary about state intervention in programs for women's empowerment and have questioned whether such intervention leads to the "governmentalization of empowerment" (Brown, 1992, p. 7; Fraser, 1989; Sharma, 2006). "Governmentalization of empowerment" has two meanings for the purpose of my research – the bureaucratic processes of the government that overtake the feminist meanings of empowerment, and; the intentions of the government to produce governable subjects rather than empowered citizens that can question its power. The main question then is: what does the state really aim to achieve through its promotion of women's empowerment projects? And, further along, do government-initiated women's empowerment programs only produce regulated subjects of the state, or, do poor women's engagements with the state *through* these programs also expand their relationship with the state and produce active political subjects?

Brown (1995) has been at the forefront of attacking the disciplinary and constitutive relationship of women to the state. She questions liberal feminists who defend the role of the state in the empowerment of poor women that produces their constrained and depoliticized subjectivities. In response to Brown, Piven (1990) argues that to view the state as an enemy of women is a failure in understanding that all social relationships are laden with power, and the possibility of governing the subjectivity and conduct of poor women is open even in feminist movements (c.f. Cruikshank, 1999; Rowlands, 1997, p.52). I agree therefore that empowerment is a strategy of governmentality which is shared by different benefactors and programs – be it the state, feminist movements, or NGOs – “to act upon others by getting them to act in their own interest” (Cruikshank, 1999, p. 68)

Empowerment programs undertaken by government or through government-NGO partnerships should not automatically send out red signals. The governmentalization of empowerment does not mean that end results would necessarily produce subdued, disciplined and responsabilized women as apolitical subjects (as proposed by Funicello, 1993, among others, and criticized by Cruikshank, 1999; Sharma, 2006; Li, 2007). Sharma (2006, p. 82) aptly notes that a government-sponsored women’s empowerment program is like a double-edged sword – it can produce political citizens *or* regulated subjects, but can also have other effects on poor women. Based on her fieldwork with a quasi-government women’s empowerment program in northern India, Sharma (2006, p. 81) argues that attention should be paid to the “unexpected forms” through which poor women learn to engage with the state, and even hold it

accountable, not perhaps mainly for changing their gendered situations, but for expanding their political agency by interacting and negotiating with the mechanics of a government-run program. Cruikshank (1999, p.39) asserts that to assume that state intervention in welfare and empowerment cancels out citizenship and produce depoliticized subjects is to limit the scope of what such programs really do. She argues that such voluntary (not coercive) programs actually put power into operation to produce a “wholly new kind of being” – one that is in fact constituted as a political citizen that must act on their own behalf in their own interest.

I agree with Sharma and Cruikshank and extend on their theses in the context of Mission’s programs to argue that such empowerment programs have become a popular strategy not only for normalizing self-regulation but also for opening up venues for direct and indirect kinds of state-citizen interactions – some of which produce informed and economically empowered citizens that benefit from the new institutional arrangements like Mission, while others produce citizens that clearly understand their limitations to conduct their conduct as per their own needs and interest (that the state helps them produce so that they can help themselves to fulfill them) (Cruikshank, 1999, p. 38). However, I also argue that to recognize the role of the state in simply helping the citizen realize her own interest (as a tool for efficient government of populations) would provide an incomplete picture of the multiple contradictory roles of the neoliberal state in creating an aspiring world-class city.

The long-term visible marginalization of the poor in Delhi, as already discussed in detail in Sections 1 and 2 were not a result of the state’s role in preparing the citizens

to act in their own interest. That the state continues to expand the neoliberal aspirations over the backs of the poor only proves its success in keeping mass revolutions and political upheavals at bay through strategies of politics and development programs such that poor citizens believe in the conflation of the interest of the state and the self (Chatterjee, 2008). One interpretation therefore is that the state prepares poor women to work towards their own interest and needs through programs of Mission. Another interpretation is that by making women work in their own interest, the state also prepares women to absorb the state's interest in managing poverty in compliance with the neoliberal urban development paradigm.

As examined in an earlier section, poor women are viewed as sound “instruments” or “weapons against poverty” that can be trained to become responsible economic resources. This view entails a shifting of responsibility from the state to the willing/participating woman such that the state takes a back seat while poor women work harder through vocational trainings *and* community activism for women's rights within the pre-designed institutional framework of state-regulated projects like Mission to create their own exit routes out of poverty and gendered subordination. In essence, the state produces the interest of poor women to alleviate poverty without producing their self-interest in addressing the structural issues that create and sustain their poverty.

Dolhinow's (2005, p. 575) ethnographic study focused on how NGOs working in the colonias on US-Mexico border tie the colonias people to the neoliberal state through programs targeting women in the colonias. She states that “global economic restructuring and neoliberal policies lead women to take greater responsibility in the

process of social reproduction and NGOs play an important part in this repositioning of responsibility by providing technical and organizational support”. The neoliberal era is indicative of such shifts in responsibilities from the state to non-state entities or to poor citizens themselves. With the use of empowerment as a strategy to produce self-regulated and governable citizens, such neoliberal shifts have become even more automatic. And empowerment of poor women especially has emerged as a popular mantra of neoliberal governmentality in cities like Delhi where rampant poverty must be managed to make Delhi a world-class city.

Even though this mantra is critiqued for producing a depoliticized mass of poor women, it is also examined for producing “wholly new kind of beings” that embody state expectations (structure) while also expanding their political and economic possibilities through their interactions with the state machinery (actions of the intentional subjects) (Cruikshank, 1999; Li, 2007; Sharma, 2006). Feminists recognize that structure uses seemingly anti-hegemonic techniques like empowerment only to further incorporate agency into its hegemony. However, feminists also point at the slippages that such techniques allow for the intentional subject to question this hegemony. These slippages are also motivated by women’s engagement with other NGOs in their area that provide them the awareness to criticize and negotiate with the structures of the neoliberal state and of patriarchy. I argue that women’s empowerment programs operate within unquestioned (but not totalized) structures; however these alone do not dictate the kind of citizen-subjects that can be produced through these programs. Such programs, simply by virtue of being “women’s empowerment” programs operated in “gender” “resource”

centers allow for the intentional subject to look for slippages (if not for revolutions) in the oppressive structures of poverty and patriarchy. Programs like Mission therefore serve dual function – produce self-interest of participating women to work for the (conflated) benefit of the self and the state, and, provide spaces through GRCs for participating women to look for “slippages” by learning skills for rising above poverty and nudging certain gendered social norms (irrespective of whether women are able to utilize these skills in self-interest/state interest).

In the section below, I use my ethnographic data to show that Mission’s programs for women’s empowerment attempt to promote state’s efforts at neoliberal governmentality without disturbing the patriarchal status quo as per its core objectives. However, the programs also give participating women opportunities to step outside home and train their labor for the possibility of meeting their practical needs and experiencing liberal empowerment – albeit within the unchallenged but possibly fluid and fragmented structure of patriarchy.

4.5. Empowering poor women in Delhi

Each Gender Resource Center provides the same package of services to the poor women in its catchment areas. In general, while some of the vocational trainings (like beautician, tailoring, basic computer) and the free medical camps are popular among the GRC beneficiaries, non formal education (NFE) classes, legal counseling, and nutrition camps are often thinly attended. Vocational trainings are most popular services that

provide four different livelihood trainings to around 400 women per year at each GRC.⁶⁶ Below, I will provide glimpses into several events and experiences that take place within a GRC to show how intersection of different factors impact women's participation in Mission's programs. These glimpses will allow us to understand how women's empowerment is implemented and interpreted within specific spaces where Mission works to produce empowered women.

4.5.1 Learning “homely” skills

Nasreen is a 17 year old Muslim woman living in Jaan resettlement colony with her maternal relatives. Coming from a conservative Muslim family, she was never enrolled in school. GRC Divya (Divya means ‘light’ in Hindi) is located near her house and many of her neighborhood friends attended the different training programs offered here, the most popular one being tailoring. One day, while I was observing the activities at this GRC, Nasreen walked in and sought admission in the tailoring class. The tailoring instructor, a middle-aged Muslim woman, asked her, “*why do you want to learn stitching? Are you going to get married?*” Nasreen replied to the negative. After learning from Nasreen that she was non-literate, the teacher told Naseer to first join the non-formal education (NFE) program because she would not be able to follow the instructions in her class otherwise. Nasreen said she would come back later to enroll in NFE and left. A month later, I asked the instructor whether Nasreen returned to enroll in the NFE classes, she said no. The instructor then explained to me that young women like

⁶⁶ I was recently informed over phone by an informant that Mission has reduced the number of vocational trainings to two. He mentioned that the focus is gradually shifting towards not only training women but towards connecting them to the market.

Nasreen are sent to the GRC by their families to learn skills like tailoring, beautician, and craft-making as a way to prepare them for the wedding process – an eligible bride is one who knows “homely” skills that can be put to use if her family allows her to, or when the family falls in distressed times. She further discussed that few women become economically independent after learning different vocations there; they either started something very small at home, or don’t use their new skills at all.

Nasreen’s interest in joining the tailoring classes and her rejection of the NFE classes shows that poor women made economical decisions about their participation in women’s empowerment programs based on narrow gendered expectations of their families and society from such programs. The waitlists for tailoring and beautician courses versus the poorly-attended NFE classes further proved this point. While tailoring provided a tangible skill-set they could utilize to earn an income at any time in their life, NFE provided only foundational skills that did not directly translate into economic opportunities. However, if women were allowed to join only specific economically viable trainings, then why were they not able to or allowed/able to put their skills to use towards the desired end? I argue that most poor women could decide upon learning a skill but not upon utilizing it. Unlike Nasreen, there were several women who attended vocational trainings out of their own will *and* with the knowledge/consent of their families. While attending trainings at a GRC was socially acceptable for some families, translating the trainings into women’s public economic labor was difficult, not only because of the social and familial regulations against gendered labor outside home (especially among Muslim families), but also because of the lack of additional resources

required to translate the trainings into profitable business ventures for the poor women. And yet, poor women like Nasreen who were willing to attend trainings at the GRC only highlighted that women tried to step outside home and attend programs that held the possibility of empowering them (as per the expectations of the program and the state), but did so in agreement with the social and familial gendered regulations. This also partially explains the gap in women's participation in vocational trainings versus success in putting those skills to use.

4.5.2 The writing on the wall

The evidence of gap between women's participation and women's empowerment was pasted on the walls of the GRCs. In several GRCs, the walls were covered with two kinds of publicity materials: lists indicating the large number of women graduating from different vocational trainings, and, a handful of 'success stories' of women who, upon graduation, were able to start a small business or find a job and gain economic stability. These stories (like the success story mentioned in an earlier section) showed a clear difference in the lives of these new entrepreneurs – poor women attended vocational trainings, started a business, and found economic stability and self-respect. These successful cases did provide hope and enthusiasm to participating women, some of whom faced challenges in translating their trainings into successful income-generating activities and hence their "empowerment" as prescribed by the state.

Nitin, a Mother NGO staff who monitored the GRC programs informed me that Mission headquarters collated information about the number of women who joined or attended the GRC programs across Delhi, but not the number of successful cases. But he

was sure that that information would not be useful because the criteria for defining a successful case were not flexible enough to grasp the ground reality; only those women who earned above Rs.3000 (\$66) per month after training at the GRC were considered a successful case. He described the problem:

Most women have seasonal small-scale businesses, not a permanent job. They might earn Rs.2000-3000 (\$45-66) during a couple of festival months and Rs.400 (\$88) during most other months [talking about beauticians and tailors, two most popular trades at the GRC]. So their income fluctuates. But majority are not even able to start anything [any business] because they don't have the resources [to invest]. So I would say overall, there are at the most 5-7 successful cases from each batch [of 200 women undergoing training] at most GRCs.

The monitoring staff knew that a 3 percent success rate was abysmally low but didn't show any dejection with it; he was hopeful that trained women were able to put the training toward "some" economic gain at least, if not to earn above Rs.3000 per month. He asserted again that the low success rate was due to high expectations (Rs.3000) and fewer women with the resources to meet those expectations. But he didn't mention why then Mission continued to provide training or to maintain an unachievable measure of success if it could not meet its own expectations? Another MNGO staff (details withheld for ensuring confidentiality) whom I met while she was monitoring a vocational training at Karya GRC shared the problem of GRCs competing with one another to "show" successful cases. She said, *"successful cases would mean better chance at getting awards and recognition, and who doesn't want that?"* But since few such cases really existed where women earned a stable Rs.3000 per month, she said that some GRCs provided inflated numbers which were revealed as fake cases during her verification visits to the houses of the "successful" women. She went on to say, *"such cases were*

very rare, and we stopped them completely by doing more intensive verifications in the field.” Between Nitin and the woman monitoring staff, it was evident that poorest women lacked resources to meet Mission’s expectations of success. But it was also evident that the GRCs wanted to showcase “successful” cases and therefore hinted at the possibility of GRCs preferring participation of women who already had some resources at their disposal. Observations at GRCs made it obvious to me that majority of trainees came from relatively better-off families. But access to resources was not a guarantee of their economic empowerment or independence, as I shall demonstrate below as I examine the disparity between participation and empowerment by bringing in voices from the field.

While participating in a beautician training class at the Wedal Colony GRC named Sharan, I asked a group of young women whether they had plans to open their own beauty parlor in the near future. Savita, a young Hindu woman in her early-twenties who lives in the Wedal resettlement colony said, *“This training is just one thing. You need other things too, like money for initial investment and support from family. My father doesn’t even know that I come here...”* Her father does not know because he wouldn’t allow her to participate in the programs if he did. Sharan GRC is far away from Savita’s home. She convinced her mother to let her attend the training at the GRC but she said that she could not even dare to mention the thought of walking such a long distance and crossing a slum on the way for attending classes at the GRC to her father. Savita kept her father unaware of daily classes and therefore slipped away from his patriarchal control, only to realize that the slipping away produced no tangible economic

results for her. The GRC did give Savita the opportunity to learn and socialize with her friends, but it did not expand her opportunity to do what she wanted to do – earn her own money. Savita was one among the several participating women who were convinced – through a mix of their own economic conditions and the teachings at the GRC – that earning their own income would pave an exit route out of poverty and gendered subordination (the latter being more of a concern for Savita, but was not openly disseminated among participating women as a core objective of Mission’s work). Participation in Mission’s programs therefore became one of the venues for young women like Savita to temporarily escape the patriarchal gaze, but not to permanently alter the gendered power relations that gave authority to that gaze. Savita’s statement also shows that women recognized that multiple resources and social-familial support must come together to translate their participation into beneficial economic or social outcomes.

During fieldwork, I interacted with several women like Savita – young and energetic, but only too conversant with the limitations of converting trainings into income. I also met some women from income-poor families who were determined to make the trainings work for them. These were mostly married women who joined the GRC trainings to find small-scale solutions to the poor conditions at home. Chandra, an enterprising 30 year old Hindu woman from Wedal slum attending the beautician training said when I asked her why she was participating,

I will get to learn something here...better than sitting at home. I learn tailoring at Chetak *sanstha* that is near my house. So let’s see what I can do with both or at least one [training]. You know I came here from a village, didn’t know anything, didn’t study much. But one can’t survive like that here...

Chandra talked at length about the fast city life, inflation, her part-time home based work of assorting plastic toys that paid too little, her decision to not have more children, and her husband's income not enough to even cover the school expenses for her son, their only child. She had devised extensive plans for what she wanted to do with the trainings and was one of the few participating women I interacted with who also knew that the SJSRY federal scheme lends money to poor women for starting small-scale businesses. Chandra was willing to exploit all possible opportunities to provide for her family. In many ways, her energy and economic desperation were both symbolic of the poor women who were prepared to work in the interest of the self and the state.

I also met some women residing in slums who, unlike Savita, could not attend vocational trainings even though they came from poorer families and therefore could have possibly benefited more from their skill enhancements. Seema and Reema were Hindu sisters who lived with their parents and two other siblings in a one room house in Wedal slum. They were around 19 and 20 years old respectively. Their father was a night guard at a small factory. Both sisters and their mother worked at least 10 hours every day folding book pages and then binding them into books. The work was seasonal and often took the entire family's labor to produce a maximum income of Rs.150 (\$3.50) per day. This family was relatively poorer in comparison to Chandra's. Between saving for their weddings, building another room in their house, and the everyday food expenses for six people, their daily wage does not add much to their father's monthly income of Rs. 3000 (\$66). Recognizing the tight situation, the enterprising sisters found

other means to make money by working as paramedic assistants during special government events or as nurses' aid in a community-based clinic.

During an informal group discussion, Seema and Reema told me that they knew about the GRC courses but could not afford to spend time away from income-generating works. Seema said, *“two hours every day for learning beautician course would mean losing Rs.30 or so (\$0.70) in daily wages.”* The sisters' daily wages accompanied by care work for their families left them with little or no time to participate in the trainings. Those who eventually did end up participating at GRCs were women who could afford to not earn a daily living. The sisters' inability to participate in Mission's programs reveals a clear class distinction in women's participation in Mission's programs.⁶⁷ As already examined, there are additional costs involved in putting trainings to use. Besides, their labor for domestic care giving and for home-based informal businesses was important for their families' everyday survival. This situation made me question whether Mission's programs were really 'reaching the unreached'? Or, were they only reaching those who could afford to have the energy, time and resources to reach it? The different programs at GRCs are expected to work as a 'package' and help women attain 'holistic empowerment'. But gendered social restrictions and poor women's lack of time and resources to participate in Mission's programs diluted the possibility of women's empowerment. In the section above, I have illustrated why some poor women were eligible (and willing) but unable to benefit from Mission's programs even if they could

⁶⁷ This class distinction is relative considering that the majority of people living in slums and resettlement colonies are not income-rich. Some earn more money than the others and can therefore afford to not engage in additional home-based small businesses.

afford to participate in the same. Next, I examine how women who did participate in Mission's programs to earn a living faced competition on the ground as the same conventional package of programs provided by several other NGOs produced higher supply but lower demand for women's skills in their local markets.

4.5.3 Empowerment overload

Zones of poverty are over-served by NGOs that mostly provide a conventional package of services for women's empowerment. As a result, hundreds of women who acquire new skills through vocational training programs at these NGOs find their skills redundant due to a saturated local market where the supply for women's conventional skills becomes much higher than the demand. I claim that this demand and supply imbalance produced by the development sector indicates the problem of "empowerment overload". In trying to economically empower women, training programs of several NGOs do not predict the repercussions such mass-scale supply of women's standard skills will have on the local markets. They focus on training women, not on how, if at all, these trainings can be absorbed by the local market, thus showing that most programs operate within their own bubble of meeting narrow project outcomes. The saturated local markets further reduce women's ability to bargain for fair wages and therefore increased work burden with only a marginal increase in their incomes. The services that are expected to empower them therefore work to diminish the value of their labor.

And until recently, Mission was no exception as it only further added to this overload.⁶⁸ Women at Wedal Colony shared during an informal group discussion that the vocational trainings at GRCs offered limited choices in learning new and lucrative trades. The same classes for tailoring, beautician, craft-making and basic computer education were offered by several other NGOs that had been working in the slums for decades prior to Mission. In Wedal colony alone, there were at least twenty-five NGOs offering an array of services to its 100,000 residents. Bina, who learnt tailoring at Sharan GRC, said,

There are so many NGOs providing the same training in every nook and corner of this colony...there is a tailor sitting in almost every house here but one can't find willing customers....such a waste [of training]

Bina's views confirm that empowerment is fraught with contradictions – it can empower women in one sphere and simultaneously dis-empower them in another (Nagar and Raju, 2003; Rowlands, 1997, p. 132). However, what does this kind of empowerment mean for those poor women who know that their trainings produce mild results and their social conditions don't change? (O'Reilly, 2006). And why then do these programs continue despite a “success” rate of 3 percent?

Molyneux (2008, p. 181-182) states that programs for raising incomes like vocational trainings, self-help groups and micro-credit lending, are a central part of neoliberal poverty-alleviation strategies which has absorbed a substantial number of poor women. Yet, many such programs fail to even raise women's economic status

⁶⁸ As mentioned earlier, Mission is in the planning phase for a tie-up with the SJSRY federal scheme for providing free unconventional and marketable vocational trainings to poor women.

because they are not sensitive to what happens outside the group meetings or program offices. More often than not, poor women's inability to garner support from other family members and from male-dominated economy renders them vulnerable to failure.

Despite such failures, women's participation in such programs becomes the best way for governments to attract attention and goodwill of poor women that keep them "distracted from wider political considerations and submerged within the minutiae of issues in their own backyard" (Taylor, 1996, p. 785; Dhanraj and Batliwala, 2004). I view Mission's women's empowerment programs, especially vocational trainings and self-help group formations as efforts towards pacifying and embedding participating women's agency within confirmed developmental activities for their empowerment; such programs work to create confusion around state's "real" intentions and distract the poor from questioning exclusionary policies (Mahadevia, 2011). In this sense, the state could be criticized for incorporating the seemingly anti-hegemonic and power-altering concept of women's empowerment and then disseminating it through specific programs and channels that only strengthen its hegemony – not challenge it. Of course those women who can't spare time to participate in GRC programs also often lack time to engage in the long and tenuous processes towards transformative politics⁶⁹. Especially relevant are the parallels I can draw between the example of how an ex-chief minister of Andhra Pradesh (a southern state of India known for its booming information technology industry) initiated a state-wide self-help group based poverty alleviation program for

⁶⁹ However, it is important to note that poor women's choices to train or to protest are constrained by the lack of time and energy *because* of the lop-sided socio-familial pressures to provide care and to earn. Women receive larger burdens – be it from their own families or from development programs – the onus is mostly on them to "somehow" keep the children fed and the house functional.

poor women while his economic policies were actively transforming the state into a neoliberal hub of global business in ways that did not hold any benefit for the poor. The ex-chief minister used the power of development project to pacify the poor citizens of his state by focusing on women (Dhanraj and Batliwala, 2004).

In a similar vein, Mission has been initiated as the Delhi government's flagship project for the benefit of the poor at a time when the city-state is undergoing pulsating infrastructural facelifts and economic boom that does not impact the poor in any positive manner. At GRCs, poor women are motivated to join self-help groups and vocational trainings not only for improving their social status and standard of living but primarily for lifting their families out of poverty. I participated in a women's meeting at a GRC where the male project coordinator was teaching women the benefits of learning a new trade through the vocational training program.

If you learn this (vocation) you will be able to become independent...you will earn your own money. You will be an independent woman. You will be able to buy things for your children. You will see to it that they go to a good school and get good education. You will give them nutritious food. You will have *izzatt* (respect) when you contribute towards your family's income...they will see that you are more valuable outside the kitchen, not just inside it...

I have heard similar speeches at the GRCs where I conducted my research.

Women were urged to join the programs so that they could lift their families out of poverty, raise their standard of living, and also get more respect from others. But these were not easy aspirations to pursue for women lacking time, resources, and ability to make independent choices within the confines of embedded poverty and regressive gendered social norms. The programs did not emphasize on the need for women to develop their political agency to alter the structure, but simply gave hope that held little

meaning within their existing social and economic conditions as already discussed above.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, several poor women pursued these aspirations and took upon themselves the additional burden of developing self and family as per the expectations of the programs. Mission's programs gave the impression that large number of poor women participating in empowering activities could alter their economic and social conditions. But this impression did not hold ground in the face of unquestioned regressive gendered norms and entrenched poverty further accentuated by exclusionary city modernization policies. An implicit accommodation of patriarchal norms into Mission's programs come to light as I further analyze the ethnographic data below.

In spite of GRCs' efforts to work in culturally sensitive ways, the programs at GRCs came under fire from some prominent men in the community. I attended a GRC-community meeting at a GRC named Delhi Charities located in a predominantly Hindu and low-income unauthorized colony in north east Delhi. This was the first meeting between GRC staff and colony residents and the young Hindu male coordinator named Pankaj organized this meeting to inform the residents about the GRC activities. The meeting was thinly attended by fourteen middle-aged (40-50 years) Hindu male residents

⁷⁰ The "We Can" campaign that is being planned for inclusion into Mission's programs will work to create awareness around issues of domestic violence. I speculate that such a campaign might not focus aggressively on the other aspects of women's subordination. I understand that issues of subordination are overlapping and that women's call to end violence will bring forth questions about women's other rights as equal humans and equal citizens. But I am not certain whether the campaign's implementation within Mission's "project" structure will provide enough scope for poor women to raise voice against social "norms" (violence is common but is not a norm) and especially against state's exclusionary neoliberal policies like slum demolitions and privatization of public land and right of the poor to the city. The connection between a campaign against violence and women's call for action against patriarchy and the exclusionary neoliberal state is a difficult one to make as of now. I concur with Sharma (2006) that the campaign might open up unexpected venues that might not overtly challenge or change anything but will create new relations between the participating women, their families and communities, and the neoliberal state.

and one elderly Hindu woman (70+ years, she was the mother of one of the male participants). Pankaj started the meeting by introducing himself and his staff and moved on to explain each program in detail. He was interrupted by the *pradhan* (local leader) who asked in an agitated voice, “*Okay so all this is for women. What about the men?*” That question onwards, the participating men poured their views on how all NGOs and government projects focus so much on women that the men are completely forgotten. One man was rather riled about one specific program - free legal counseling for women. He narrated the case of his friend who was in jail because of false dowry charges by his wife. The *pradhan* spoke again,

So much is done for women that now they have started dancing on our heads!⁷¹ I tell my daughters that they should stay away from such ideas (of women’s empowerment)...they must adjust after marriage.

Using the word ‘adjust’ in English, the *pradhan* noted that GRCs programs were against the traditional norms that women must compromise with the expectations of their families and society. Legal counseling was especially seen as something that would make women un-compromising. While all fourteen men criticized the women-focused services provided by this GRC, the old woman participant sat in the corner of the room next to us (me and my research assistant Geeta) and the GRC women staff. Without any intention of sitting there, I found myself huddled together with other women in this small room full of men who were afraid of how GRC programs would increase legal cases against men and make women rethink the importance of following social gendered

⁷¹ “Dancing on our head” is a popular phrase used in northern India. It conveys that those who were “given” some privilege start taking it for granted and asking for more, therefore deviating from the norm of “receiving” the privilege and being thankful and satisfied for it.

norms. Pankaj did not intervene throughout this conversation as the community men discussed yet another kind of “empowerment overload” – one that could empower women in ways detrimental to the social fabric of their society. The meeting ended with a GRC-sponsored lunch. Next day onwards, programs began at the GRC and within a month all vocational training classes were full. Perhaps, the *pradhan* and his colleagues realized that GRC programs posed little threat to their power and that they mostly provided passive programs for women to learn some vocations and get free medicines – neither of which could possibly weaken their patriarchal control. I argue that some GRCs therefore allowed for so much flexibility with social norms and sensitivities that their programs sustained the unquestioned reproduction of patriarchal norms in the slums of Delhi

As women-only spaces, GRCs operate as safe and desirable spaces for women (especially young/ adolescent women). I observed that young women enjoyed their time at the GRC; the casual all-women’s environment allowed them to develop friendships away from home chores or familial restrictions. During fieldwork, I observed that not a single woman across GRCs ever expressed vocally that she was here to empower herself, to be an equal member of her society, or to raise a voice against gendered discriminations. I understand that not vocalizing women’s empowerment does not dilute its credibility. However, my observations across GRCs reveal that the concept of women’s empowerment was rarely directly discussed by GRC staff or beneficiaries. A concept that has been so vastly adopted by government and NGOs that it has lost its

spark; as one GRC staff puts it aptly, “*women’s empowerment ka bhartha bana diya [has been beaten to death] ...*”⁷²

Treated as panacea for all developmental ills, women’s empowerment has gained much scholarly attention but fails to generate equally stimulating debates on the ground. Why? I argue that somewhere between Mission’s tall statements about women’s empowerment and the everyday implementation of its programs, the political ideology of change has been sidelined while revealing rather clearly that women’s empowerment is used as a concept to validate governmental presence and intervention in the lives of the poor. The programs expect to train women to rise above poverty, to share the state’s responsibility for poverty alleviation and community incorporation into its programs, and to also perceive the state as a caring developmental actor in their everyday lives. This also explained why GRCs did not want to disturb the oppressive social norms controlled women choices and access to resources.

4.6. Discussion and conclusions

Several development programs assume that poor women need to be empowered because they are poor and powerless and that their empowerment will happen through their participation in a staple set of programs. It is assumed that yet another policy intervention that repackages and implements the staple set of programs will succeed in empowering poor women in a society where power dynamics between women and men and poor citizens and exclusionary neoliberal state both remain unaddressed. I argue that such interventions or programs provide only a partial platform to change women’s

⁷². *Bhartha bana diya* means to squash or beat something until it cannot be squashed any more.

conditions but these conditions are unlikely to change unless gendered regulations and citizenship rights are also not addressed.

My research shows that beyond Mission's reports that paint the project as successful in "benefitting" thousands of women, the ground realities are very different. Mosse (2005, p. 14) argues that "policy primarily functions to mobilize and maintain political support that is to legitimize rather than to orientate practice." Development projects, when working to maintain (or gain) political support succeed in generating a caring aura towards the beneficiaries. Mission mobilizes the poor women to not only assist the state in appearing as their caring and vote-worthy patron, but to join free programs to "instill the appropriate motivations and social habits" (Everingham, 2001, p. 118). I bring back my initial question and discuss below: *what kind of gendered subjects are produced through Mission's programs?*

GRC as a homogeneous institutional arrangement spread across the slums of Delhi provided a set of programs through which the participating poor women's "self-interests" were expected to be accomplished. Mission's programs provided (truncated) scope for their liberal empowerment so that they could learn new skills and responsabilize themselves as instruments for poverty reduction. Mission's programs for the "holistic empowerment" of poor women were expected to strengthen their agency to equalize gender relations and therefore change the oppressive structure so that they could be better prepared to work in their self-interest. However, my research indicates that the "rules" of patriarchy along with limitations of resources and capital do not build the agency of the poor women to become economic actors as per the needs of the self

and the expectations of the state. Both factors came together to weaken the state's plans for preparing women as "partners" of the government in fighting poverty. Mission's programs expected the state to engage thousands of voluntarily participating women into a web of programs to uplift their family and community, to be mobilized as subjects willing (but not always able) to conduct their conduct as per self-interest *and* state's aspirations. However, many poor women who were mobilized and some out of them who were convinced to become responsible for reducing their poverty could not do so. This shows that at one level the poor women were able to partially escape the structure of neoliberal governmentality and yet became "whole new political beings" (Cruikshank, 1999) that were counted and categorized based on their poverty and gender, that entered the government records and administrative arrangements of surveillance, that were considered effective instruments of poverty reduction and a desirable subject of the massive institutional arrangement across the slums of Delhi – and yet majority of these 400,000 participating poor women could not become the entrepreneurial face of a poverty well-managed by the aspiring world-class Delhi.

By analyzing Mission's programs in the context of Delhi's aspirations to become a world-class city, I argue that the Delhi government was trying to reform the way it developed its poor citizens. Mission extended the government's material presence in the slums of Delhi, showed that it cared for the poor, and floated specific ideas about poor women's self-interest and entrepreneurial capabilities as "weapons against poverty". But poor women were not silent spectators to such programs. They were intentional subjects who understood their marginalization within the dual and co-existing structures of

neoliberal urban development (spawning a particular kind of governmentality) and patriarchal control. Participating women recognized which programs could meet their needs, and which could not, even if these needs were defined by socio-familial expectations. Women operated in their interest but within their social regulations to extract the most out of these programs. Some of them learned vocations knowing well that they will not be allowed or able to use. Others used the GRC as a safe space where they can spend time away from domestic pressures. And few others like Chandra continued to train with the hope that they will help them improve their lives. Many others like sisters Seema and Reema, who were unable to participate in these programs due to their more pressing economic responsibilities highlight its myopic practices that weaken the agenda for “reaching the unreached”.

I argue that women’s empowerment should not simply be criticized as piecemeal free services; it should be analyzed for the kinds of citizen-subjects that are produced as a result of its possibly unintended but clear coexistence with neoliberal governmentality (conduct of conduct as per state’s neoliberal aspirations) and patriarchy (conduct of conduct as per gender social norms). While the former enables voluntary participation of thousands of women to recognize their self-interest/state interest, the latter restricts that realization to its fullest potential as women nudge and create slippages but are largely tied down by their gender and poverty to claim the resources (available through GRCs) and become empowered.

The successful group of women in the far-flung resettlement colony who have experienced the sweet smell of their income are examples of how women’s

empowerment agenda is popularized as a panacea to alleviate poverty, and how the everyday practices and long-term outcomes associated with these programs gradually become safe technique to distance these women from the real structural issues, like – why they are living in the margins of the city and why they are responsible to end their poverty – burdens that they didn't bring upon themselves but were imposed upon them by the forces of patriarchy and urban neoliberal development (seeped in circuits of global and local capitalism). One could argue that these self help group members are so busy earning a basic living that they can't invest their energies to question or resist the forces that maintain their marginality. I would counter-argue that programs like Mission serve an unintentional but crucial purpose at the micro-level in muting such questions by engaging a large mass of women across Delhi slums into programs that could manage their immediate needs without addressing their long-term circulations in and out of different vulnerabilities (including gendered discrimination). Again, participating poor women become “wholly new kinds of beings” that acquiesce to state's programs that “produce their interest in helping themselves” (Cruikshank, 1999, p. 38). Participating women are “made” political beings through programs like Mission that use the language of empowerment and partnership to include and develop them – within the patriarchal structure – as per the will of the state conflated with the women's intention and desire to rise above poverty. As Delhi transforms itself to attract global capital, Mission's programs offer poor women limited scope to slip out of the marginalizing structures of patriarchy and exclusionary neoliberal development – neither of which are totalized hegemonies but largely work to sustain gendered discrimination and poverty. This status

quo occurs in such complex ways that the intentional woman subject is entrenched into the programs that extend neoliberal governmentality (conduct of conduct) without being able to actually utilize the programs in her self-interest to alleviate her poverty or to end her gendered subordination.

5. POOR WOMEN AND THE (CARE) WORK OF EMPOWERMENT

5.1 Delhi government's *ladli*

I begin this Section with two engaging observations from the field. On August 14, 2009, Mission Convergence celebrated its one year anniversary. This event was attended by more than 300 staff members from Mission's partnering NGOs, high-ranked government officials, politicians, Chief Minister of Delhi, and the President of India. Certificates of appreciation and handsome cash awards were given to hard working NGO staff. 19 year old Deepa was one such staff member. Surrounded by the president of India and the Chief Minister of Delhi, she gracefully received her rewards before merging back into the cheering crowd. Next day, India's most popular English newspaper declared her 'Delhi government's *ladli*'⁷³. "Woman power" – declared the captioned photograph of Deepa standing with the President and Chief Minister (Figure 5.1). So what made Deepa Delhi government's *ladli*? She is one of the 100+ women community mobilizers working at Gender Resource Centers across Delhi. Deepa came from a poor family that lived in a low-income colony in Delhi where Mission operates one of its GRCs. In spite of facing stiff opposition against working outside home, Deepa had aspirations of being independent. She joined as a community mobilizer at the GRC in her community.

⁷³ *Ladli* is a Hindi term meaning 'loved one'. *Ladli* is also the name of a Delhi government scheme for promoting education of girl children by providing cash incentives to the girl child.

Why she is Delhi govt's 'ladli'

Ambika Pandit | TNN

Last year, 19-year-old Deepa's elder brother had torn her Class X and Class XII certificates to shreds. Her crime? She had expressed a desire to work after completing school. Cut to Friday. The same brother watched with pride as Deepa received an award for being the best community mobilizer from President Pratibha Devisingh Patil.

The occasion was a function to mark completion of the first year of the state government's ambitious Mission Convergence at Vigyan Bhawan. As Deepa walked up to the dais to receive her award and later posed with the President, chief minister Sheila Dikshit and Lieutenant Governor Tejendra Khanna, Budh Vihar, the lower middle class locality in north-west Delhi where she lives, savoured its moment of glory.

Deepa was one of the 26 grassroots workers who received awards in various categories — tokens of encouragement for their efforts in making Mission Convergence a reality. They went door-to-door, reaching out to the poor and guiding them to the various social welfare schemes floated by the government through a single window system.

Deepa's award for best community mobilizer was in recognition of her outreach efforts. Her life's story is no less dramatic. Glowing with pride and joy after receiving her accolade, Deepa spoke to *Times City* later in the evening. "My parents, and more so my brother, were dead against the idea of me working. They are proud of me today," she said, smiling.

Deepa said the community living in her own Budh Vihar neighbourhood was largely conservative, and underage marriages of girls was common. "I always wanted to study and was afraid that I would meet the same fate as some of my other friends in the neighbourhood. But since my parents were hugely in debt, their desire to marry me off early failed to materialise. That way I managed to finish school and enrolled

Growing up in the conservative society of Budh Vihar in north-west Delhi, Deepa defied her family to complete school and then worked for uplift of her own community

moved to an NGO called Jeet. As she strated reaching out to the community under the Gender Resource Centre initiative to link the poor to the single window system of Samajik Suvidha Kendra under Jeet, Deepa discovered her zeal for social work.

"What I started as a way of helping my parents financially turned into an exercise which I enjoy. Reaching out to my own community with all government schemes and filling their forms for various schemes — whether for the old, the widows or the Ladli scheme for the girl child gives me joy," she said.

The award has been a boost to her courage. Now, her family feels proud of her efforts and the residents of the lanes of Budh Vihar have already started talking of Deepa as an example for their daughters.

Like Deepa, Friday was special for 22-year-old Chandra Shekhar Sharma who shared the honours as best community mobilizer. Speaking to *Times City*, an overwhelmed Sharma revealed that he was a graduate who worked for the NGO Anchal in East Delhi. He said that ever since he got involved in the community outreach programme, he had never felt his salary was not enough. "My parents complain about my poor pay packet but I love my job and now with this recognition from the President herself, I never want to look back," Sharma added.

Similar in the case of 29-year-old Devraj Singh who got an award in recognition for his work as project coordinator in the Savda Ghevra area where he works with Ray Welfare Trust.

Presiding over the event, President Patil expressed the view that the poor are the growth engines of the city. With 45% of the city population residing in slums and with over 4 million working in the unorganized sector, Mission Convergence is a small step to redefine public service by keeping the poor and vulnerable citizens at the centre of governance she added.

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WOMAN POWER: Deepa with the President and CM on Friday

for graduation through correspondence," Deepa said.

She faced her biggest hurdle when she proposed to her parents that she wanted to work. Her enraged elder brother tore up her Class X and XII certificates when he heard. But Deepa remained adamant. She started by first working in a private school and then

Fig. 5.1. Delhi government's *ladli*. Deepa receiving an award for best female community mobilizer from the President of India (left) and the Chief Minister of Delhi (right)
Source: Times of India, August 14, 2009

Deepa earned a monthly salary of Rs. 5000 (\$112⁷⁴) for working long hours to deliver Mission's two core services: empowerment of poor women; and, hassle-free delivery of social welfare schemes. According to the newspaper article, Deepa was the *ladli* of Delhi government because she worked hard to connect poor and disempowered women (like her previous self) to different government services aimed at their holistic empowerment and social security. The newspaper article suggested that Deepa had broken away from the restrictions of her family and society to emerge as a strong, independent woman, that she enjoyed her work because she helps others achieve what her work had helped her achieve – empowerment. In the process of empowering others, Deepa had also become empowered.

Deepa may be unique in her work, but not in the situations through which she had emerged to become a mobilizer. Several women mobilizers I interviewed faced similar economic, social and familial constraints and yet stepped outside home to work. Deepa succeeded in empowering poor women like herself by investing her sincere emotional and physical labor as per Mission's expectations. She symbolized the *ladli* possessing “woman power”. I argue that women like Deepa epitomize the objectives of the Delhi government to produce empowered women who step over rules and restrictions to empower self and serve community. The Delhi government's appreciation for Deepa was based not simply on her sincere work but also on her assumed ability to network with women community members based on her gender, local personal

⁷⁴ As of 2011, GRC staff had a salary hike: Community mobilizers Rs.6500 (\$150), vocational training instructors Rs.5500 (\$120), project coordinator Rs. 13,000 (\$260), program officer Rs. 10,000 (\$225) per month. The work of community mobilizers is considered most tedious, physically draining and demanding from all ends – community, GRC staff, and Mission headquarters.

knowledge of the community, and a somewhat shared set of social, economic and spatial vulnerabilities (Jenkins, 2008; Leonardo, 1987; Werner, 1998).

Based on ethnographic research with women community mobilizers, I argue that the work of the ideal mobilizer is dictated by two prominent factors: 1) Mission's technical approach ('add women and stir', Cleaver, 2001; Cornwall et al. 2004, p. 4; O'Reilly, 2003, 2011b) towards empowering women that expected mobilizers to promote a popular set of programs already being implemented by several NGOs in the Delhi slums, and to do so by attending to the scripted work methodology and expected outcomes in the field; and, 2) mobilizers' overlapping/ hybrid identity as a woman community member *and* a mobilizer, i.e. as a *subject*⁷⁵ and an *agent* of these programs that pushed them to customize Mission's script in accordance with lived experiences, ground realities, and community's expectations (Jenkins, 2008; Nagar and Raju, 2003; O'Reilly, 2003, 2006). I describe both these factors in the light of the next observation from the field.

The scene with Deepa receiving accolades from the President and Chief Minister is blurred as I witness Sheetal's work in the field a month later. Sheetal was a 21 year old Hindu resident of a resettlement colony in north east Delhi. She was from a low-income family and had been working with GRC Karya at the Sethu slum near her house for a year now. I regularly accompanied her to the slums where she enrolled women to participate in the GRC programs and also disseminated information about different

⁷⁵ I want to clarify here that the "subject" of Mission's programs are not only the women who participate in its programs but all those who are targeted for participation, i.e. all those women categorized within the social, spatial, occupational and income vulnerability criteria. Also, not all women mobilizers resided in the same communities where they worked. Many lived in nearby resettlement colonies or other low-income colonies that faced similar, but not the same, kinds of spatial vulnerabilities as the slums.

welfare schemes facilitated through the GRC. One day, we visited a slum to enroll women for an upcoming nutrition camp at the GRC. According to Mission documents, providing information about nutritious food is important for the health of women and their families, and therefore falls within the ‘holistic empowerment’ paradigm. During this camp, participating women were given demonstrations on how to select and cook nutritious but cheap food. Cooked food samples were later distributed among them.

Sheetal walked briskly, skipping over open gutters and simultaneously greeting people with a loud call ‘*sab theek?*’ [is all well?]. She was in a hurry because she had to enroll at least 25 women to attend the nutrition camp to be held next day at her GRC.

“Sir [GRC project coordinator] has given us all strict instructions...each person must be able to get at least 25 people from the basti [slum] ...” Then she stopped and asked, *“could you help me get 25 names down on this register? It’s getting late and I need to get home soon.”* I agreed and we divided our territories. However, I soon realized that women here were not interested in my speech on the benefits of attending a nutrition camp. Most women there were busy making small decorative strings which were to be sold at two cents each for the upcoming *Diwali* festival; women were busy earning a living. After several failed attempts, I headed towards Sheetal and observed the following conversation between Sheetal and a small group of women.

Sheetal: come for the nutrition camp tomorrow at the center from 12 to 2pm. ok?

Woman 1: what is happening there?

Sheetal makes an eating gesture with one hand and then chews on a mouthful of imaginary food.

Woman 2: So write my name then. And add my youngest son too.

Woman 1: how much food will you give?

Sheetal [scribbling names in her register]: depends...if more women come then we’ll have more...but no use cooking for just a few of us, right?

Woman 2: okay. I will tell others too.

From then on, Sheetal had hit a golden technique. She looped around the congested lanes quietly gesturing to women that they will be served free food. She would first quickly say a line or two about the *paushtik aahaar camp* [‘nutrition camp’] at the GRC and then immediately demonstrate the ‘free food’ clause through sign language. In her decision to skip the script about benefits of nutrition camp in favor of cautiously advertising free food, I concur that Sheetal made some clear decisions regarding how women’s empowerment activities should be translated in the field. Based on our prior interactions it was evident to me that Sheetal understood very well that the overarching goal of the nutrition camp was to make women active and aware decision-makers for their and family’s health. Sheetal was also aware that GRCs were to seek women’s participation in different activities in order to make them *jaagruk* (aware), and that asking them to participate in return for free food was not an acceptable technique (and therefore must be conveyed with quick gestures). In my view, Sheetal’s silent performances at each door made clear the fact that pressure for women’s participation exceeds ideals of women’s empowerment (O’Reilly, 2006), thus producing certain shallow but effective participation-attracting techniques⁷⁶. Sheetal used a smidgen of the script taught to her in Mission’s workshops but she added materials to the script based on her local knowledge of people’s vulnerabilities and people’s perception about “such”

⁷⁶ Such participation-attracting techniques are not uncommon across NGOs in general. In fact, NGOs use refreshments and even entertainment openly to popularize their programs in the community. But most NGOs I have observed don’t exclusively focus on such techniques, unlike Deepa. NGOs and community members are both aware of donor pressures for showing numbers. But they both are also aware that such shallow techniques could gradually reach donor attention and loss of reputation in the community. Hence, NGOs mostly use such techniques with caution, and with success of numbers.

camps in her catchment area, which she knew would help her generate quicker participation (Figures 5.2 and 5.3). She was doing the work (of ensuring women's participation in the nutrition camp) that she was expected to do but she did it in a way she deemed efficient to meet expected outcomes (by quietly highlighting free food). The next day, Sheetal met her coordinator's expectations by ensuring a well-attended and therefore successful nutrition camp. This success was shown in Mission reports by highlighting the number of women in attendance along with photographic proof of the same.

That day, as we got more than expected names down on the register and parted ways, I couldn't help but think back on Deepa's accolades as Delhi government's *ladli*. While Deepa was portrayed as a young woman who had empowered herself and other poor women through Mission, Sheetal struggled to ensure women's participation in Mission's activities, and in the process, altered the meaning of empowerment as prescribed by Mission. Sheetal, like Deepa and most other women mobilizers, shared similar social and economic conditions, did the exact same work for Mission, faced similar pressures and deadlines, and, in the process, made new sense of how ideas of women's empowerment should reach poor women. These ideas emerged as quick solutions to the "community participation crunch". Such crunch created additional work pressures for community mobilizers and also showed the community's low expectations of several such programs that either do not represent their interests and needs, or fail to provide the intended services/ outcomes despite attracting their participation. In the course of this Section, I will offer ethnographic insights from the field to show the

diverse ways in which women mobilizers translated women's empowerment in different situations as Mission hired their gendered, local, interactive and emotional labor to empower their own communities.



Fig. 5.2. Making a Living. A woman resident making decorative strings to sell for the upcoming Diwali festival. On her side is Sheetal's register.



Fig. 5.3 Mobilizer in the community. Research assistant Geeta standing on the right corner (in pink *salwar kameez*) observing Sheetal (sitting on left, face covered with red scarf) as she mobilized women for the nutrition camp.

5.1.1 “Poor Women”

Let me start by first clarifying that ‘poor women’ is not a blanket category. Many slum residents in Delhi are not income-poor but live in marginal spaces because they cannot afford to live elsewhere. As such not all women living in slums and resettlement colonies that are working with Mission are income-poor. But there are several mobilizers who come from income-poor families that are dependent on their salaries. Many poor

and non-poor women living in marginal spaces face several similar vulnerabilities like poor education, struggle for basic amenities like sanitation and water, unsafe neighborhoods, socio-familial restrictions from working outside home or community, and high demand for balancing their domestic care giving labor and economic labor at home or outside. Some of these latter set of vulnerabilities are not uncommon in upper-class neighborhoods but they come together more persistently in marginalized areas to hinder women's capabilities for seeking better-paying, non-local jobs that are not as emotionally and/or physically demanding of them.

I use the term "poor woman" in this Section to refer to the subject as well as agent of Mission's programs that lives in the slums, resettlement colonies and similar low-income areas of Delhi and are the "target population" in GRC "catchment areas" of Mission's programs. The category "poor woman" or "vulnerable woman" originated out of the Delhi government's emphasis on using Mission to empower all women living in these vulnerable spaces. This constructed category therefore assumed that these women are not already empowered in the ways the government would expect them to be – as women who should be capable to alleviate the vulnerabilities of their family and community that are at the core of the government's transformation agenda for the making of a world-class city. My use of this category is an expression of how it is adopted and altered by those women who are impacted by as well as a part of running the machinery that created it.

5.2 Research focus and Section outline

In Section 4, I have provided an overview of literature on gender and development and also offered my critiques on the meaning of women's empowerment as prescribed by Mission. Here, I will trace the meanings and practices that come to re(define) empowerment as poor women become NGO staff for a Delhi government project to empower other poor women like themselves. I focus on the urban poor woman as a 'subject-agent' who is the subject of development projects like Mission and is also employed as an agent of the community's development. I examine the multiple subjectivities formed by the development discourse and ask: how do women who are the 'targets' as well as 'implementers' of development schemes negotiate their experiences and subjectivities in everyday work practices? I pay special attention to the impact their institutional practices have on their work and on their own gendered self (Goetz, 2001; Nagar, 2006; O'Reilly, 2003, 2006).

Using discourse analysis of Mission documents, participant observation, and interviews with community mobilizers, I argue that women mobilizers redefine the agenda of poor women's empowerment based on their personal experiences as "poor women", and expected (professional) and personal kinds of emotional investments in their work – which come together to create diverse nuanced interpretations of Mission's objectives in particular and the extension of women's care giving and emotional labor into the development sector in general. Further, women mobilizers highlight the technical undertones that guide Mission's work with women's empowerment, and also find themselves working as technical pawns for the program. I use geography theories of

women's labor in the development sector and theories on interactive carework and affective/ emotional labor to highlight the subject-agent hybrid and the interplay of project expectations and personal experiences to tell the story of empowerment from those who do the work of empowering.

This Section is divided into six sections. In the subsequent three sub-sections, I examine the economics behind hiring poor women as field staff, and, the ways in which Mission comes to promote a gendered division of labor within its work practices. The third section examines theories on development workers and the hybridity of subjects and agents. Fourth section examines theories on interactive and emotional care work. Further in this section, ethnographic data is examined to situate the woman mobilizer as a sympathetic and empathetic care worker who is impacted by the client's conditions but unable to produce desired results. The fifth section looks at how success is redefined through Mission's practices. The last section ends with a discussion and offers conclusions.

5.2.1 The gendered economics of development

As NGOs continue to receive global recognition and funding, NGOs are also hiring more people (Townsend et al., 2002; Dichter, 2005; O'Reilly, 2011a), thus indicating the increasing demands of a professionalizing development sector impacted by neoliberal trends (Nagar and Raju, 2003; Jenkins, 2008; Dolhinow, 2010). With more than one NGO per 400 people in India, NGOs have also become a big employment

generators in India (Indian Express, July 7, 2010⁷⁷). This has created greater interest in transforming women's voluntary labor as domestic care givers into women's low-paid labor as semi-skilled local experts that disburse services and information for the development of their community. In compliance with gendered norms, women are seen as ideal candidates for projects focusing on women within their own communities. Majority of the development projects have at least one component of women's empowerment while several projects focus exclusively on women's empowerment or well-being (Molyneux, 2008).

Ragi was 25 year old Hindu woman community mobilizers with GRC Desh working in Surja slum near her home. She had witnessed the growing NGO industry in her own community over the past 10 years. Ragi's estimate was that there were at least 5000 NGOs in Delhi, employing approximately 50,000 people at approximately 10 staff per NGO. This meant approximately 1 percent of Delhi's working age population was engaged in the NGO sector. She further said,

And out of the 8-10 staff in each NGO, at least 3 or 4 are from poor background...they take up the position of fieldworkers...their economic conditions are not good and so they join an NGO after completing tenth or twelfth standard. Some women who are comfortable venturing outside home also join to run their households. But nothing changes – neither the conditions of those who work here, nor the conditions of the communities where these NGOs work

Even though Ragi's number crunching was anecdotal, I did agree with it. Having worked with NGOs in Delhi, I noticed that NGOs had become a popular source of

⁷⁷ <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/first-official-estimate-an-ngo-for-every-400-people-in-india/643302/>

employment for several young women residing in spaces that offered few other jobs so close to home. As the 22 year old Muslim woman mobilizer at Divya GRC stated clearly, *“The GRC is an all-women’s center and it is in the community. That is why my mother allowed me to work here.”* NGO work at the grassroots has two prime gendered characteristics - working within one’s community, and serving others. However, I am not convinced with Ragi’s argument that NGOs altogether fail to change the condition of their clients and their local staff. On the contrary, I would argue that feminist and politically-inclined organizations especially have been able to make participating women economically independent and aware of their rights.

In my view, the hiring of poor women from within community offers a clearer understanding of the economics of development. By hiring poor women, NGOs show their deep commitment towards community-oriented participatory development while being able to save money and also benefit from local knowledge of the staff. Young women from low-income families residing in catchment areas take up the job of a community mobilizer which pays them \$150⁷⁸ per month for work that expects them to achieve women’s empowerment through their trained emotional, interactive, and gendered labor. Women’s labor is assumed to be gendered, local, and emotional and therefore corresponding with their domestic care giving labor. Further, mobilizers’ work is often viewed as “social work” or *“jan seva”* by Mission officials, one of whom argued that *“...mobilizers get an honorarium, not a salary. Social workers don’t get*

⁷⁸ Average monthly income of people residing in low-income communities usually varies between Rs.3,000 - Rs.15,000 (\$65 - \$330) per month. Women get relatively lower-paying jobs. Many of my women informants worked from home and earned between Rs. 1000 – Rs. 3000 (\$22 - \$60) per month

salaries!” (Interview with Mission headquarters staff, November 2009). Women mobilizers doing *jan sewa* provide their professionally trained gendered and interactive labor to serve their community, more specifically to mobilize women to be like them – willing to provide their labor for the empowerment of their family and community. A chain reaction set off by the Delhi government’s *ladlis* is expected to serve the purpose of mobilizing thousands of women across the slums of Delhi to become responsible agents for poverty alleviation and community development.

There are several factors that influence women’s decision to work as mobilizers with Mission. During workshops and trainings for mobilizers, Mission often invokes the ‘public good’ sentiment to motivate workers to treat their jobs as a personal interest in serving their society (*jan sewa*). Mobilizers are exalted as the “hands and eyes’ of the community” and as “the real connection between government and its poor people” (Chief Minister’s speech during award ceremony, August 14, 2009). In essence, mobilizers are expected to serve the ‘public good’ by selflessly working for their impoverished communities. However, a reasonable monthly salary makes their decision easy as mobilizers get paid more in comparison to other jobs available within their community.⁷⁹ Further, Mission is a Delhi government initiative and those working at its GRCs therefore work for the Delhi government – a prestigious opportunity in a culture

⁷⁹ Women and men community mobilizers are paid the same monthly salary of Rs. 6500. However, there are cases where GRCs pay lower salaries to women mobilizers because some women have lower educational qualifications. I was informed of one such instance at Divya GRC. Two Muslim woman mobilizers were asked to reduce their working hours to half per day and were paid half of their regular monthly salaries. However, due to heavy work load and unmet deadlines, I mostly found one young mobilizer working overtime for which she was not paid. She said during our interview, “*They know I need this job.*” The money that was saved by the GRC from the salaries of these mobilizers was used to hire another male mobilizer who focused on welfare delivery.

that views “government” jobs as relatively better-paying with the additional bonus of making relevant personal contacts with staff at different partnering NGOs and government departments.

Interviews and interactions with women mobilizers reveal that most had two opinions about their job and whether it empowered them. Many women mobilizers considered their job as an opportunity to contribute to their family income and to help their community. Mobilizers also mentioned that the words and actions that formed their everyday work, like –stepping outside home, traveling alone in the field, interacting with women and men, holding large group meetings, informing people about welfare and empowerment programs, report writing, form filling – these practices came together to make them feel “different” and “stronger” in comparison to other women in their community. But more prominently, mobilizers pointed out that the long hours, short deadlines, confusing guidelines, strict supervision, and unreal expectation – all of these created an unproductive work environment and an internalized sense of failure for them, therefore challenging Mission’s assertion that women staff members like Deepa were empowered simply by stepping outside home and working with Mission. Instead, many women mobilizers recognize that Mission’s women’s empowerment objectives as unachievable. How then were they expected to empower other poor women?

5.2.2 Reproducing gendered labor

Each Gender Resource Center (GRC) operated by an NGO has ten staff members out of which two are community mobilizers (hereafter ‘mobilizers’).⁸⁰ In accordance with Mission regulations, each GRC must recruit one female and one male mobilizer from the same or similar community where the GRC works. The emphasis was on hiring low-income candidates so as to give them an opportunity to serve their communities and become self-reliant (Interview with Mission staff, July 2010). Both mobilizers worked in separate catchment areas under the GRC to disseminate information about GRC activities, to recruit poor women in GRC’s women’s empowerment programs, and to help eligible people receive welfare services. According to Mission policies, there is no distinction in the work expectations from female and male mobilizers; both mobilizers are expected to perform all these tasks in their respective areas. However, my fieldwork suggests that women mobilizers tried to balance but still focused more on women’s empowerment and lesser on welfare delivery component while men mobilizers focused mostly on the latter. The work of empowering poor women is considered pre-gendered because of social norms that allow a more comfortable relationship among women mobilizers and women beneficiaries (Leidner, 1999; O’Reilly, 2006).

In the slums of Delhi, receiving services was as gendered as delivering services.

While women community members absorbed information on welfare and women’s empowerment disseminated by the mobilizers, it is the men usually assumed charge of

⁸⁰ One project coordinator (mostly men), one program officer (mostly men), four vocational training instructors (all women), one Self Help Group coordinator (mostly women), one Non Formal Education teacher (women), two community mobilizers (one woman and one man), and one office help (mostly women). Majority of the staff, excluding project officer and program officer, come from same or similar low-income communities where they work.

following the procedures for availing welfare. This was more a result of the pre-Mission channels for welfare delivery that involved exploiting male-dominated social networks, bribing, running to offices and standing in long lines. Welfare-entitled women also traveled long distances and stood in lines, but they did not interact as regularly with the male middlemen who assisted with the welfare delivery. As a result, even though women mobilizers informed women beneficiaries about welfare services, the information usually moved ahead after intervention of the male family members. Since welfare services provided (until May 2010, as discussed in Section 3) the possibility of more tangible and immediate benefits and women's empowerment programs did not commonly lead to immediate and economic tangible outcomes, the latter was sidelined in favor of the former during the time of my fieldwork in 2009. After May 2010, women's empowerment became a prominent set of programs and the work of women's mobilizers therefore increased.

5.2.3 Doing the work of empowerment

Empowerment is a political process which aims to strengthen the social, political, and economic capabilities of an individual. Though empowerment as a concept is well examined (Batliwala, 1994; Cornwall et al., 2010; Cruikshank, 1999; Dhanraj and Batliwala, 2004; Kabeer, 1999; Kesby, 2005; Klenk, 2004; Rowlands, 1997; Molyneux, 2008), and so are the projects that implement empowerment (Anupamlata et al., 2004; Li, 2005; Magar, 2003; Molyneux, 2008; Sharma, 2006), what demands more attention is the impact of the work of empowerment on the staff who do this work *and* the impact of the women staff on the work of empowerment (c.f. Goetz, 2001).

Development projects face many distortions between their planning and implementation phase and most of these distortions or alterations emerge from activities of project staff (Gupta, 2001; Mosse, 2005; O'Reilly, 2003; Sharma, 2006; Weisgrau, 2005). Feminist scholars like O'Reilly (2003, p. 273) and Anupamlata et al. (2004) assert that most analyses of effects of women's empowerment projects overlook the impact of internal staff dynamics and individual staff experiences between field and home. Feminist and development scholars like Goetz (2001), Wiesgrau (1997), Crewe and Harrison (1998), Mosse (2001, 2005), O'Reilly (2003, 2004, 2006, 2011a), Anupamlata et al. (2004), Singh and Nagar (2006), and Jenkins (2008) have attended to the nuances of development fieldworkers' subjectivities, the intermingling of their personal (as development subject) and professional (as development agent) experiences, and the tensions between gendered labor and discriminatory practices of a development project. There is also a growing body of scholarship on development fieldworkers, their behaviors, choices, and the obstacles they face (Anupamlata et al., 2004; Crewe and Harrison, 1998; Dolhinow, 2010; Goetz, 2001; Mumtaz et al., 2003; Jenkins, 2004; O'Reilly, 2003 2004, 2006, 2011a).

O'Reilly's (2003, 2004, 2006) research on women fieldworkers in rural Rajasthan provides a foundation for my own research to understand how women mobilizers "*negotiate meanings, spaces, and practices*" (2004, p. 175) of women's empowerment in the slums of Delhi. O'Reilly (2006, p. 1077) argues that fieldworkers should not simply be viewed as instruments of development who mechanically implement projects. Instead, the power dynamics involved in their everyday work along

with *their* interpretations of the development ideals on the ground calls for a deeper examination of the work, behaviors and practices of development fieldworkers. O'Reilly (2006, p.1076) states that interconnections between gendered relations of power, the positionality of fieldworkers, and individual practices in the field have been sidelined by development policymakers in favor of attention to the practices and results of development projects. She argues that there is a need to bypass the quest for ideal development tools like participation (Cooke and Kothari, 2001) and in fact turn inwards to locate the workings of project ideals on the ground through the works of fieldworkers. On a similar note, Mumtaz et al. (2003) and Anupamlata et al. (2004) turn inward to reveal that expectations of women fieldworkers are often contrary to the cultural realities on the ground and the ideologies/ work practices of the organization, thus leading to a situation where little outcome (which is usually participation) is achieved and the labor of women fieldworkers is questioned; relations of power based on gender, class, and caste remain unquestioned within the organization and the work area.

My research expands on their scholarship by focusing on the internal and everyday functioning of a government-NGO partnership in the slums of Delhi. I locate women mobilizers of Mission as the eyes and ears of their communities that the Delhi government intends to develop to better fit an aspiring world-class Delhi. I argue that Mission women mobilizers as hybrid 'subject-agent' are the subject of the government's development aspirations *and* the agent or mediator that work to entrench its aspirations on the ground. My use of theories across feminist geography, economics, and development alongside ethnographic evidence indicate that the binaries of personal and

professional come together and transmute the institutional objectives of women's empowerment into fluidly disseminated and equally fluidly accepted practices of women's empowerment. Below, I discuss scholarship on how contemporary development expectations are diffusing the category of the subject of development and the agent of development.

5.3 The making of the subject-agent

Klenk (2004, p. 70) suggests that development discourses enables creation of multiple subjectivities through which some become 'developed' in comparison to the 'other/underdeveloped'. However, my research suggests that the supposedly divisive nature of the development discourse (Escobar, 1995; Klenk, 2004) that pitches the 'developed' vs. the 'underdeveloped' is not as clear cut. Movement of people, experiences and knowledges between the two categories within an expanding development sector are creating multiple blurred subjectivities. By subjectivity here I mean the identity of the individual as it emerges from her social, political, historical, and cultural contexts (Nagar, 1997). These blurred subjectivities are a product of the emphasis on participatory development that engages the community in projects aimed at empowering them (with the obvious other goals of also showcasing the success of a project). Further, as NGOs become implementing agencies for government services, they use market principles of efficiency and cost reduction and therefore look towards hiring willing community residents into the labor intensive, interactive, and community-oriented works of the project (Feldman, 1997). Feldman notes that the skills and jobs the state could not provide these community residents are eventually provided by NGOs that

work as government's contractors. This devolution of state's welfare responsibilities at these two different levels leads to a situation where the resident/NGO staff becomes the subject as well as agent of development projects. These imbrications of what I call the 'subject-agent' allow us to move towards a more nuanced examination of dichotomies produced by as well as within the development sector.

Mission's community mobilizers unsettle several dichotomies like public and private, formal and informal, emotional and logical, learned and experienced and show how closely the domestic and the professional exist in their everyday lives. Staeheli (1996) urges for a re-conceptualizing of publicity and privacy such that the 'content' of action is separated from the 'space' in which it takes place. This separation, she insists, would debase the assumption that the two are separable in that only public actions are effective and the private produces no action. The content of action of the mobilizers when seen without reference to the space of its performance suggests the fluidity with which their internalized and expected duties as domestic care givers overlapped with their work as paid and trained mobilizers. Mobilizer's actions and the ensuing results only prove that known spaces become receptors of scripted words and actions for mobilization that are delivered according to the personal, private, emotional, and rational interpretation of the programs. Taking Staeheli's argument forward, I also suggest that women mobilizer's overlapping identities and overlapping actions/ behaviors indicate the fluid ways in which they understood space. The agenda of the Delhi government to "reach the unreached" in the slums of Delhi had created "catchment areas" served by

partnering NGOs. These “catchment areas” were communities where mobilizers resided and worked to produce complex meanings of the state’s development agenda.

I extend on O’Reilly’s (2006) refined focus on subjectivities of women NGO workers as discussed above to assert that contemporary development projects with a focus on women’s empowerment significantly blur the boundaries between ‘developed’ and ‘underdeveloped’. ‘Poor women’ as a category requiring development and poor women as grassroots development workers both come together to diffuse assumed tensions between segregated categories of ‘developed’ and ‘under-developed’. My ethnographic data reveals how the working of an agent/mobilizer is heavily defined by her experiences and expectations as a subject of development. The developmental efforts of the caring and inclusive state categorize the poor woman as a subject that must be better served and empowered. However, women’s experiences and expectations of the state remain poor and women mobilizers’ internalized recognition of the same, in light of their negotiations within the patriarchal status quo, impacts their work as the agent/mobilizer of the caring government’s programs.

My ethnographic data does not provide a sweeping picture of dejected mobilizers churning helplessly at the margins of the state and the society. It highlights the complex ways in which status quo is maintained in a society. Tensions between professional expectations, internalized limitations, and an emotional investment in their work as mobilizers come together to produce a stunted effect of the programs at one level and a continuing expansion of the state’s “caring” agenda at another level. I support this argument later with ethnographic evidence from the field. Below, I delve into theories of

care work and emotional labor to situate the work of women mobilizers as care work that is gendered, emotional, and interactive, and to argue that these characteristics produce certain unexpected meanings and outcomes. The training of women mobilizers involves the development of their work as interactive and emotional, but also produces internalized responses beyond women mobilizer's professional expectations. Theories of care work and emotional labor have been sparsely used to examine gendered labor in implementation of government projects that arise out of a call for making an inclusive and world-class city. I adopt these theories to explain how the Delhi government's agenda to "reach the unreachable" and to "evolve the image of Delhi as a caring city" trains the paid labor of poor women to extend its agendas for continuing political legitimization and poverty management in the slums of Delhi.

5.4 Gendered economies of care work

Care work is defined as the "multifaceted labor that produces the daily living conditions that make basic human health and well-being possible" (Zimmerman, et al., 2006, p.3). Gendered economies of care work have become a hot topic among feminists to showcase the continuing exclusionary nature of mainstream economics that still separates labor and remuneration based on gender and space (public vs. domestic). Women's participation in the formal as well as informal labor force has been vastly examined by feminist scholars in the field of anthropology, economics and sociology (Hochschild, 1983; Liedner, 1999; Cameron and Gibson-Graham, 2003; Sudarshan and Bhattacharya, 2009; Williams and Crooks, 2008). Women's work within the domestic sphere for sustaining or expanding social networks has also strengthened

feminist theories on the different facets of care work (Stack, 1975; Leonardo, 1987; Werner 1998). Studies on networking for social as well as economic gains through feasting, festivities, gift exchange, and everyday gendered interactions have opened up new venues to discover the different ways women provide their physical, emotional, interactive, and mostly unpaid labor to manage the household and create community security nets during rough political and economic conditions in a nation (Stack, 1975; Werner, 1998).

These works assert that specific attention needed to be paid to the economic values of women's care work, to introduce care work within the formal economy, and to extend the definition of economics to include alternative, non-capitalist, and women-dominated forms of productions (England, 2005; Hochschild, 1983; Leidner, 1999). But knowledge produced through these endeavors, however commendable, does not explain the social and economic dynamics that constitute women's labor in the development sector. It is important to conceptualize this specific labor kind because several development projects utilize women's pre-configured social role as a gendered, emotional, interactive and continuous care giver at the domestic level to justify her role as a caring development worker who extends her services for the benefit of the community, and with that, also extends the agenda of the caring state. The kind face of a woman wearing a simple cotton *saree* and holding a bag, walking through spaces of deprivation with great ease is the staple representation of a professional development fieldworker.⁸¹ Such representations highlight the gendered nature of development, and

⁸¹ This representation was used by one of Mission's publicity video productions for the federal self-employment scheme known as SJSRY described in Sections 3 and 4. This representation is also common across non-partnering NGOs' publicity materials.

“care” for the poor and needy articulate development fieldwork as a type of care work. Below, I provide literature on why and how care work takes emotional and interactive forms, and the impact it has on programs like Mission.

To care for someone is to ensure their well-being. England and Folbre (2002) use ‘care work’ to define occupations that help develop capabilities of their clients by using instrumental tasks and affective relations. Sustained personal face-to-face interactions with intrinsic motives for recipient’s welfare are also seen as key factors determining care work (Folbre, 1995). England (2005, p. 383) uses Leidner’s (1993) term ‘interactive service work’ to define “all jobs involving giving a face-to-face service to clients or customers of the organization for which one works”. According to both authors, these jobs include nurse, waitress, usher, receptionist, sales person, nanny, etc. I apply the term ‘interactive service work’ to also define the work of community mobilizers – work that involves face-to-face service to poor people by creating affective relations for the purpose of meeting project outcomes, i.e. greater and sustained women’s participation in Mission’s programs. The use of emotions in interactive care work is crucial as a way to maintain community interest in the project by creating close and conducive relations with its members (Hochschild, 1983; O’Reilly, 2011a; Wharton, 2009).

Mission’s mobilizers are trained to interact personally and continuously to mobilize the community to join programs that would empower them. As per their fixed routine, mobilizers must spend between 2-4 hours in the field every day building relations, disseminating information, and mobilizing participation. During field visits with mobilizers, I observed that much of the emphasis in their work was on developing

'family-type' relations with women in their catchment areas to seek their continuous participation in Mission's activities. During workshops and trainings for mobilizers, trainers often invoked the 'public good' sentiment to motivate workers to treat their jobs as a personal interest in serving their society. Mobilizers were reminded that they were the "*ears and eyes of the community*", "*the voice of the grassroots*", "*the real connection between government and its people*".⁸² However, even though Mission exalted mobilizers' work as "*jan sewa*" or service to community and some mobilizers prided themselves in serving their community, a decent monthly salary was the prime reason why most mobilizers continued working despite extreme work pressures. Mobilizers decided to sell their emotional interactive labor in return for money. England (2005) provides an exhaustive framework to understand different kinds of care work, including "public good" (mentioned above) and "commodification of care work" that I discuss below. The commodification of care work framework highlights the dilemma with paying for labor that often creates varying degrees of emotional attachments between careworker and the client. Hochschild (1983) argues that being paid to create an emotional attachment with clients can be detrimental to the care workers. Considering that mobilizers are also expected to provide an interactive service to clients who experience different vulnerabilities, mobilizers are emotionally affected by their plight and share their pain. The mobilizers I interviewed narrated at least one incident (as part of the questionnaire) where they felt emotionally entangled in the lives of their poor clients, but most could not do enough to empower them. In the sub-sections, I share

⁸² These quotes are from interviews with mobilizers and GRC staff and also heard by me at workshops I attended with GRC staff

examples where the mobilizers felt sympathy and empathy respectively, both succumbing to the same outcomes.

5.4.1 Emotional and interactive work of women mobilizers

Mission policies lay much emphasis on mobilizers to interact with the beneficiaries using a mix of emotional as well as rational ways. Because women mobilizers were also community members, they were expected to reach out to poor women by creating a good relationship with them. For example, women mobilizers are reminded by their project coordinators that they must be able to “...*win over the trust of women and get them involved in our activities.*” (observation during staff meeting at a GRC, 2009). I witnessed in the field that women mobilizers went on daily field visits and spent hours often revisiting same families, convincing women to join the programs, using examples of themselves and other participating women to extract their participation. And yet there were recurrent discussions over mobilizers’ not being able to convince certain poor and/or conservative families.

Mobina was a 40 year old Muslim woman resident of Sethu resettlement colony and worked as a mobilizer with Karya GRC in Sethu slum. During one of our field visits, she mentioned to me that it was very difficult to recruit women from Muslim families in her community. Mobina’s GRC had been successful in mobilizing a significant number of Hindu women, but Mobina was troubled about poor participation of Muslim women. She shared with me her views on how religious orthodoxy kept many Muslims poor and that women especially were the most affected. Mobina’s prior work experience with a feminist NGO was instrumental in driving her to make efforts beyond

the call of her duty to engage women from the Muslim community, but with little success. She said,

I use everything...I tell them 'look at me, I am also out of my house and independent and nothing has happened to me' but they [Muslim families] still don't agree [to participate]. The ones that do send their daughters and sisters out do so after we have visited them multiple times to convince them. And even then, only mothers are convinced...they start sending their daughters to our center without informing the men...all this takes a lot of work...talking, convincing, telling them we are also like their family and wish them well...it takes forever and even then we are not successful all the time.

Mobina used her ability to work outside home as a Muslim woman to convince and inspire families to let their daughters join programs at the GRC. Observations in the field showed that community members reacted diversely to such mobilization exercises – some clearly stated their disinterest, others expressed ambivalence, and few others took interest. Mobina would pick on these reactions to decide how much time and emotion she wanted to spend. Irrespective, she started conversations by showing interest in women's personal lives and then gradually moved towards disseminating information about Mission. With interested families, conversations comfortably shifted between neighborhood news, family matters, and women's empowerment programs. Mobina's identity as a community member helped her better exercise her emotional labor among these families. Mobina also often used examples of other women from the community to showcase GRC's reach and credibility among locals. Being a local woman, she was able to quickly locate a comfort zone between herself and the poor women (not men) as she gradually tried to pave way for their inclusion into the GRC activities.

During my field visits with women mobilizers, I witnessed several such scenes and interactions between the mobilizer and the families. These interactions would slowly turn from scripted interactions (on either side) to casual discussions, evoking feelings of sisterhood and family-type relations. I realized that interactions turned personal once the mobilizers were invited inside the house and offered water or tea, as if the collapsing of spatial boundaries of public and private also collapsed the boundaries between a development subject and agent. The women mobilizers performed emotional labor through face-to-face, voice-to-voice contacts (Hochschild, 1983) that include spoken words (emphasizing on personalizing the relationship by using terms like sister, mother, family, asking about health of children) and specific behaviors (sitting on the ground with others rather than sitting on a chair, drinking chai at a house however poor, talking only to women). They made efforts to empathize with the situation of their beneficiaries, “to feel their feelings as part of their own” (England et al., 1986, p. 91) by always starting conversations with specific questions about which school the children went to, or when the family will visit relatives in their native village, or whether the pregnant woman got her health check-up, or whether the family was planning their daughter’s marriage.

During these women’s-exclusive interactions, women mobilizers were expected to keep their emotions under check while successfully inciting emotions of their beneficiaries (Hochschild, 1983 on expectations of ‘emotional labor’). In Mobina’s case, her emotions of frustration with religious conservatism motivated her to work for her community even beyond the expectations of Mission. She immersed herself in her work

and openly used her emotions as a Muslim woman and a concerned mobilizer to mobilize women. However, like in the case of Sheetal discussed in the first section of this Section, emotions were not used as a core component during all interactions and women mobilizers did not always move swiftly between professional and emotional scripts prescribed to them through Mission's staff trainings. While Mobina used her empathy towards Muslim women in her community and her passion for gendered equality to serve her community, Sheetal preferred a rational approach to attract their participation. Nonetheless, considering that mobilizers were expected to provide an interactive service to clients who live in poverty, mobilizers were emotionally affected by their plight and shared their pain. Most mobilizers shared their entangled emotions in the field. Below, I share two examples where the mobilizers felt sympathy and empathy respectively, both succumbing to similar outcomes.

5.4.1.1 Sympathy

Neetu was a young Hindu woman working as a mobilizer in Wedal slum. She shared her inability to emotionally cope with the neglect suffered by two young destitute sisters at the hands of their relatives living in Wedal slum. Over a period of five months, Neetu tried to convince the relatives to allow the sisters to join women's empowerment activities at the GRC but regular visits exposed to her the desperate conditions of the sisters. During an interview, she mentioned,

I would go to their house every day, try to persuade their uncle to allow me to talk with them [sisters] and include them in our activities...but he wouldn't allow that...I got so depressed with their situation that I decided to drop their case. I still pass by that house but I can't get myself to knock at that door anymore...

Neetu tried to mobilize the sisters but she didn't have the authority or power to intervene and help the sisters in any way. Also, she told me during the interview that as a young woman working in a crime-ridden and conservative environment, she feared for her safety if she continued to intervene. She said, "*I don't know...what if that family gets angry at me?*" She persuaded her GRC coordinator to take action and move the sisters to a destitute women's shelter. The coordinator tried to use his contacts in the NGO circle to get the sisters admitted to a shelter. In the meantime, the work pressure on the GRC became so intense that the coordinator and Neetu got caught up with more immediate deadlines.

Neetu wanted to help the sisters but after trying for more than six months, she gave up. She realized that in order to keep her job, she had to show more immediate results in the number of women participating in women's empowerment activities at the GRC, not case studies of how the GRC tried to assist two women. Further, Neetu understood her lack of authority but she couldn't control her emotions towards the situation. Lack of authority to effect change deepened her emotional turmoil with this case and she decided to permanently distance herself from it. She said, "*Now I don't even pass through that lane anymore...I couldn't do anything.*" Similar instances were shared by others and suggested that emotional labor when provided with minimal power to effect change is detrimental to the workers (Hochschild, 1983; Wharton, 1999). As mobilizers, they were expected to feel and care in order to serve the poor. But their feelings, accentuated by face-to-face regular interactions, could not enable them to effect change. Development projects like Mission accomplish the task of highlighting

deprivation and desperation and then showcasing through photographs and numbers the large masses that are “reached” through camps and trainings. What remains unshowcased is the fact that the breadth of the reach of the program hinders its depth.

5.4.1.2 Empathy

Other than cases of emotional labor and its effect on the mobilizers, there were several cases where the mobilizers did not feel emotionally attached with their client and yet had to exhibit care. I also simultaneously witnessed that the ‘uncaring’ or lack of emotions was not caused due to lack of sympathy or lack of understanding the situation but in fact due to empathy arising out of complete recognition of the ground realities. I witnessed this kind of uncaring yet empathetic behavior in Shakeela, a 22 year old Muslim mobilizer with Divya GRC working in Jaan slum. Shakeela and I often frequented the field as she mobilized women to join women’s empowerment programs and assisted them with welfare services. One day in mid-November 2009, we met an elderly woman. She had recently come to know that she and her husband were eligible to receive the \$20 each worth of old age pension from the government’s welfare system. The old couple lived in a shanty at the peripheries of Jaan slum, had no paperwork or identity proof to prove their age or residence. As soon as Shakeela heard that they have no paperwork, she moved away and said,

Amma, main tumhari madat kaise karoon? [mother, how can I help you?] You don’t have any documents which are required for getting pension...by the time you run around to get these documents made you would have spent all your money. I am telling you, don’t get into this problem [*jhanjhat*]...it’s not worth it...

But the old woman was adamant that she would get the paperwork ready for availing pension. She continued to request Shakeela for her help but Shakeela kept saying, “*koi faydaa nahin hoga Amma*” [all efforts would be useless mother]. As an observer, I was beginning to get angry at Shakeela. As soon as we left the house, I asked Shakeela why she refused to help the old woman. She told me in a patient tone,

I know! I live here. I have dealt with the government departments ...these things are impossible if you already don't have some proof... and they have nothing to show.

Shakeela decided to not help the old woman based on her own experiences with getting widow pension for her mother. A few years ago, Shakeela's father passed away and the family decided to move from their village in the neighboring state of Uttar Pradesh to Jaan resettlement colony (near the Jaan slum where we met the old woman) to be closer to her mother's relatives. With no paperwork and identity proof, Shakeela and her mother struggled to get the mother enrolled for widow pension. She told me that they paid bribes and spent months waiting at government offices to get a response. The whole process took more than two years *after* one of their relatives who knew the local politician intervened and took the matter in his hands. Shakeela's family was relatively better-off than the old woman. They lived in a *pucca* (brick constructed) house in a resettlement colony and had relatives to help them out. The old woman lived in a shanty and it seemed like she had no networks to assist her. Shakeela made the calculations, compared situations, and realized that there was a thin chance of the old woman ever availing her welfare entitlement, especially when multiple guidelines and conflict between department and Mission were further stalling an already crumbling system (as

discussed in Section 3). In doing so Shakeela further internalized that “poor woman” like her mother and Amma would continue to remain at the margins of the state’s attention.

During our interview a month after meeting Amma, I again asked Shakeela about her duties and why she decided not to assist Amma with her paperwork. At first she was taken aback at the bluntness of my question. But then she composed herself and said,

There is too much work to be done and I have to be smart about what I choose to do and what I choose to not do. If I took up Amma’s case, I would have still been wasting days at the welfare office and I wouldn’t have been able to do anything else...I have to make daily reports, go to the field to disseminate information about our programs, organize meetings, assist this one and that one with their work...I mean what all can I do? And what all could I have done had I been stuck with Amma and her paperwork?

In making choices between what work to do and not do, Shakeela was ensuring that she was doing the work that created the required results in a timely fashion – results of number of women participating and benefiting from her GRC. Amma’s case would have definitely counted in the results had it delivered the expected outcomes in a more timely manner. But since Shakeela knew that the process would be stretched over months and would eat into her other more immediate result-generating works, she decided to convince Amma of the uselessness of even seeking her help.

There were several instances where mobilizers juggled between different work expectations. At the level of GRCs, staff was aware of the difficulties in enabling holistic empowerment of poor women or assisting poor people with welfare while also struggling to meet expectations to show “success” based on the numbers, not progress with individual cases. The work of the mobilizers shows the complex ways in which status quo of unequal power relations is maintained while intervention for change

become irrational in the face of Mission's more immediate tangible, visible expectations of the mobilizers. These recognitions give rise to emotions of empathy and sympathy such that despite knowing or feeling the situation of a woman subject, the mobilizer is either unable to or intentionally does not want to work towards changing the subject's situation. The inability to effect change or to empower poor women comes from several factors, including lack of authority, and an incisive understanding of the structural violence that also permeates her everyday life as a "poor woman" at the margins of the state and society. The practicality with which mobilizers evaluated each case and realized their limited authority in effecting change further dampened the feminist zeal of women's empowerment to a great degree. The lived realities of each mobilizer in situations similar to those of the women they serve diluted the women's empowerment agenda to a degree where it was considered irrational to divert from everyday routines, meetings, marches, camps, and trainings and immerse into activism-oriented assistance.

It would be easy to place the blame on the mobilizers for not doing their job well. It would be even easier to suggest that the women's empowerment component is dispensable. However, I argue that the women's empowerment component suffered because the mere exercise of sustaining the project in the face of political pressures had overtaken its core objectives of empowering poor women. The sustainability of the project depended upon the visible and countable mass inclusion of women residing in the slums of Delhi. In the face of exclusionary neoliberal urban growth and the failed attempts at serving the poor through an efficient welfare delivery system, women's empowerment programs entrenched in the Delhi slums through GRCs worked to still

prove the government's inclusive and caring agenda. The frenzy around making the conventional programs a "success" was impacted by the internalized skepticism of women mobilizers who considered Mission a good idea bogged down in an institutional arrangement trying to do too much with limited resources and lack of clarity. Women mobilizers were unable to separate their experiences as marginalized citizens due to their failed encounters with the state *because* projects like Mission continue to be burdened by the technicalities of sustaining their existence such that they are unable to redefine new relations between the state and the poor or radicalize the call for women's equality. Further, as women mobilizers got absorbed in institutional demands, they became active partners of the state in creating a mirage of a caring state that had mobilized 400,000 women to participate in its programs to become empowered (as discussed in Section 4).

5.5 Success, redefined

The day after Sheetal's success with attracting women's participation for the nutrition camp, I went to attend the nutrition camp at Sethu slum. The GRC had arranged a large colorful tent in sparse open space. Different food items were on display with nutrition charts in Hindi pinned up in the background. A nutritionist sat at one of the food stalls while more than hundred women poured in and out to get free food. Sheetal was happy and so was her project coordinator. The attendance of women had exceeded their expectations. One GRC staff moved around smoothly taking photographs of the camp. Within a few hours, the crowds of women subsided and I got a chance to talk with Sheetal.

RD: Sheetal, do women understood '*paushtik ahaar* camp' [nutrition camp].

Sheetal: yes, they know they will learn about what food is nutritious and all that...but they don't really have the time to pay too much attention to it...These women don't care about which food would be healthiest...they first need food, whatever kind that might be.

RD: I noticed yesterday that none of the women asked you about why they will get free food there...

Sheetal: Yeah. These women are used to having people like us [from different NGOs] call them for some event or the other. They don't ask details...*bas kaam kii baat puchte hain* [they only ask what is relevant to them].

RD: So what do you think...is the nutrition camp of any use?

Sheetal: it is utterly useless. We are supposed to teach them which vegetables are cheap and nutritious...we are supposed to have lectures especially for pregnant women...and they do happen sometimes. But usually women are in such a hurry that they want us to give them whatever food there is and then they run back home.

RD: so why doesn't Mission stop doing these camps?

Sheetal: Our entire team knows how useless [*bekaar*] these camps and the coordinator has even talked about this with the higher-ups but nothing has happened as yet...*bas chale jaa raha haii aise hii*...[things just go on as they are...]...and if we say too much [about the uselessness of nutrition camp] then Mission staff will say, "No, camp is not useless, you are not doing your job properly"...*Kucch bolne se mera hii kaam badhega* [saying something will only increase my work]

Sheetal was hinting at the tip of the iceberg. Women mobilizers like Sheetal are the negotiators of project ideals. But they are also cogs in the wheels of power that maintains status quo while giving the impression of change and empowerment. O'Reilly (2003) notes the difference between participation and empowerment is well understood by NGO staffs in ways that they recognize the expected/ idealistic link between the two but do not work towards essentially linking the two through their work. NGO staff realizes that projects run on numbers that can be garnered through participation while allocating the back burner for empowerment-related outcomes. The fluidity and fuzziness surrounding the concept of 'empowerment' further enables project policy

makers as well as implementers to pay more attention to the more visible component – participation. Such numbers not only falsely imply empowerment of ‘some’ kind but also keep controversial interventions in local cultures at bay. By actively (and often subconsciously) floating their own interpretations of project ideals, women mobilizers were able to extract participation from several poor women in their communities, but in ways that created two effects: 1) diluted Mission’s already weak political objectives for women’s empowerment, and; 2) popularized Mission’s women’s empowerment programs as successful interventions of the caring state.

5.6 Discussion and conclusions

The overlapping subject-agent identity of the “poor women” provides a complex perspective on how development projects are translated on the ground through a mix of NGO expectations, personal experiences as poor gendered subjects, and a nuanced knowledge of the field. The fluidity with which women mobilizers create interpretations of their work between project expectations, project pressures, and personal experiences show that their identity as “poor women” overshadowed their identity as community mobilizers. The poor woman as mobilizer is passionate but frustrated with entrenched gendered subordination (Mobina), is sympathetic but authority-less to act (Neetu), is empathetic but rational about her decisions (Shakeela). And between her own emotions and those expected by Mission to maintain participation, between her lived reality and the reality of others she was expected to change, and between her rational choices and the technical pressures of showing success, women mobilizers were normalizing their hybrid identity as poor local women who were best suited for this work. They were

working hard to meet project expectations, even though their work often wavered from Mission's scripts. Women mobilizers recognized the limitations of their work and that of Mission, but the salaried labor sustained their immersion into its practices – the state's extraction of their paid labor allowed them to create their own exit routes out of income-poverty; their exalted status as empowered women working for their community asserted their empowerment as responsible and caring women who can defy gendered restrictions to serve their community. Such asserted empowerment was expected to create a chain reaction for producing more *ladlis* like Deepa who were willing to serve their families and communities.

Projects like Mission are expected to redefine state-poor relations so that poor women like Sheetal, Mobina, Neetu and Shakeela can exercise their political citizenship to make rightful demands of the state, equalize gendered relations, and reduce their poverty. But the workings of Mission at the grassroots indicate that some complex relations and decisions on the ground produce the circulation of the status quo and the maintenance of development categories like "poor women". When the GRC office shuts in the evening and the mobilizer returns home, she becomes a woman who is not income-poor owing to her salary but still exists within a massed category in the registers of the state – "poor woman" who lives in slums and similar other low-income areas, has few opportunities, faces gendered discrimination, needs empowerment through the programs of Mission, and therefore must be included as a subject or an agent – Mission assumes that either way the participating poor woman will achieve empowerment by expanding her gendered, local, interactive and emotional labor beyond the domestic.

Through a feminist economic interpretation of the labor of poor women, I pay special attention to the role of state in engaging in a dichotomous economy of empowerment. I have argued in Section 4 that Mission's programs focus on training the labor of poor women to become economic instruments for alleviating the poverty of their families and communities. In this Section, I add women mobilizers to that argument to show that the state wants to hire poor women to extend their gendered, local, interactive, emotional labor to create those economic instruments. In either case, the state uses women's caring and nurturing labor to contribute towards the economic growth of their families, communities, and the city (Folbre, 2001). Women as mobilizers and as beneficiaries continue to work in lower paying, local, and gendered vocations, thus maintaining their secondary economic position in their families and communities through (and despite) their engagement with Mission. Further, by not emphasizing on the political and social consciousness-raising of women, the government re-inscribed poor women's secondary role as care givers for supporting the working of a male-oriented and neoliberal economy. Through its women's empowerment programs, Mission allowed the state to extract salaried (and therefore controlled), local, emotional, and interactive labor from poor women to empower other women through a chain reaction of kinds. After all, the labor of poor women who *mobilize* and the labor of poor women who are *mobilized* and trained through Mission's programs could fast-track Delhi's world-class aspirations, but what use would their "holistic empowerment" be in this neoliberal scheme of urban development? The mass participation of poor women in different programs of Mission could translate Mission into a successful program that

bolsters the idea of a caring state that is also competent to manage and govern the poor of an aspiring world-class city. Government initiatives like Mission work to produce mass categories like “poor women” to entrench political consent and bureaucratic control by disseminating programs for the supposed dissolution of such categories.

Considering the growing demands of global capitalism, the Delhi government was more concerned with how women like Deepa and Sheetal can provide their gendered, local, and interactive labor to spread the state’s bureaucratic control in the slums of Delhi by mobilizing poor women like themselves to participate in Mission’s programs – even if these programs continued to circulate their disparities and perpetuate their identity as a poor woman existing on the margins of the state and society.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Reaching the unreached?

For several years I have been interested in understanding why the poor remained poor despite several government and nongovernmental interventions working to alleviate their poverty and enhance their well being. I also wanted to know how seemingly divergent and contradictory policies of the government came together to produce more poor and more solutions to end their poverty. These questions have guided my journey across the disciplines of anthropology, geography, urban planning and feminist theory. When I started fieldwork in May 2009, the questions and theories merged as my ethnography of Mission Convergence peeled away layers that define the complex relationship between the poor residents of Delhi and the Delhi government within a neoliberal urban development paradigm.

Government projects like Mission Convergence expanded services for the welfare and empowerment of the poor in Delhi at a time when the city was undergoing massive transformations to join the circuits of footloose global capital. The project was well-intentioned. It was the brainchild of a group of concerned civil society and government officials who genuinely wanted to devise solutions to reduce poverty, empower poor women, and assimilate the poor within the social and economic fabric of an aspiring world-class city, thus also aspiring to make Delhi an inclusive city. My ethnographic study of Mission examined its side-effects and behind-the-scene politics within the larger exclusionary neoliberal urban development paradigm. I assert that

multiple complex relations of economic and political power at the local and the global levels came together to necessitate as well as alter Mission's programs and practices. Findings from this research indicate that Mission met with roadblocks and criticisms that altered its core programs and truncated its core objectives, but is nonetheless continuing to extend its presence and services in all low-income pockets of Delhi. Despite its visible and growing spread, Mission has not enabled an evident reduction of poverty in the slums of Delhi. Nonetheless, it took more fluid and nuanced outcomes as more than 100 NGOs partnered and extended government services to the poor, and more than 400,000 women from slums and resettlement colonies participated in its different programs while exclusionary exercises of city modernization like slum demolitions, privatization of land, construction of modern infrastructure gained pace and diminished the rights of the poor to the city.

Ethnographic data suggests that 104 NGOs working as Gender Resource Centers of the Delhi government facilitated the participation of the poor through voluntary but incisive technologies that merged self-government *and* panoptic power of the state through vocational trainings, self help groups, free health and nutrition camps, recurrent surveys, family vulnerability index, UID cards – all provided at the doorsteps of the poor by community-based NGOs and their community-based mobilizers. While such programs produced the self-interest of the citizen-subject to reduce her poverty, they also entrenched and made visible the aura of a caring and inclusive state – the larger intention being the creation of a stable and safe socio-political environment that is appealing to global capital. Such a dichotomous policy framework promoted the manifestation of an

exclusionary world-class city over the backs of the urban poor who were expected to be included within this city through the conventional programs of welfare and empowerment. What chance does redistributive programs for the welfare of the poor have in the face of the reality of neoliberal urban development? What exactly are these redistributive efforts intending to achieve? I argue that such a dichotomous policy framework between a world-class and inclusive city provides an answer to a critical question: why is the mass of marginalized citizens not resisting, i.e. how is the status quo maintained, and in what complex ways?

6.2 Contributions of the dissertation

My dissertation research furthers our understanding of a complex relationship between the urban poor and their governments, as the latter seeks an increasingly tenuous balance between neoliberal urban development and social welfare of the growing number of poor resulting out of the city's exclusionary urban development policies, among other things. My ethnographic research on Mission highlight that new institutional arrangements created for efficiently serving the poor are not panacea to the shortcomings of the developmental state. Government-NGO partnerships allow for the greater expansion of the government ideologies and bureaucratic channels but they do not provide clear solutions to the reduction of poverty or empowerment of poor women. The intersection of new and traditional institutions creates tensions and confusions that can render novel policy initiatives such as the Mission ineffective. Mission's journey over the past three years clearly shows that the governance of the poor and the provision of resources for their welfare are embedded in the political and economic complexities

between traditional actors and innovative inter-sectoral solutions for making the government efficient.

Further, women's empowerment programs do generate large-scale participation across Delhi but are unable to economically or socially empower most participating women. The conventional and apolitical nature of its programs produce a large mass of labor trained in gendered and low-paying vocations without the adequate resources or socio-familial support to transform their labor into empowerment. Institutional demands for showcasing success through numbers further expands the reach of these programs among thousands of women and shows that the government cares for them, but fails to address entrenched poverty and gendered social norms that continues to converge and produce "poor women" as a category for development interventions existing on the margins of an aspiring-world class city.

Despite roadblocks and shortcomings, Mission is viewed by policy makers and international development agencies (United Nations and the World Bank) as a unique initiative in making cities inclusive. Mission has won several international and national accolades since its establishment in 2008. An ethnographic examination of Mission has proved to be a timely and important research project. Delhi is a city at the forefront of governance reform efforts in India – and India's federal government is contemplating replication of the Mission Convergence mode; across other cities and states of India. Following Li (2007, p. 231), I insist that this 'franchising' of Mission makes it even more important to study Mission and to understand the ways in which it framed welfare and empowerment in the context of urban poverty, in how it categorized the poor, and

introduced a more nuanced, interceptive, and everyday means of governing them. My research is especially relevant for policy makers because it ethnographically captures the internal dynamics of project implementation across various scales (government offices, politicians, NGOs) and highlights barriers that initiatives such as Mission face in achieving their objectives. This research will be important in persuading policy makers to critically revisit and question Mission's objectives, practices and limitations prior to its replication in other states. Whether programs like Mission can make cities inclusive, or simply assist the government in rearranging populations living in poverty – I am hopeful that my research will convince policy makers, academics, and the common person that this is an important question and must be asked of the Delhi government.

6.3 Policy recommendations

My ethnographic study highlights the tension between new and traditional institutional arrangements for the welfare of the poor. The policy changes as of May 2010 have withdrawn the role of NGOs from welfare related activities, and have effectively shut down efficient and alternative arrangements that could have proven beneficial for the poor. I recommend that policies around welfare services be reformulated by asking two questions: 1) how exactly does \$20 a month worth welfare service (cash or kind) impact the vulnerability of a welfare-entitled individual; and, 2) how can the service delivery channels be made transparent and hassle-free for the benefit of the poor.

Mission had partially responded to the first concern by conducting surveys, locating the poor, understanding their vulnerabilities, and then assigning NGOs to reach

them and provide the required set of services. However, I would urge Mission to learn whether such services actually have any impact on the lives of the poor. Do these services support them in sending their children to school, living in safe and comfortable environment, improving health of family? Or do these services provide a small buffer for their everyday living? Mission could devise methods to strengthen the outcomes of each welfare program so that the programs act as “spring boards” that enable the poor to move ahead, and not just as “safety nets” that barely save them from falling below their current poverty (Ferguson, 2009).

In the face of recurrent changes, the “convergence” aspect of Mission Convergence weakened as welfare delivery was withdrawn and women’s empowerment programs took center stage. Women’s empowerment programs have been the most consistent component of Mission. High participation (400,000+) of women availing vocational trainings and other services contrasts with the low percentage of women who are able to benefit from them. Based on my findings, I recommend that greater attention be paid to the efficacy of all of Mission’s programs, especially vocational trainings. The everyday demands of running a GRC are high, and they often divert the attention of policy managers and staff alike from Mission’s core objective of women’s “holistic” empowerment. I urge that if the Delhi government must continue providing services that are already being provided by other organizations, then they must distinguish themselves. First, it must be made clear that empowerment is a process of not only economic but also social and political transformation. Next, Mission must learn from the community about the different programs that should be implemented in each of its

Gender Resource Center. The homogeneous expansion of a staple set of programs does make Mission seem like a success simply by virtue of the number of women who attend or participate in its programs. But this success does not tell us much about how women transform their participation into real-life development of capabilities to weaken the set of gendered and other restrictions that impact them.

The efficacy of the women's empowerment projects could be better captured by devising evaluation tools that recognize the economic as well as social well-being of the participating women. Such tools should not only consider permanent businesses or jobs that earn a stipulated amount but also those temporary but significant jobs through which women are able to improve their social and economic capabilities. Such an evaluation tool would allow Mission to know how, if at all, the different programs are accessed by women to reduce poverty, improve health, or develop social and political networks. The community-based Gender Resource Centers should be instrumental in not only helping women reduce their poverty by learning vocations but also in assisting women in recognizing their rights as women and as citizens of an aspiring "inclusive" and "world-class" city.

Lastly, Mission is a Delhi government initiative for the welfare and empowerment of the poor. And the Delhi government has multiple other policies that disable rights of the poor in the city. The threat of slum demolition looms large in several of Mission's catchment areas. I was often asked in the field whether the onset of Mission's programs meant that the slum would be made *pucca* (an authorized residential colony) in government records. Mission must recognize that in the face of an

overarching exclusionary paradigm, the poor cannot be expected to empower themselves and rise above poverty by simply availing its services. In order to move beyond a token “caring” program of the government, Mission must convince the Delhi government to reconsider its policies that displace poor residents. In the absence of a permanent sense of place, Mission’s services will have minimal impact on improving the lives of slum residents. I am confident that such an intervention could politicize the rights of the poor and enlarge the vision for the making of a holistically inclusive Delhi.

6.4 Future directions

My ethnographic research on Mission Convergence has captured the ground realities of an ambitious socio-economic project within the larger neoliberal paradigm of urban development and governance. My ethnography was time-bound, and therefore captures only a slice of the larger picture. In the near future, my aim is to move beyond my dissertation research on a project to ethnographically examine the city from the exclusive lens of those served by such projects. I plan to collaborate with the residents of Delhi slums that are on the verge of demolition to examine their everyday experiences of negotiation and resistance with the dichotomous material and human development programs of the aspiring world-class *and* inclusive city. I am most interested in the voices of women who reside in slums to know more precisely an often overlooked gendered dimension of state-citizen relations in the context of neoliberal urban development. I am confident that such a collaborative ethnographic enquiry will enable us to reconsider the idea of a world-class city and the policy interventions that are

required for the sustainable and productive inclusion of poor into its social and economic fabric.

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