# The Afterlives of "Waste": Notes from India for a Minor History of Capitalist Surplus


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**Abstract:** We contend that "waste" is the political other of capitalist "value", repeated with difference as part of capital's spatial histories of surplus accumulation. We trace its work on India through a series of historical cuts, and suggest that the travels and perils of waste give us a "minor" history of capitalist surplus—the things, places and lives that are cast outside the pale of "value" at particular moments as superfluity, excess, or detritus; only to return at times in unexpected ways. The neologism "eviscerating urbanism" becomes our diagnostic tool to investigate both urban transformations in metropolitan India and their associated architectures for managing bodies and spaces designated as "wasteful". In sum, our essay reveals how "waste" begins as civil society's literal and figurative frontier only to become its internal and mobile limit in the contemporary era—a renewing source of jeopardy to urban life and economy, but also, in the banal violence and ironies of *fin de millennium* urbanism, a fiercely contested frontier of surplus value production.



**Keywords:** waste and value, eviscerating urbanism, planning, infrastructure, politics, India


## Point of Departure

The core thesis that we propose is simple: "Waste" is the political other of capitalist "value", repeated with difference as part of capital's spatial histories of surplus accumulation. We trace its work on India through a series of historical cuts, and suggest that the travels and perils of waste give us a "minor"[1] history of capitalist surplus accumulation—the things, places and lives that are cast outside the pale of "value" at particular moments as superfluity, remnant, excess, or detritus; only to return at times in unexpected ways.

Our account begins in colonial Bengal with a preview of discussions that led up to the Permanent Settlement of 1793. We show that the formative operations of "waste" in these debates was a shorthand


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for the bio/cultural difference that putatively separated colonizer from colonized. By gathering a series of negative associations about native disposition, conducts and landscapes, "waste" became indexical of the necessity for an ordering rule of property. John Locke's political theory was the philosophical antecedent of this principle. In his influential *Second Treatise on Government* (1988 [1681]) the figure of "waste" comes to designate the unenclosed common, the external frontier, and the ethical horizon of civil society. The transformation of "waste"—idle land and nature's bounty—into something useful becomes the defining moment of political modernity in Locke's treatise. Having entered the discourse of English liberalism, "waste" found uncanny afterlives—in Indian land settlement policies, but also colonial irrigation science. Colonial irrigation manuals devised around the management of large irrigation systems in British Punjab and elsewhere reveal a preoccupation with thwarting nature's profligacy: epitomized by water's natural tendency to run to waste. Interestingly, this effort to rationally control nature and minimize its wastefulness accentuated a different conception of waste that had congealed in land settlement and revenue administration policies: waste as the horizon of property relations, a realm outside production that staged the difference between India's village communities and colonial rule: one mired in age-old bonds of ascription, the other guided by the force of reason.

The same dividing line—with the modern and the rational on the one side, and traditional and the irrational on the other—reasserted itself in post-Independence India. The trope of "waste" came to limn the anxiety of Nehru's moral-technological crusade to modernize and consolidate the scattered geographies of nation through development planning. The essay culminates in present-day Delhi and Bangalore, in the thick of voracious urbanization, where "waste" has become society's internal and mobile limit—a renewing source of jeopardy to urban life and economy, but also, in the banal violence and ironies of *fin de millennium* urbanism, a fiercely contested frontier of surplus value production.

## "Waste" as Distance/Difference: the 1793 Permanent Settlement in Bengal

As a social relationship, property designates rights over an enclosed surplus or source of surplus. It is a determination that is in dialectical tension with an indetermination: "waste". In this formulation, waste is "the degree zero of value" (Frow 2003:25): not forever outside value's ken, but rather its limit and future possible. Colonial land settlement policies in India offer a vivid glimpse of these ambivalent dimensions of "waste".

What is this word "waste"? The *Oxford English Dictionary* traces the word's origin to the Latin *vastus* meaning "unoccupied, uncultivated"

and its entry into Middle English via Old Northern French [also see Scanlan (2005:22) on the etymology of "waste"]. Its enrollment as a political-juridical concept dates to late-thirteenth-century England, when it is invoked as a curb on the usufruct rights of tenants. According to the historian Reinhold Noyes, the doctrine of "waste" directs those who have "interests" in an object—that is tenants—to keep its "aggregate value" intact: in short, to preserve the value of what is rightfully the owner's". Noyes writes:

> At first the tenant had the "right to use and abuse the land, to cultivate it or leave it uncultivated, to keep all others off it . . ." In fact he had an almost absolute Austinian right of user—"a general, indefinite right of using it as he pleases." Nevertheless, actions for waste, while probably new, were brought. In the course of time, "just as the law gave specific relief if the lord ejected his tenant, so the same relief was granted if the tenant used his land in a manner inconsistent with the nature of the interest granted" . . . By the end of the 13th century it was settled that the tenant for years must keep the premises in repair (1936:264).

How does the word "waste" fare these days? Again, the *OED* provides this catalog of meanings for the noun "waste": unusable or unwanted material; a large area of barren, typically uninhabited land; land that is desolate, empty, cheerless, monotonous, useless, uncultivated, or unproductive. The verb "to waste" is to use carelessly, extravagantly, or to no purpose; fail to make full or good use of; to damage, destroy, squander, discard, dissipate, fritter away, or let lapse. A "wastrel" is a wasteful or worthless person and, in informal usage, a "waster" is a person who does little or nothing of value.

"Waste", then, is *material excess that is unruly and improper*: disordered matter, or matter out of place (cf Douglas 2002 [1966]). It is also the specter that haunts the modern notion of "value", which itself operates in two entangled registers: first, "value" as the economic coding and logic of wealth in capitalist society (Spivak 1999:79)—taken up in different but historically related ways by classical political economy, Marxist political economy, and neoclassical economics; second, "value" as a normative or moral template for conduct—to not waste, to make full or best use of, etc. For projects of value, waste is "an enemy to be engaged and beaten" (Neeson 1993:30–31).

"Waste" also lurks as a founding impetus in John Locke's political theory. Arguably the most influential English philosopher of the seventeenth century, Locke is, in many respects, a singular figure. He is the intellectual inspiration for social contract theories of society—a formative influence on Jean Jacques Rousseau as well as the architects of British liberalism (Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, among others). He is the proto-capitalist thinker *par excellence*: he makes property the bulwark of his political thought,

and its protection the principal task of the state as sovereign. Locke traces a direct line of causation between property, commerce and the accumulation of wealth, which he gives the form of a divine injunction. Indeed, one might say that Locke clears the terrain for the emergence of a new object of knowledge and field of intervention, the "economy", a task that is taken up and elaborated by classical political economy. Classical political economy also takes Locke's views on property and commerce to their logical culmination by providing formal demonstrations for why the logic of market exchange should be the organizing principle of society.

But all these developments can be traced back to one axiom from Locke: namely, "*waste" as the constitutive outside of political modernity*—that which must be continuously acted upon and improved, first to enable passage from the state of "nature" to the state of "civil society" and subsequently to preserve that order of society. In India, a century after Locke, the desire to supply a "rule of property" (Guha 1996 [1963]) that would be the bulwark for civil society and agrarian capitalism sparked furious debate in the Governor General's council on the matter of "waste". Given the peculiar obsession with the "problem of waste" in late eighteenth and early nineteenth England it should come as no surprise that British rule in India was, around this exact time, gripped by a similar preoccupation.

Indeed, a short biography of "waste" provides an anatomical peek into colonial rule in India: its imperative to generate revenue and spur commerce and capitalist production, its fixation on character and conduct, and its relentless manufacture of knowledge—erecting what John Stuart Mill was to call a "government of record", as if the strangeness of India could be domesticated by sheer volume of empirical data. In fact, it takes little to surmise that the colonial discourse around "waste" was substantially a shadow theory of value, whose effects were to cast in sharp relief the physical infirmity and cultural inferiority of Indians, thereby clearing ground for a permanent colonial presence and, equally vital, for "development" as the answer to liberalism's imperial contradictions (Gidwani 2008). Discourses travel and the colony and the metropole—in this case, India and Britain—were locked in morbid embrace, with policy debates on "waste" in one resounding on the other. Michael Cowen and Robert Shenton (1996) argued in a fascinating thesis that the modern idea of "development" as a theory of ordered progress and doctrine of trusteeship emerged in England in the social turmoil of the early nineteenth century, at the height of the enclosures and mass migration to the cities for factory work. Oddly, they never ask whether the idea of "development" had roots in the English ruling-class obsession with "waste" and the temporal stigma of backwardness applied to commoners who depended on them for livelihoods; or, for

that matter, whether it had tendrils extending to India, where "waste" became the gravitational impulse for projects of improvement.[2]

Standard economic histories of British rule in India are mostly silent on the question of waste. When waste *is* considered it appears as merely a revenue category designating tracts of land that were not generating taxes for the exchequer, or were doing so poorly. But this narrow rendering of "waste" is a serious mistake in our estimation. As a concept, "waste" tersely condenses an entire early history of liberalism, most significantly the articulation of seventeenth-century natural rights liberalism (of John Locke and his followers) with the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century political economy liberalism (of Adam Smith and his interlocutors)—a joining of such force that its effects continue to set the parameters for policy debates today.[3]

On what basis can such a strong claim be sustained? The answer requires a return to 1812, the year when the *Fifth Report on East India Company Affairs* (Firminger 1917) was issued. One of the most consequential policy documents in the history of British Company Raj, the *Fifth Report* marked a decisive shift away from Lord Cornwallis' Bengal system of *zamindari* settlement and an endorsement of Thomas Munro's alternative Madras system of *ryotwari* settlement. The principal difference between the two lay in the nature of the settlement. Under *zamindari*, a superordinate category of landlords and tax farmers, lumped together as zamindars, were recognized as final proprietors. In contrast to the permanent settlement instituted in Bengal,[4] Munro's Madras system (*ryotwari*) challenged the legitimacy to ownership of superordinate classes and instead proposed a direct settlement with the land's cultivators (*ryots*). Whatever the administrative and partisan differences between the two systems, on one key issue they were alike: each perceived the problem of waste in the colonized territories of India with grave concern.

Writing just a little over a hundred years after the Permanent Settlement in Bengal, the British historian W W Hunter underscored the critical but nebulous influence of waste in that policy. He wrote: "Even in regard to the all-important question of Waste Lands, whose vast extent and difficulties of reclamation determined both Cornwallis and the Court of Directors [of the East India Company] to declare the Settlement permanent, the area was absolutely unknown in any District" (Hunter 1894:86). The oddness of this statement is obvious. On the one hand it is able to claim with apparent conviction that the extent of waste lands in Bengal was enormous; on the other hand it nonchalantly states that the actual area was unknown. Is this simply an instance of sloppy logic? If so, how is one to account for Cornwallis' claim from 1789 that one-third of the Company's territories lay "waste"?[5] These impressionistic remarks were able to carry their degree of conviction precisely because they

originated in a network of premises that had already rendered "India" as an object in imagination. The summoning of magnitudes was a rhetorical sleight-of-hand—shorthand as it were for what was already known: the immeasurable cultural difference separating the British from the Bengalis (equivalently, upper class advocates of enclosure in England were prone to describe "commoners" as "idle", "indolent", "wild", and "uncivilized").

We sense the specter of waste in James Grant's lament about the state of finances in Bengal. Grant, one of the indirect architects of the 1793 settlement, offered this assessment:

> Taking all the ground in tillage [in Bengal] in the course of the year, to be 35 million of the small ryotty begas [bighas: a unit of land], of which perhaps, *from the constitutional indolence of the inhabitants, only one-third is in actual cultivation during each of the three seasons* . . . The gross product of the land, with the labour performed in different degrees *by such a body of people . . . cannot reasonably* be estimated . . . at a greater rate than 6 rupees per bega, amounting in all to 21 krore of rupees (my italics).[6]

Grant's words reveal the operation of discourse as a network of linked statements. In this instance, one precept—"constitutional indolence" that breeds "waste"—stands in metonymically for another that goes unnamed—"lack of ability" or "deficiency of reason".

We could point to numerous other sightings of the term "waste" in British settlement documents pertaining to India, and the tendentious policies it sanctioned. What is consistent across these invocations is a portrayal of "waste" as an indetermination: an untapped potential awaiting transformation into value by dint of human labor and colonial stewardship.

## Waste as Society's External Margin

As noted, it was John Locke—more than any other figure—who was responsible for bringing the problem of "waste" into modernity: *for making it the ethical horizon of "political society"* and in so doing, *valorizing a certain conception of the modern subject*. In Locke's political theory the figure of "waste" is the constitutive outside of modern society; that without which the idea of modernity is incomplete. By tracing the arc of this thought we can see in sharp relief the illiberalism of liberalism, the exclusions and exceptions that enabled its version of "good society"—a "civil society" devoted to the accumulation of wealth, guarded by private property and law.

Offered up as a doctrine of freedom and inclusion, liberalism's certitudes are constantly secured by the violence of exclusions. We see this forcefully in John Locke's defense of English settler colonialism

in North America. His 1681 *Second Treatise of Government*, a slender but enormously influential tract in the making of English and French liberalism, is singularly instructive on this score.

Locke makes an ingenious move when he is confronted with the objection that English settlers in the New World are dispossessing Native Americans of lands that are rightfully theirs. He invokes "evidence", what any reasonable person can affirm, to show this is not the case. The "matters of fact" that Locke invokes include the observation that Indians roam freely over the land, without enclosing it. When they do enclose it (as coastal Indians did) their practice of letting it lie fallow every three years "demonstrated that they did not make rational use of it". More so, even when they cultivate land, it was never to its "best possible use". And the clinching evidence for Locke? Since the Indians had apparently few needs "they lacked the desire to accumulate wealth". Based upon such facts he concluded that they "were not entitled to have their territorial integrity respected by others" (Parekh 1995:86).

It should be evident how this line of reasoning presages debates that were to occur more than a century later around the enclosure in England, where commoners who depended on common waste for livelihoods were frequently likened to the "savages" of North America and the idea of sharing land in common was decried as "the barbarous usage of remote ages" (see Neeson 1993:30). An almost identical argument drove land settlement policies in India, where Lockean "matters of fact"—the vast expanses of wasteland and the natives' indolent habits—became the guiding force for a rule of property that recognized some as rightful owners of property and others as illegitimate claimants. The colorful denunciation of Hindu civilization by James Mills, in his six-volume *History of British India* written in 1817, is vividly illustrative of the workings of colonial imagination:

> Another remarkable circumstance in the character of the Hindus . . . is the inertness of disposition . . . The love of repose reigns in India with more powerful sway, than in any other region probably of the globe. "It is more happy to be seated than to walk; it is more happy to sleep than to awake; but the happiest of all is death." Such is one of the favourite sayings, most frequently in the mouths of this listless tribe, and most descriptive of their habitual propensities. *Phlegmatic indolence pervades the nation* (Mills 1968 [1817], volume 1:332–333; our italics).

Within the *telos* of this thought, which traces its descent from John Locke's moral-political theory, the figure of "waste" came to dramatize the distance/difference separating Britain from India. In his influential writings Locke defended the virtues of individual labor, the sanctity of property acquired by mixing labor with objects, and the natural rights of individuals—and conceived for the state the limited but critical role

of regulating and securing men's property (see particularly, Locke 1988 [1681]:285–302). These injunctions established the inseparability of freedom and property, and were to become the founding premises of British liberalism a century or so later. But they also sanctioned how that property was to be used. Here is Locke from the section on "Property" in the *Second Treatise*:

> [W]hatsoever he tilled and reaped, laid up and made use of, before it spoiled, that was his peculiar Right; whatsoever he enclosed, and could feed, and make use of, the Cattle and Product was also his. But if either the Grass of his Inclosure rotted on the Ground, or the Fruit of his planting perished without gathering and laying up, this part of the Earth, notwithstanding his Inclosure, was still to be looked on as Waste and might be the possession of any other (Locke 1988 [1681]:295, §38).

Locke re-codes this claim as a moral injunction with a suppleness of logic that is audacious: "God Commanded, and his [man's] Wants forced him to *labour*. That was his *Property* which could not be taken from him wher-ever he had fixed it. And hence subduing or cultivating the Earth, and having Dominion, we see are joyned together" (1988 [1681]:292, §35). And from here, Locke, despite being trapped within an older grid of sovereignty, is nevertheless able to transport us to the doorsteps of the yet-to-be-inaugurated diagram of governmental power: "This shews, how much numbers of men are to be preferd to largenesse of dominions, and that the increase of lands and the right imploying of them is the great art of government" (1988 [1681]:298, §42).

What Locke develops in the slender *Second Treatise* is nothing less than the essence of good government and, consonant to that, the essence of what it means to be a "human" *who is ready for passage into political citizenship*. That is to say, "civil society" as the rationally negotiated *after* of "the state of nature". Who enters into these negotiations? Those who have managed to enclose a common by virtue of labor. Thus a series of exclusions (gendered and otherwise) is already in place before entry into "society". In this formulation, to be recognized as a political "human" is to labor, to exert industry, and to improve—add value to—nature lying "idle" or "waste". Anything less is to abdicate on divine intention and to put in jeopardy the prerequisites of "social" existence—and therefore, the rights that individuals are entitled to within political society.[7]

Locke's labor theory is a normative theory of property and value. It is not, strictly speaking, a labor theory of value where labor functions as the common measure of exchange value (or price). This undertaking, associated most closely with the British classical economy of Adam Smith and David Ricardo (and subsequently critiqued and emended by Karl Marx), identified labor as "the real measure of the exchangeable

value of all commodities" and "the only measure by which we can compare the values of different commodities at all times and places" (Smith 1937 [1776]:31). Still, it is possible to glimpse in Locke's limited theory of value the intellectual antecedent of the labor theory of value that was to emerge several decades later; and more importantly, a proto-capitalist defense of a society organized under the principle of capitalist value accumulation.[8] The route is simple: if personal labor is the foundation of value in society and, thus, possession over things, how does Locke justify the property rights of manorial lords and other categories of superior holders? Here the unthought of Locke's thought—the conditions of its emergence—stands exposed. Most telling is this assertion, early in the section on "Property" in the *Second Treatise*:

> We see in *Commons*, which remain so by Compact, that 'tis the taking any part of what is common, and removing it out of the state of Nature leaves it in, which *begins the Property*; without which the Common is of no use [it is 'waste']. And the taking of this or that part, does not depend on the express consent of all the Commoners. Thus the Grass my Horse has bit; the Turfs my Servant has cut, and the Ore I have digg'd in any place where I have a right to them in common with others, become my *Property*, without assignation or consent of anybody. The *labour* was mine, removing them out of that common state they were in, hath *fixed* my *Property* in them" (Locke 1988 [1681]:289, §28; italics in the original).

Here, what should rightfully be the servant's—if Locke is to be consistent in his argument that the basis of property lies in one's own labor—is elided by rendering the servant as a *mere placeholder* for the master: the servant's labor doesn't count! In this slip—Locke has not *yet* discussed the role of money in permitting accumulation of property beyond what one is able to subtract from the Common by personal labor—lies revealed the ideological edifice of Locke's philosophy; and why liberalism—the political ideology he foreshadowed—dovetails so well with capitalism. Locke is, in this precise sense, the proto-capitalist thinker *par excellence*, whose moral injunctions against waste continue to lurk in both the classical labor theory of value and its neoclassical successor, which sees itself waging a relentless battle against "inefficiencies," or waste, of all sorts.

## Wasteful Nature and State-Led Development

The theme of nature as bountiful yet wasteful, unless properly harnessed by application of human labor, is a powerful undercurrent in Locke's theory. David Gilmartin (2003) has shown how a compatible yet historically different anxiety around nature's wastefulness emerged in mid-nineteenth century India in the science of irrigation engineering.

The construction of the Ganges canal in the 1840s, followed by the establishment of a Public Works department in the newly annexed territory of Punjab in the 1850s, spurred a demand for irrigation engineers. The opening of the College of Civil Engineering in Roorkee in 1848 was meant to cater to this demand. Many of Roorkee's professors were drawn from the Royal Engineers. These military engineers were consumed with a sense of professional mission that was "intimately linked to colonialism" (Gilmartin 2003:5058), and aspired to a "world-wide science" that would put mathematics at the service of the state. In Baconian fashion, their benchmark of victory was "success ... in 'subduing' nature, and turning its products into 'resources' that could be used for purposes of production" (2003:5058).

This mission was vividly personified in the technical jargon that arose. Hence the notion of putting water to work—condensed in the term *water's "duty"*—has become standard in modern irrigation manuals. It is a measure of "the relation between the volume of water and the area of crop it matures" (2003:5058). The word "duty" captures the two senses of value—economic and moral—that we have previously mentioned. Hence, "duty" was both a "fundamental measure of irrigational value" (2003:5059) that reflected its relative scarcity and ability to turn an economic surplus, as well as the engineer's moral calling—the measure of his success—in controlling "nature's waste". Thus, "[m]easurements of duty inevitably hinged on calculations of 'waste' (water losses) in all the parts of canal systems, including the irrigators' fields" (2003:5059).

It was precisely the last of these components—the irrigator's fields—that was the limit point of this system of water delivery and valuation. "Village communities" of irrigation users, over which irrigation science had little or no leverage, became the "black box" where the engineers' battle against nature's waste met a rude halt. In a strange replay of land settlement operations, these village communities came to be associated with pre-modern and non-rational forms of sociality organized around "wastelands"—a heterogeneous category of ostensibly common and non-producing tracts lumped under a single heading.

This association of village India as somehow outside the purview of modern forms of reason and hence economically stagnant carried over into the postcolony. Like colonial irrigation engineers before them, India's development planners wished to operate on the nation as a statistician might on a model—but found their Comtean desire to reduce development to a technical problem constantly thwarted by the state assemblage of which they were part.

As a diagram for transforming and cementing the nation, development needed a machinery to realize itself. Indian planners inherited some of this machinery, whether infrastructure or bureaucracy. The rest, such as a Ministry of Community Development and Cooperation, development

blocks, *panchayati raj* institutions, and various arteries of economic circulation, had to be created. Put simply, development required the state to distribute itself territorially in order to reach its target populations. But dispersion and proliferation of the state apparatus had an electric political effect, producing disagreements and conflicts wherever it came into contact with society. The battles that erupted, particularly at the district and sub-district levels, were frequently about where to draw the lines between state and civil society. Local elites seeking to preserve or extend their influence and subaltern groups intent on escaping or weakening this influence fought to control newly formed conduits of development and development resources.

To wit, on the one hand, development enabled the postcolonial state to spatialize and clot power in unprecedented ways. On the other hand, as it distributed itself (thereby growing its surface area) it multiplied points of social conflict and "rent-seeking". In a nutshell, the Indian development experience threw into stark relief an old contradiction in liberal political theory: namely, where does the state end and civil society begin? Nehru's technocrats were no doubt mindful of these intensifying contradictions. But they plunged ahead anyway with their five-year plans. They were summoned to a higher calling: to build a modern nation. This entailed, among other tasks, a familiar crusade against "waste".

Nehru captured these sentiments in a remarkable 1954 speech. Speaking to a meeting of the Coordination Board of Ministers for River Valley Projects in New Delhi, he admonished that "the 360 million people" of India wanted not "words, even though words may signify much"; rather "they want food ... they want clothing ... they want shelter ... they want health". Having warned his audience that "[w]ords are tricky things always" and that they "are thrown at each other as a bomb might be thrown at a person" he launched a ferocious verbal assault, clearly intended to rouse:

> We have to utilize the experience we have gained, pool our resources and prevent wastage ... We cannot allow the nation's resources to be wasted. Democracy has many virtues, but one of its concomitants is wastage of time and energy. Nevertheless, for many reasons, we prefer democracy to other methods of government. That does not mean that we cannot avoid waste. We cannot afford waste, because the basic thing is that we should go ahead. The devil is at our heels, or as they say, "s*haitan peechhe ata hai, to bhagte hain*". I should like you to have this kind of feeling. To hell with the man who cannot walk fast. It serves him right if he gets out of the ranks and falls out. We want no sluggards ... I want work and work and work. I want achievement. I want men who work as crusaders (Nehru 2003:148).

We could pick at Nehru's words endlessly, not the least for the specter of waste that haunts them. Suffice to note that Nehruvian planning

carried out its moral-technical crusade against waste through a variety of inscription devices, which included radio and TV propaganda but also surveys, maps, input–output models, statistical tabulations, flowcharts, budgets, reports, strategic plans, institutional diagrams, and pricing mechanisms. There were other pressing concerns of nation making (particularly frayed regional unity, linguistic divisions, casteism, and religious discord), but they were rendered subordinate—perhaps in an act of willed ignorance—to problems of the economy. Doggedly modernist and socialist in its self-conception, Indian planning, like European liberalism and Stalinism before it, sought to evacuate the political from the stage. The elevation of the economy to the dominant instance meant that that the nation-state effectively became an abstracted "problem-space" on which development planning could write itself. Abstraction, the *sine qua non* of planning, is after all nothing more and nothing less than a way of producing and organizing space in the exercise of power.

From the vantage point of India's development planners, the long 1950s were witness to two sharply different performances: on the one hand, the agrarian scene where in the perception of planners "instinct" flailed against the guiding force of "reason" (Chatterjee 1986:145), generating a cycle of conflict and accommodation that turned well intentioned interventions like land reform into a tepid spectacle; on the other hand, the urban–industrial sector where the imprint of "economy" could be firmly asserted on wasteful (human and nonhuman) natures and where, as a result, the crackling drama of industrialization could unfold.

## Eviscerating Urbanism: "Waste" in Metropolitan India

In present-day urban India "waste" in its literal and figurative senses has come to mark both, the excessive and the expendable but also the productive and the profitable (see Cohen 2005:x for a comparable analysis of "filth"). As society's excrement it has become an immanent limit to its wellbeing and reproduction, as well as a vector of realized and potential value. Consider that Delhi generates 7500 metric tonnes of municipal solid waste—garbage—every day, a figure that is expected to rise to 16,000 metric tonnes per day by 2021.[9] The bulk is collected, sorted, stored, and sold or disposed of by an informal (and socially stigmatized) army of waste pickers who number more than 150,000. However, since 2005 the three municipalities that oversee Delhi have begun to privatize infrastructural services, including collection of municipal solid waste. Three large companies—Delhi Waste Management (DWM), AG Enviro Infra Projects, and Metro Waste Handling Pvt Ltd—have been awarded contracts to collect garbage from neighborhood collection points and transport it to landfills.

Predictably, the privatization of municipal solid waste management has adversely impacted the livelihoods of Delhi's waste pickers.[10] Prior to privatization, several waste pickers used both a territory and a *dhalao* (municipal bin space) to generate a living. While some picked waste in the morning, others would sit at a bin for a predetermined number of hours. Time-shares were informally negotiated between waste pickers who shared a catchment area. With privatization, the bin space has become the purview of waste management firms. A salaried bin guide, whose first allegiance is to his corporate employer, now maintains the bin space. The informal social sharing mechanisms that promoted a certain degree of equity in earnings across waste pickers have begun to fray. The same quantity of waste per unit area is now available to fewer workers. Worse, because a bin guide's work hours are inflexible (set by the private firm that employs him) women, who must juggle household work with waste picking, are invariably precluded from the position.

Privatization has also led to poorer segregation of municipal solid waste. Whereas waste pickers gather and segregate 15–59% of the waste depending on their area of operation, municipal contracts allow private companies to segregate at much lower levels. Thus, in the 8 years of their contract the private operator is only required to segregate 20% of the waste. Privatization of waste collection has aggravated a longstanding problem faced by Delhi's informal sector waste pickers: a space to efficiently segregate their laboriously gathered waste. Previously, many used the municipal collection point (*dhalao*) as a space to segregate. Although they were occasionally harassed by municipal field staff and beat cops, the situation appears to have worsened after privatization. According to Chintan, a Delhi-based advocacy group that has been working for several years to organize waste pickers and highlight their adversities, many pickers have begun to complain that the privately employed bin guide, on orders from management, no longer permits them to segregate their own waste in the bin area; nor dispose the remains of post-segregation waste in the *dhalao*. As such, they are forced to travel longer distances to find spots where they can sift through their *maal* ("stuff") and throw post-segregation chaff.

Finally, as private contractors have begun to sell waste directly to the recycling factories or large dealers, a legion of small junk and scrap dealers—most risen from the ranks of waste pickers—now finds itself out of work. These fears were anticipated in a report published in the newsmagazine *Frontline* in April 2006, 1 year after the privatization of waste collection. The reporter, Aman Sethi, wrote at the time:

> At present, waste companies in Delhi are paid on a "per tonne" basis, with the fee ranging from Rs. 500 to Rs. 700 a tonne. This, many

> feel, acts as a disincentive for recycling and segregation and puts the newly created formal waste economy in direct conflict with the existing informal economy. The informal work of rag pickers may be curtailed on the grounds that it compromises the profit of the waste operator ... Officials involved in the framing of the contract with private operators have explained that specific provisions have been incorporated in the contract to ensure an incremental 5 per cent segregation of household waste annually. A "40 items clause" (a list of 40 "restricted items" that shall not be counted as tonnage), officials say, has been specifically designed to protect rag pickers. But waste operators, speaking on the condition of anonymity, have feigned ignorance of the "restricted items" list. While recyclables such as plastics and iron shall not be counted as tonnage, the contract does not disallow the private operators from selling recyclables. Thus, the privatisation of waste collection might provide the portal for the entry of corporate interests into the waste sector. "Taking over waste collection is just the first step," feels Santosh Kumar, a godown owner in Takiya Sarai. "Soon waste companies will build sorting stations, then godowns and finally recycling factories. Then they will own the entire sector."[11]

In Bangalore, the capital city of the southern Indian state of Karnataka, the annexation of waste has assumed an older, colonial, form. "Wastelands" have become the new frontier of accumulation for the city's knowledge economy. In the early 1990s, Bangalore catapulted to global prominence as an attractive destination for capital flows into "knowledge-based" industries. Information technology (IT) is the most prominent sector in Bangalore's knowledge economy. According to the *City Development Plan for Bangalore* (IDECK 2006), the city was home to over 1685 Indian and foreign IT companies by 2006 and Bangalore's share of India's total software exports stood at 33% (Ramesh 2007).

IT's spectacular success in Bangalore is underwritten by the state, which over the years has offered an array of subsidies to foster this sector. For instance, the state through parastatal agencies like the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) played an instrumental role in the acquisition of land for the establishment of the city's premier IT parks. In 1977, KIADB acquired 136 ha (326 acres) of land in the "green belt", at the urban periphery, to build Electronic City, Bangalore's first IT park (Heitzman 2004). Subsequently, KIADB commandeered 22 ha (53 acres) of land in the eastern fringes of Bangalore for the development of International Tech Park, the city's second IT park (Heitzman 2004). Despite this state largesse, Bangalore's IT companies have incessantly complained about the government's failure to make land available in quantities that can fully accommodate the sector's expansion.

Starting in the late 1990s many IT corporations including Infosys, Bangalore's flagship IT firm, announced a series of expansion plans to build IT campuses in Chennai, Hyderabad and Pune. IT companies claimed these cities were offering "better" land. By the turn of the millennium the state government of Karnataka grew increasingly anxious about IT flight and fearful that Bangalore's dominant position in this high visibility sector would be undermined by inter-urban competition (particularly from Hyderabad and Chennai). In a preemptive move it boldly proposed to carve out an 18,000 acre "IT Corridor" linking Electronic City in the south with International Tech Park in the east, as a way to comprehensively address the sector's growing land requirements (Alternative Law Forum 2003; Ghosh 2005). In invoking its power of "eminent domain" to annex a vast amount of land for the IT sector in a region with acute land scarcity, the state government acted as if the tracts they intended to acquire were of little or no value—in effect, "wastelands"—when weighed against their alternative uses for Bangalore's knowledge economy. Local inhabitants have disputed this logic of enclosure, and mounted a legal challenge against the acquisition of their land for the IT Corridor. The project remains embroiled in legal disputes. To date, the state has only managed to carve out intermittent IT enclaves along the proposed length of the corridor.

But it hasn't stopped trying. Having failed to acquire a contiguous expanse of land for IT on the urban periphery the state government is increasingly turning to the rural hinterland. Using the provision of the Special Economic Zones Act of 2005, which allows tracts designated as "wastelands" in land revenue registers to be acquired for carving out special economic zones (SEZ), the Government of Karnataka is proposing to create a sector specific IT SEZ in Malur, a town located 50 km from Bangalore (*The Hindu* 12 August 2006).[12] According to the Collaborative for the Advancement of Studies of Urbanism through Mixed Media (CASUMM), a consortium of Bangalore based urban activists and scholars, preliminary notifications to acquire over 1500 acres of land have been issued already. CASUMM (no date) asserts that these preliminary notifications are indiscriminate, and make no attempt to parse "wasteland" from productive land. It concludes that over 300 families will be displaced and that Malur's farmers are at risk of losing irrigated lands as well as eucalyptus plantations (an important source of income).

Even if the government were to strictly follow the stipulations of the SEZ Act of 2005 and only acquire revenue wastelands in Malur the net result would punish the poor and marginalized in order to reward the IT sector. The reason is simple, and lies in the elasticity of the land classification category of "wastelands"—which is applied to remarkably diverse tracts of lands, such as "land with scrub,

grazing land, pasture, [as well as] land on which shifting cultivation is carried out" (Centre for Science and Environment 2006:25). This diversity makes wastelands a commons *par excellence* for the poorest sections of the society, who depend on them for an array of everyday needs (fuel wood, fodder, minor foods, a place to shit, even grow crops). Environmental Support Group (ESG), a Bangalore-based non-governmental organization (NGO), found that in some instances marginal cultivators had rendered "wastelands" cultivable through incremental improvements and sheer dint of labor (Saldanha and Prasad 2002). In short, the legal category of "wastelands" obscures the fact that they are enmeshed in circuits of value and offer critical resources that supplement the income of the poor and marginalized.

The enclosure of wastelands for the establishment of IT SEZs and the privatization of municipal solid waste in Delhi are unfolding chapters in the annals of "eviscerating urbanism"—a neologism that describes three interlinked forces that are at work in metropolitan India. First, a *parasitic urbanization* that is rapidly colonizing the land and ecology of the surrounding countryside, in the process displacing and impoverishing local populations at the urban periphery. Second, a *speculative urbanization* that is relentlessly mobilizing resources and violence to transform commercially underutilized spaces in the urban region, which frequently serve as commons for poor residents, into commercially valuable retail and residential spaces, as well as spaces of "flow". Third, a *techno-ecological urbanization* that is producing two sets of urban ecologies and populations—one, the ecology set of an urban bourgeoisie actively tied into global circuits of capital, whose lives are considered worthy of caring by the state; the other, the ecology set of an urban underclass living off the commodity detritus of these global circuits, whose lives are of indifference to the state.

As a consequence present-day urban India, we contend, is emerging as a *post-development* social formation.[13] How so? Because as the paradigmatic form of bio-political power,[14] development has always presupposed *a nominal ethical engagement with the subjects whose lives and conducts it seeks to manage and cultivate*. This is no longer a tenable assumption. Today, neither the apparatuses of the state nor an increasingly anti-poor urban bourgeoisie seek an *ethical* engagement.[15] This is a break from the past. We want to be clear: the absence of ethical engagement does not mean the absence of negotiations or consistent deafness to the plight of the urban poor. It simply means that practices of engagement—when and where they occur—are fitful, contractual, and individualized, rather than expressions of a socialized moral economy or state project.

Three emerging tendencies define this urban present:

1 On the one hand, *the proliferation of "survival" jobs* (such as scavenging, waste-picking and household services, in the niches of the urban informal economy) led by rapidly rising middle class affluence.
2 On the other hand, *the emergence of a strange geography of encounters and contact zones* within which differences—but also new forms of "intimacy"—between the urban middle class and the urban underclass are now being produced.
3 And finally, as the urban wealthy and the urban poor grow closer *and* more sharply distant within a context of uneven development the materialization of *a new "moral economy" with new forms of patron–client relations* to compensate (imperfectly) for the post-development state.

We offer three anecdotes to stage these claims (the first two are drawn from Gidwani's ongoing fieldwork in Delhi, and the third from Reddy's fieldwork in Bangalore):

## *Anecdote I*

I am invited to a late-evening bash at a close high-school friend's house. He is now a highly successful trademarks and patents lawyer whose roster of clients includes Coca Cola, Microsoft, Sony Entertainment, etc. It's his younger son's birthday. The lawn is milling with friends—many equally successful, who exude confidence about India's economy. The barbecue and booze flows freely, and manning the bar and buffet are several young and tired-looking servers dressed in white, trying to keep pace with the demands made of them. They listen in silence when they are scolded for being too slow or for mishearing an order. They have been contracted for the night by a local caterer; they make 100 rupees for the night. When the party finally winds down at 2am they clean up, hoist tables, chairs and dishes into an open van, and leave—where do they go, who knows and who cares? Certainly the guests don't. We—the globally connected middle classes—have our ecologies (or techno-natures), they have theirs. As our lives become more and more mobile, we encounter them more and more often—but with indifference and, frequently, without the dignity of recognition. *These are the de-sentimentalized geographies of the urban present*. It's not that urban inequalities are new. It's how direct and visceral they are today.

## *Anecdote II*

I exaggerate. The dignity of recognition is not always lacking. What's different about the urban present is that the terms of recognition emerge

within a new "moral economy" of need and responsibility. A married couple I know returned to India 6 years ago, after studying and working in the UK for several years. The wife is an economic consultant with PriceWaterhouseCoopers and the husband runs a successful travel agency. They have three children and can afford to rent a lovely house in one of Delhi's most posh (and gated) colonies. They can also afford a full-time nanny. Their story is not unusual. There is a large and growing professional middle class in cities like Delhi that can aspire to such lifestyles. In time, the couple discovered that their nanny, who they depend heavily on and like, had an abusive husband. The nanny and her husband migrated to Delhi from eastern India a few years ago in search of work. He works as a *chowkidar* (guard) at a private residence. She has been doubling up as cook and nanny. Along the way, they had a child. She has no independent foothold in the city. And like many plebeians in her situation, access to the police and legal systems to address domestic violence, is a mirage. The Indian state, even in its developmentalist incarnation, has always been callous in its treatment of the urban poor. The post-development liberalizing state is even less willing to take responsibility for the wellbeing of urban migrants, who labor in the interstices of the economy. But these vital interstices, invisible in state accounts, stitch together the possibility of "proper" or "qualified" life for the urban elite—the couple in question among them. They tell me how difficult it is to find "reliable help" in Delhi and how hard it would be to manage without their nanny. Their need is a source of guilt and responsibility. They don't feel they have a right to intervene in their nanny's marriage. They have instead given the nanny the option of sleeping in the apartment with her child, and taken on the responsibility of sending the child to an English-language school. This is the new face of patronage.

## *Anecdote III*

Her name is Vanaja and she is a contract worker for the Bangalore Municipal Corporation. I met her for the first time at the weekly meeting of the *Powrakarmika* (street sweepers'/garbage collectors') union. During the meeting I noticed Vanaja constantly pulling out a handkerchief that was tucked away in the folds of her faded and frayed blue *saree* to dab at her eyes. Vanaja told me that it was over 4 years ago that her eyes had started to water, profusely and continually. She doesn't quite know what is wrong but thinks it is the result of the toxics she is exposed to during the course of her workday. But there is no way to conclusively determine this. Detailed studies to probe the health risks faced by Powrakarmikas have never been commissioned. The Indian state, which regularly churns out copious amounts of data on an array of subjects, hasn't bothered to enumerate the working and living

conditions of Powrakarmikas. A 2002 report produced by the Support Group for Powrakarmikas (a Bangalore-based group comprising human rights and labor activists; hereafter SGP) provides some rudimentary details on their work-related health risks. The report finds that on account of routine exposure to workplace hazards Powrakarmikas are at increased risk of developing skin allergies and irritations, dermatological problems, and respiratory ailments. The report provides a glimpse into the occupational safety hazards of street sweepers. But, the limited resources of groups such as SGP prevent them from investigating the full nature and extent of health risks. Without "credible" data from toxicity studies that could be used to demand medical treatment and compensation from authorities, municipal workers like Vanaja must simply suffer their symptoms in silence.

She says of her eyes: "*okaoka turi nipullu vachestayi*" ("sometimes they burn like hot coal"). On these occasions, the pain is unbearable. The prescribed medicine only provides temporary relief. The doctor who kindly attended to her is the brother of a volunteer from SGP. He told her she needs surgery. But Vanaja says she can't afford it. She explained that with her (meager) salary she supports a married daughter and a grandson born with congenital defects. She is not entitled to sick leave—contract workers work all 7 days of the week—and worries that she will not be able to pay for medical expenses and take care of her daughter and grandson on unpaid leave. Furthermore, when she has taken unpaid time off it has been for the arduous task of tracking down free medical clinics and patrons that could help her grandson.

Even a casual visit to Delhi or Bangalore reveals a congested, pockmarked landscape, disrupted by the physical and human debris of rapid change. This "eviscerating urbanism", as we previously noted, is composed of three intersecting forces: a "parasitic urbanization" that is colonizing the land and ecology of the surrounding countryside; a "speculative urbanization" that is relentlessly and disruptively transforming wasteful spaces in the urban catchment into spaces of value; and a "techno-ecological urbanization" that is producing two different sets of urban ecologies and populations, those worthy of caring and those not. Planners and developers in Bangalore and Delhi summon a variety of imperatives to justify this process.

We are told that Bangalore's infrastructure is in disrepair. The city's dominance in IT is under threat (Heitzman 2004).[16] Delhi's lungs are dying. Its "heritage" is threatened by overcrowding. The city must be made "clean and green" (a popular refrain in street hoardings and newspaper articles). Delhi's latest Master Plan (MPD 2021) asserts that, "Vision-2021 is to make Delhi a global metropolis and a world-class city, where all the people would be engaged in productive work with a better quality of life, living in a sustainable environment" (Puri 2007:1).

Noble sentiments, until we read on. Among other ambitions, Delhi's planners want to boost its prospects for an Olympic Games bid in 2020. As a prelude to this ambition, Delhi played hosted to the 2010 Commonwealth Games in October. In preparation for this spectacle, the city underwent a massive facelift. Amidst allegations of massive corruption by sports authorities and public agencies charged with staging the Games, the Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi and Delhi's municipal authorities used the event as cover to evict the city's poor from street occupations and slums. The human toll of the Games is yet to be audited. But this latest instance of "spectacular dispossession" should evoke no surprise. After all, the city's current Master Plan 2021 maintains that slums compromise the "quality of life" in Delhi. They are labeled "urban hazards" and a "nuisance" to law-abiding residents (Batra 2008; Ghertner 2008). The MPD 2021's anti-poor agenda imagines a city that will be "slumless". Demolitions and evictions have been regularly carried out under Delhi High Court directives since 2002, often with the flimsiest of rationales. In February and April 2004, for instance, in a police-supervised demolition drive several thousand residents were evicted from a slum settlement called Kanchanpuri.

The eviction drive came on the heels of an announcement by the Tourism Ministry of the Government of India stating its intent to develop a 100-acre strip of land on the banks of the river Yamuna into a riverside promenade with parks and fountains, which would be marketed as major tourist attractions (Sen and Bhan 2009). The Delhi High Court, which ordered the slum removal, declared in its eviction order that the slums were an encroachment on the Yamuna riverbed. But the Court willfully ignored other illegal structures serving wealthier communities and their interests, such as the massive and recently constructed Akshardham Temple complex, the Metro Rail Headquarters, and the Commonwealth Games Village. The court order supplied a second reason for slum removal—that the slums were polluting the Yamuna River, a major source of Delhi's drinking water supply. This, again, ignored available evidence from a pollution study by the Delhi-based NGO Hazard Centre, which pointed out that the total discharge from the 300,000 residents of the Yamuna riverbed settlement accounted only for 0.33% of total sewage released into the river.[17] The evicted residents were denied a court hearing.

Bangalore reveals a similar double standard. A number of IT start-ups are located in residential areas like Indiranagar, Jeevanbhimanagar and Koramangala in violation of the zoning laws that proscribe the establishment of commercial offices in residential areas (Ribeiro 2005). According to one study nearly 50% of Bangalore's IT firms (mostly smaller companies) are located in such residential areas (Aranya 2003). Bob Hoekstra, the Chief Executive Officer of Philips Innovation Centre

until his departure from India in 2005, once asked Bangaloreans to be "flexible" in their attitudes towards such IT infringement. Hoekstra justified his plea, explaining that "software startups have usually started up from residences, and we can't kill this aspect of the city that has contributed to its entrepreneurship and growth" (quoted in Ribeiro 2005). Bangaloreans (including authorities) have been remarkably accommodating of the IT sector's illegalities. Eviction drives against IT start-ups have never been conducted.

Not surprisingly, the same "flexibility" hasn't been extended to poor entrepreneurs such as hawkers and petty traders. In fact, activists say that the frequency and severity of eviction drives against poor entrepreneurs have intensified. In recent years, Bangalore's municipal administration has launched eviction drives—the "Public First" campaign, for example—to remove hawkers from pavements and courtyards of shopping complexes on the grounds that street traders use city space in violation of master plans and restrict the right of public to move freely (Narayanan 2005). Neither the state nor the captains of IT who fervently urge the public to overlook IT illegality in the name of entrepreneurship have come forward to defend the rights of Bangalore's poorer entrepreneurs.

We could parade a number of other imperatives, and they all raise the same question. *In whose name are these various imperatives invoked*? Is it the beggars who are ejected from entertainment complexes, the sidewalk vendors whose wares are leveled, the footpath dwellers who have nowhere else to go, residents of slums whose habitations are demolished as part of urban beautification schemes, the petty industries that are evicted from city limits, the displaced workers who are relocated in makeshift dwellings 20 km outside city borders, even as parks and green areas are selectively built and maintained, ultra-modern office complexes erupt across the landscape, glittering malls and multiplexes proliferate, and gated communities and "secure" high-rise apartments become can't-live-without selling propositions for the urban bourgeoisie?

*In whose name*? The foregoing instances reveal the patrician agenda of urban planning, where public imperatives are selectively invoked in order to advance elite interests. At times, the bias becomes explicit in official documents. Consider, again, Delhi's current Master Plan. In a section titled "Framework for sub-regional development" we encounter this injunction: "Industrial growth in Delhi should be restricted to high-tech with emphasis on units, which require skill, less manpower and energy and do not create pollution/nuisance." Furthermore: "Legal and fiscal measures should be adopted to restrict employment in industries and distributive trade" (Puri 2007:6).

City master plans, judicial rulings, and municipal ordinances have become the preeminent tactics of sovereign power for the "urban reform"

agenda in India's metropolises. Massive investment in infrastructure in order to produce an urban landscape of "smooth spaces" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) that will facilitate flows of people, commodities, and ideas within the new urban economy's circuits of accumulation is a cornerstone of this reform project. From an infrastructural point of view, present-day metropolitan India is a network of highways and fast bypass roads, overpasses, bridges and tunnels which weave over and under one another in an attempt to engrave a compartmentalized geography—what Frantz Fanon, in a different context, called "the principle of reciprocal exclusivity" (Fanon 1963 [1961]:39). The "haves" of the New Economy have their ecology sets and zones of existence, and the "have-nots" theirs. Flows and encounters between these two bodies are confined, whenever possible, to well defined contact zones. Any spillage beyond sanctioned sites of encounter becomes a source of anxiety for the "haves".

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh inadvertently acknowledged the striating effect of "smooth spaces" in remarks delivered in 2006, at the groundbreaking ceremony of the Electronic City elevated highway project in Bangalore. He proclaimed:

> Today, we need this elevated highway above so that those who function in a fast moving and rapidly growing economy can keep pace with the competition they face. I am sure a day will come when every highway and road will enable faster movement. *The dualism that this project represents is a transitory phenomenon of development*. In time, we want an India in which every one of us can move along the same highway. That is my dream (Singh 2006; our italics).

The four-lane Electronic City elevated highway opened in January 2010. This elevated highway allows IT workers commuting to Electronic City (Bangalore's earliest and still most prominent IT park) to "leapfrog" their way across congested, chaotic traffic and shave-off anywhere between 20 and 60 minutes from their daily commute. In contrast, the denizens of the old economy are not so lucky. They have to plough through traffic on older roads that run parallel to the elevated highway, their movements interrupted by numerous traffic intersections that allow people who live and work on either side of the extant road to enter and exit. The "have-nots" can experience the pleasure of seamless travel on the elevated highway, provided they pay steep toll fees that Bangalore's affluent IT salariat can readily afford. Net result: a *chronopolitics* that sanctions speed for some, relative immobility for others. Or, as Jeremy Rifkin observed many years ago in *Time Wars*:

> Political tyranny in every culture begins by devaluing the time of others. Indeed, the exploitation of human beings is only possible in pyramidical time cultures, where rulership is always based in the

proposition that some people's time is more valuable and other people's time more expendable (1987:196–197).

The Electronic City elevated highway is but one in a suite of projects launched by the state government in its attempt to overhaul the city's infrastructure. The IT tsars of Bangalore's New Economy, in addition to lamenting land scarcity, have maintained a steady drone of complaints about the city's crumbling infrastructure. In 2005, Bangalore's flagship IT companies, who are credited with putting the city (and India) on the global map, threatened to boycott the annual IT fair designed to showcase Bangalore as a destination for IT investment (Ribeiro 2005). The threat was intended to draw attention to the state government's repeated failure to address the infrastructure priorities of the IT sector. A year later in 2006, Siemens, one of the earliest multinationals to set up shop in Bangalore, put a freeze on the company's local expansion plans. In announcing this, the CEO of Siemens complained: "Bangalore is in a mess. The road and power infrastructure is chaotic . . . If workers reach office tired after spending long hours on the road, efficiency will come down" (*The Hindu* 11 February 2006). In 2007–2008, the growth of software exports from Karnataka fell below the national average, raising the specter of a permanent decline in Bangalore's dominance of India's IT sector (Abrar 2008). The prospect of diminishing productivity of its knowledge workers, corporations halting their expansion plans for Bangalore, and IT flight due to crumbling infrastructure are all pressed into service by state authorities as justification for massive urban transportation reforms, and the large-scale demolitions and displacements that inevitably accompany these.

Initially, the state's preferred strategies for overhauling the city's transportation network revolved around constructing flyovers and widening roads (frequently without adequate attention to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists). Increasingly though the state views these as mere "palliatives" that fail to comprehensively address Bangalore's transportation challenges. As part of a "big picture" approach to transportation (which is detailed in the 2006 *City Development Plan for Bangalore*) the government is now building Bangalore Metro Rail, the city's first non-bus based mass transit service. In the future, Bangalore hopes to tap into federal funds and undertake several mega-projects that will girdle the city within a system of concentric ring roads. A core ring road, an intermediate ring road, an outer ring road, and a peripheral ring road dissected by arterial roads are all in the works.

Displacement, dualism and exclusion are inter-braided logics in these projects. With their bias toward fostering the work and lifestyles of the city's elite Bangalore's mega-projects promise to engrave ever more deeply the compartmentalized geography that has come to mark the urban landscape. NGOs such as the Environmental Support Group

(ESG) have observed that only the relatively well-off will be able to afford the city's new transit systems (such as its toll highways and metro rail service). Furthermore, the Environment Support Group (2008) notes that only car owners will benefit from the decongestion of roads because even though state authorities acknowledge the pressing need to provide lanes for pedestrians and cyclists, in practice no such lanes have been built or planned. Indeed, the opposite has happened. The construction demands of giant transportation projects have led to loss of pavements and bicycle paths, placing additional burden on the urban poor. The Environment Support Group contends that the disruptions to life and movement from the rash of road building will increase the cost of living of the poor, and potentially deprive many of them of their places of dwelling and livelihood. Bangalore Metro, for instance, will dislodge 300 slum dwellers, 1500 shopkeepers and numerous hawkers (CASUMM 2007). Similarly, activists fear that the proposal to decongest the central city by widening roads will displace 5000 traders, in addition to several thousand workers and street vendors (Chamraj 2008).

It is easy to forget that city roads are an important, even critical, commons for the urban poor: places to fabricate wares, ply trades, rest, congregate, dream, love, and live. Far more than mere arteries of movement, they are means of production and reproduction. The latticework of life itself. Their enclosure eviscerates this lifeworld. "Eviscerating urbanism" is also, then, a "splintering urbanism" (Graham and Marvin 2001)—*a regime of disengagement*. And here we invoke the word "regime" in the precise sense of the political theorist Claude Lefort (1986): "regime" as the manner of shaping human co-existence that has implicit geographies and forms of sociality. Obviously, we could extend this definition to cover human and non-human associations in the city as several geographers and actor-network sociologists have begun to. The effected "dualism" of mega infrastructure projects may be an issue for Prime Minister Manmohan Singh; but for proponents of "urban reform" it is has been at best a peripheral concern. To politicians, planners, municipal officials, construction companies, and real estate developers large infrastructure projects are opportunities for accumulation and revenue generation, through patronage, speculation, contracts, and user fees.

## The Afterlives of Waste

John Locke seems very distant to these ongoing urban transformations. Of what possible relevance could he be? He was writing, after all, in the seventeenth century. This is a perfectly valid question if we engage with him in what Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) has called the time of history, or Althusser and Balibar (1998 [1970]) the time of "synchrony" and

"diachrony", where the chain of historical causality must be direct and determinate. But if instead we agree with Michel Serres (1995) that time is multiple, that it has foldings . . . then distant events can become quite proximate, like two distant points on a flat sheet of paper do when that sheet of paper is crumpled. The Euclidean distance of historical time is supplanted by the non-Euclidean distance of genealogical time: *a time that maps the conditions of possibility of thoughts and conducts in the present*.

Let us pause here to dismiss a possible misconception. It is true that Locke serves as something of a foil. Obviously, we are not attempting to suggest that colonialism or liberalism or capitalism or development would not have happened in the absence of Locke. Rather the substantive argument, which we have already tried to anticipate, is that "India" has been produced in various ways and at various historical junctures by interventions designed to manage "waste". Similarly, the "eviscerating urbanism" that is transforming cities like Delhi and Bangalore is today repeating with difference an old battle against "waste". In its negative figurations "waste" has continued to function as a placeholder for material excess; or to put it another way, excess matter. *Wasteful "natures"—bodies, spaces, conducts—have to be territorialized for ordered "society"—the society of law that safeguards property and value—to be possible*. "Waste", as we have demonstrated, is not a trans-historical given, either in form or content; rather, it is mobile description of that which has been cast out or judged superfluous in a particular space–time. *It is a technical and political artifact* that gathers force in its performativity (this point is powerfully demonstrated by Hudson and Yates in their contributions to this special issue).

Law, working through its sovereign exceptions, has becomes the bio-political tactic *par excellence* for achieving social order. Propertied urban residents, fearful that Delhi is sliding into chaos, are filing environmental litigations to preserve green areas and heritage sites, curb polluting industries within city limits, and evict squatters and street hawkers. Property developers, construction companies, and the Delhi Development Administration are employing old and new ordinances to acquire "old and dilapidated areas of the city" for the purposes of urban "up-gradation" (Puri 2007:1)—code word for retail commercial and upscale housing projects. The judiciary is actively collaborating in conjuring a state of emergency to justify punitive actions against the urban underclass (as witnessed in recent decisions by the Delhi High Court and the Supreme Court of India, although this judicial ethos is now under scrutiny).

Despite these persistent efforts at eradication, "waste" has not subsided. Between Delhi's overcrowded colonies with their abysmal sanitation on the one hand, and furious growth in middle and upper

class consumption on the other, the city now confronts unprecedented levels of residual matter that is able, in some instances, to support unwanted, often deadly, urban micro-ecologies. Recent outbreaks of dengue in Delhi (dengue is now a recurring feature of metropolitan life and it does not discriminate between rich and poor) underscore the emerging hazardscapes of eviscerating urbanism.

Waste is also emerging in new forms. As different types of packaging flood consumer markets the composition of solid municipal waste has changed dramatically in recent years, with poorly understood economic and environmental consequences. In Bangalore, the city's IT sector—which uses state-of-the art hardware to connect India to global centers of electronic capitalism—now generates voluminous quantities, between 6000 and 8000 tons per annum, of new detritus: *electronic waste* (*Deccan Herald* 2005). Electronic waste (or e-waste) refers to electronic equipment that has become obsolete. It is highly toxic, containing substances like lead, beryllium, cadmium and mercury. Approximately 30% of the computers used in Bangalore's IT sector become obsolete every year, a statistic that has provoked fears among some environmentalists that Bangalore may soon become a "cyber wasteland". But so far the city has avoided that dire fate, thanks in large part to an informal network of scrap dealers and recyclers, hailing from Bangalore's marginalized Muslim communities, who have collected, segregated, processed and disposed the remains of electronic capitalism since the late 1980s.

Their labor exemplifies David Harvey's adage of "the body as an accumulation strategy" (Harvey 2000). The e-waste is first meticulously stripped in order to retrieve reusable working components, such as integrated circuit chips, functional hard drives, motherboards. Second, non-working parts are stripped and separated into recyclable streams, such as plastic, glass and metal. Finally, the e-waste workers process computer parts like integrated circuit chips in chemicals, in an effort to recover traces of precious metals like gold and silver. The toil of informal recyclers and scrap dealer ensures that e-waste is recuperated as value within multiple secondary circuits of capital. But at a steep cost. Toxicology studies (Brigden et al 2005) show that e-waste recyclers and dismantlers are at increased risk of developing skin ailments, kidney damage (from mercury), respiratory ailments (through inhalation of cadmium dust) and cancer (through inhalation of beryllium and cadmium dust and fumes). As workers absorb many of these toxins the hazardscape of e-waste is markedly different from that of municipal waste. As a rule, e-waste toxins are interred in the bodies of workers—contributing to chronic illness, long-term morbidity, and delayed outbreak of symptoms. But because the toxins are unlikely to trigger imminent public health catastrophes, concerned authorities have adopted a policy of benign neglect.

The bodies of e-waste workers have, quite literally, subsidized the disposal of Bangalore's IT waste since the sector's inception. But their livelihoods have become increasingly perilous in recent years. In 2004, the Swiss and German development agencies, SECO and GTZ,[18] launched a partnership with the state and federal Pollution Control Boards (PCBs) to streamline and modernize Bangalore's e-waste disposal practices. The initiative required that Bangalore's informal sector recyclers be authorized by varied regulatory agencies in order to collect and process e-waste. Furthermore, the initiative was tilted in favor of large-scale recycling companies on the grounds that only they could realize economies of scale and recycle e-waste efficiently. This led the collaborative to support the establishment of a private, large-scale formal recycling unit named E-Parisaraa. IT companies were urged to hand over e-waste to E-Parisaraa and shun informal e-waste workers. In 2008 the collaborative set up a central collection point for e-waste in Electronic City. E-Parisaraa was granted exclusive rights to collect e-waste from the collection point under a business-to-business agreement with the collaborative, thereby further monopolizing channels of e-waste sequestration and processing.

Populations that are in the process of being rendered superfluous, such as Bangalore's e-waste workers and Delhi's waste pickers, pose political and managerial problems for municipal authorities and planners. Consider Delhi. Its population today is about 22 times what it was about nine decades ago. Anywhere between 300,000 and 500,000 migrants are estimated to migrate into the National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCTD) every year. The fortunate end up living in authorized and unauthorized slum colonies and *jhuggi-jhopari* clusters that encircle the metropolis. At last count, there were about 1500 illegal colonies and 1000 slums in Delhi accounting for nearly a third of its 13 million plus inhabitants—that's 4 million people, give or take a few hundred thousand. The unfortunate become pavement dwellers. Living conditions in Delhi's slums are squalid: 44% have only open, makeshift drainage or none at all; 69% have no waste disposal amenity; and almost 90% of inhabitants are forced to use either ill-maintained and overcrowded public toilets or open spaces to urinate and defecate (Sundar, Mahal and Sharma 2002). Lack of civic amenities such as clean drinking water, sewer systems, and access to clean cooking fuels such as liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) means high risks of morbidity for slum residents, over and above the travails of daily employment. Slum dwellings are also characterized by poor ventilation leading to extremely high levels of indoor air pollution resulting from cooking with "dirty fuels" such as biomass and kerosene. Smoke emissions from these fuels are a significant source of indoor pollutants such as particulate matter (PM), carbon monoxide, polyaromatic hydrocarbons, such as benzo(a)pyrene, as well as $SO_x$ and trace metals (Kandlikar and Ramachandran 2000).

Greater Bangalore presently has a population of 5.5 million. According to the 2006 *City Development Plan*, 1.48 million people—nearly a third of the total—reside in slums, 542 of them (unofficially, the number is closer to 1000). Conditions in Bangalore's slums, like Delhi's, are squalid. A report produced by the Community Health Cell shows that 33.5–55% of children under the age of 6 living in Bangalore's slums are moderately to severely malnourished (cited in Benjamin 2000). The infant mortality rate of children in slums is estimated to be 120 per 1000 live births compared with 46 per 1000 live births for the State of Karnataka as a whole. In short, sickness, neglect, depression, violence, and death are quotidian realities for the urban poor of Delhi and Bangalore.

## Conclusions

Two ecology sets: on the one side, a way of life that churns out growing quantities of "waste"; on the other, lives that live off this commodity detritus. On the one side, lives whose labor is valued and rewarded; on the other, lives that are of utter indifference to global circuits of capital. Lives worth preserving, lives easily abandoned (cf Bauman 2004, Wright 2006). Valuable lives, wasted lives; and mapped onto these, valuable spaces and spaces designated as wasteful. Colonizing and re-making wasted spaces as valuable spaces, excluding from political citizenship those whose labors are not counted. This is the juggernaut we call "eviscerating urbanism", and its enabling ideology—however unlikely it may seem—lies in seventeenth-century England.

India's urban present, as we have mentioned, is a *post-development formation*. Its regime of co-existence, if it can be so dignified, is no longer a strictly governmental one. Governmental power presupposes nominal engagement with the subjects whose lives it seeks to manage and cultivate; or, as Giorgio Agamben (1998) puts it, the life of potential, "bare life" (*zoe*), that power seeks to take up in various ways in order to make it proper life (*bios*).

In *Politics of the Governed* (2004), Partha Chatterjee argues that the Indian state, hamstrung by limited resources, operates in a peculiar mode. It confronts a population of which the majority is de facto denied the full privileges of citizenship. But since the state cannot afford to address this population on uniform terms, it addresses itself serially and selectively to informal representations by excluded groups—on terms that are particularistic and exceptional rather than universal. Groups who find themselves outside the ambit of formal citizenship rights attempt to summon the moral charge of "community" in order to stake claims to state-held resources. There are no fixed or rational protocols of negotiation. Rather the terrain of negotiation is given by a fluid set of norms. It is a peculiar liberal polity that continuously

produces sets of vulnerable citizen-subjects who are assured of neither status.

Still, Chatterjee's argument assumes that the informal realm of state negotiation *retains its populace within an ethical discourse, even if legal rights are effectively denied them*. But as Arvind Rajagopal (2001) has noted, this may not be a tenable assumption. An ethical discourse implies engagement, or at the very least, the desire for it. Today, neither the apparatuses of the state, nor the urban bourgeoisie, seek this social engagement.[19] What we have instead is the emergence of a fitful and individualized "moral economy" that operates through new forms of patronage.

This emerging and individualized "moral economy" barely compensates for the brutality of the urban present. The casual evictions of street vendors and slum dwellers in Bangalore; the killings of vulnerable migrant children on the outskirts of Delhi; the stories of street children eliminated by police in Mumbai; or the mysterious disappearances of ragpickers in police lock-ups in Delhi are, we suggest, not anomalies. They are rather applications of the supplementary, violent, order of "police" that has *always* co-existed with the ethical order of "police" as *salus publica*—the wellbeing of the public—that we encounter in different guises in the writings of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham, the order of "police" that Michel Foucault identified as the wellspring of governmental power.

In this supplementary order of "police" excess matter—"waste"—is either expelled or else violently absorbed through primitive accumulation when it becomes a threat to the liberal social order of "property" and "economy". Often the excess matter is "surplus humanity" that is *superfluous* to a regime of capitalist value. When it cannot be easily expelled it is simply abandoned, thrust into a zone of indistinction where it is regulated but not considered worth redeeming.

This is not the "civil society" John Locke imagined, but it is the prospect that has always been present since the time he anointed the improvement of "waste" as its founding instance.

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## Endnotes

[1] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari say this about minor languages: "Minor languages do not exist in themselves: they exist only in relation to a major language and are also investments of that language for the purpose of making it minor" (1987:105). Our

invocation of a "minor" history of "waste"—a becoming that is always in relation to a stratified "major" history, in this case of "value"—follows exactly.

[2] See also Li (1997) for parallel insights from a different colonial context, the Dutch East Indies.

[3] In this articulation also lies the explanation for why contemporary neoliberals are able to assert a causal link between "human rights" and "democracy" and the spread of the "free market". For a suggestive exploration of this, see Talal Asad (2003).

[4] As to the issue of "permanence", this lay in the intent expressed in the Bengal Code of Regulations of 1793 to fix the revenue assessment for the duration of a zamindar's lifetime on the grounds that this expectation of stability was crucial in inducing the landowner to make "improvements in agriculture which are essential to their own welfare as to the prosperity of the state" (Cornwallis, quoted in Stokes 1959:6; for a superb analysis of the Permanent Settlement, see Guha 1996 [1963]).

[5] Governor General's Minute, 18 September 1789, in Firminger (1917, vol 2:512). Also see H Colebrooke's Minute (no date, vol 1:420) (microfiche).

[6] James Grant, "An historical and comparative analysis of the finances of Bengal," in Firminger (1917, vol 2:276).

[7] Locke writes: "God gave the World to Men in Common; but since he gave it them for their benefit and the greatest Conveniences of life they were capable to draw from it, it cannot be supposed he meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. He gave it to the use of the Industrious and Rational . . ." (1988 [1681]:291, §34).

[8] We say "proto-capitalist" because the term "capitalism" only enters language around the mid-nineteenth century. For an argument that dissents from ours here, see Vaughn (1978).

[9] These estimates are from the IL & FS Ecosmart City Development Plan (CDP) prepared for the Delhi government in 2007 as part of funding guidelines stipulated under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). See: http://www.ccsindia.org/ccsindia/pdf/Ch12_Solid%20Waste%20Management.pdf (last accessed 3 May 2009).

[10] Personal communication with Bharati Chaturvedi, Director, Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group, 15 September 2008.

[11] Quoted in Aman Sethi (2006).

[12] An IT-specific SEZ is already under construction in Mangalore, a coastal city in Karnataka. Infosys has obtained the permit to build the Mangalore SEZ and, according to CASUMM, lands other than "wastelands" have been acquired for its construction.

[13] Also see the collection of papers on India's Insular Urbanism in the November 2007 special issue of the German architectural journal *Archplus* (Herresthal et al 2007).

[14] Points of reference here are Michel Foucault 1990, esp pp 135–159 and 2003.

[15] Baviskar (2003) makes a compatible argument; Mawdsley (2004) disaggregates middle-class environmentalism.

[16] Heitzman (2004) notes that in response to the growing competition from other Indian cities the state government rolled out the "Karnataka Information Technology Policy" in 1996 and a revamped "Millennium IT Policy" was released in 2000 to bolster the flagging IT investment in the city.

[17] It is instructive to read more fully from a June 2004 report compiled by the Delhi-based advocacy group Hazards Centre on the Yamuna Pushta evictions, which displaced several thousand slum dwellers squatting in the floodzone of the Yamuna River that demarcates Delhi's eastern boundary. The report provides background for a court filing by the non-governmental organization (NGO) challenging the evictions. It says: "The Yamuna Pushta forced evictions have come as a result of certain Delhi High Court decisions, particularly in Okhla Factory Owner's Association vs. Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (CWP 4441/1994), Pitampura Sudhar Samiti vs. Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (CWP 4215/1995), and Wazirpur

Bartan Nirmata Sangh vs. Union of India (CWP 2112/2002). These petitions, filed mostly by factory owners and resident welfare associations serving communities adjacent to the slums, essentially asked for the removal of slum clusters from their particular areas. The petitions ignored that the slum clusters were created to house the labourers working in those industrial areas, as there was no workers' housing provided by the industries. However, the High Court went beyond the ambit of the particular petitions and ruled, in November 2002, that all those who had settled in slums anywhere in the city of Delhi after 1990 should be evicted and not given any "free" land for resettlement. The Court's direction came in spite of available evidence that the residents of the slum clusters had no alternative housing options and that government agencies had provided only 35% of mandated housing, and that each "resettled" family was paying Rs. 7,000 (€134) for a license to a tiny plot of land for five to ten years. Moreover, the statutory fee of Rs 7,000 for a plot sizing 12.5 sq.m. and 18 sq.m. was charged only by MCD [Municipal Corporation of Delhi]. The DDA [Delhi Development Authority] has a four-tiered rate structure that provides a 12.5 sq.m. plot for Rs 5,000, a corner plot in 12.5 sq.m. block for Rs. 14,000, a 18 sq.m. for Rs. 7,000 and a corner plot in 18 sq.m. block for Rs. 20,000. Meanwhile, DDA has no records to show the imposition of such arbitrary rate structures. Due to public uproar against its ruling, the government was forced to approach the Supreme Court, which stayed its implementation in March 2003. However, in March 2003 the Delhi High Court held another hearing in the original matter and issued a separate order directing the DDA to remove all unauthorised constructions along the banks of the River Yamuna. There have been four subsequent appeals against this order in both the High Court, as well as the Supreme Court. The Courts summarily have dismissed all these appeals. It is important to note that in no case has the court acknowledged the slum dwellers' right to be heard.
One of the grounds for the Delhi High Court order for slum removal was encroachment on the Yamuna River bed. However, the Court ignored other illegal structures serving wealthier communities and their interests, such as the Akshardham Temple, the Metro Rail Headquarters, and the Commonwealth Games Village. The second official reason was that the slums were polluting the river. This, again, ignored available evidence from a report on pollution by Hazard Centre, which pointed out that the total discharge from the 300,000 residents of Yamuna Pushta accounted for only 0.33% of the total sewage released into the river. Thus, this suggests that removal of these slum clusters would not substantially curb pollution. Slum dwellers and NGOs working on urban issues in Delhi have reason to believe that the prime land made available from the forced eviction will … be developed for commercial and tourism purposes by the urban development authorities."

[18] SECO stands for the Switzerland State Secretariat for Economic Affairs and GTZ stands for German Technical Cooperation.

[19] In a recent article, Partha Chatterjee acknowledges the presence of marginalized groups who "represent an outside beyond the boundaries of political society" (2008:61)—in short, groups that are unable to make claims on the state and whom the state can therefore disavow.

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