

ZONE O & MPD 2041



Photo credits: Anubhav Pradhan

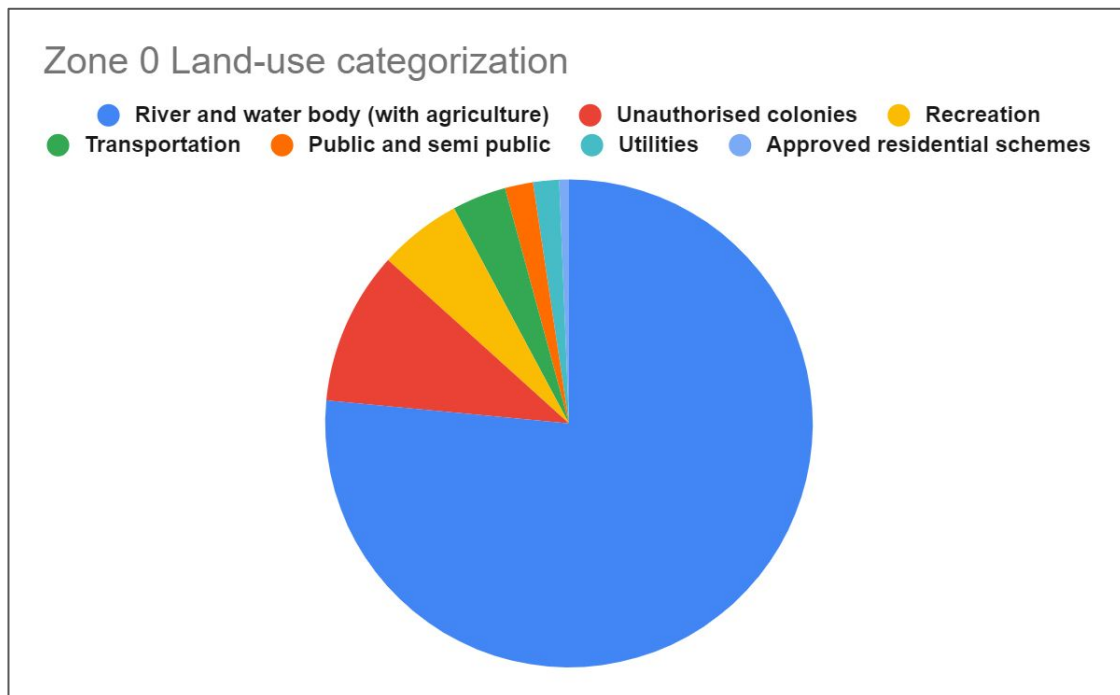
The urgent need to integrate the Yamuna and its floodplains into the larger life of Delhi's citizens has been recognised not just by researchers but also by planning documents like the Zone O ZDP and MPD 2021. Successive master plans have conceptualised the floodplains in terms of their monetary and aesthetic value, as zones of recreation and leisure which in reality acts as an important space for agricultural work and housing. The next plan should reimagine this as an accessible public site and take into account the needs of the residents who live and work there.

Main Bhi Dilli is a people's campaign aiming to envision and enable a more inclusive city. It is a collective of civil society organisations, activists, researchers and others who work on diverse issues of housing, livelihood, gender and other rights.

ZONE O IN THE CITY

Various studies have found the Yamuna to be highly contaminated with untreated sewage and industrial effluents and this has remained so in spite of massive spending by the Government of India and the governments of Haryana, Delhi, and UP to clean the river.

Successive master plans have conceptualised the floodplains in terms of their monetary and aesthetic value, as zones of recreation and leisure. In the past two decades, this discourse has been repositioned with judicial diktats and environmental activism to incorporate growing concerns on extreme pollution and resultant ecological degradation in the river and its floodplains. Consequently, planning documents such as the Zone O, ZDP and *MPD 2021* now include ecological restoration of the Yamuna and its floodplains through wetland creation and afforestation as a key priority in the rejuvenation of these natural assets of Zone O. The ZDP states that rejuvenating the Yamuna as Delhi's lifeline is its basic goal, and proposes measures and land uses specific to each of the eight sub-zones within Zone O.

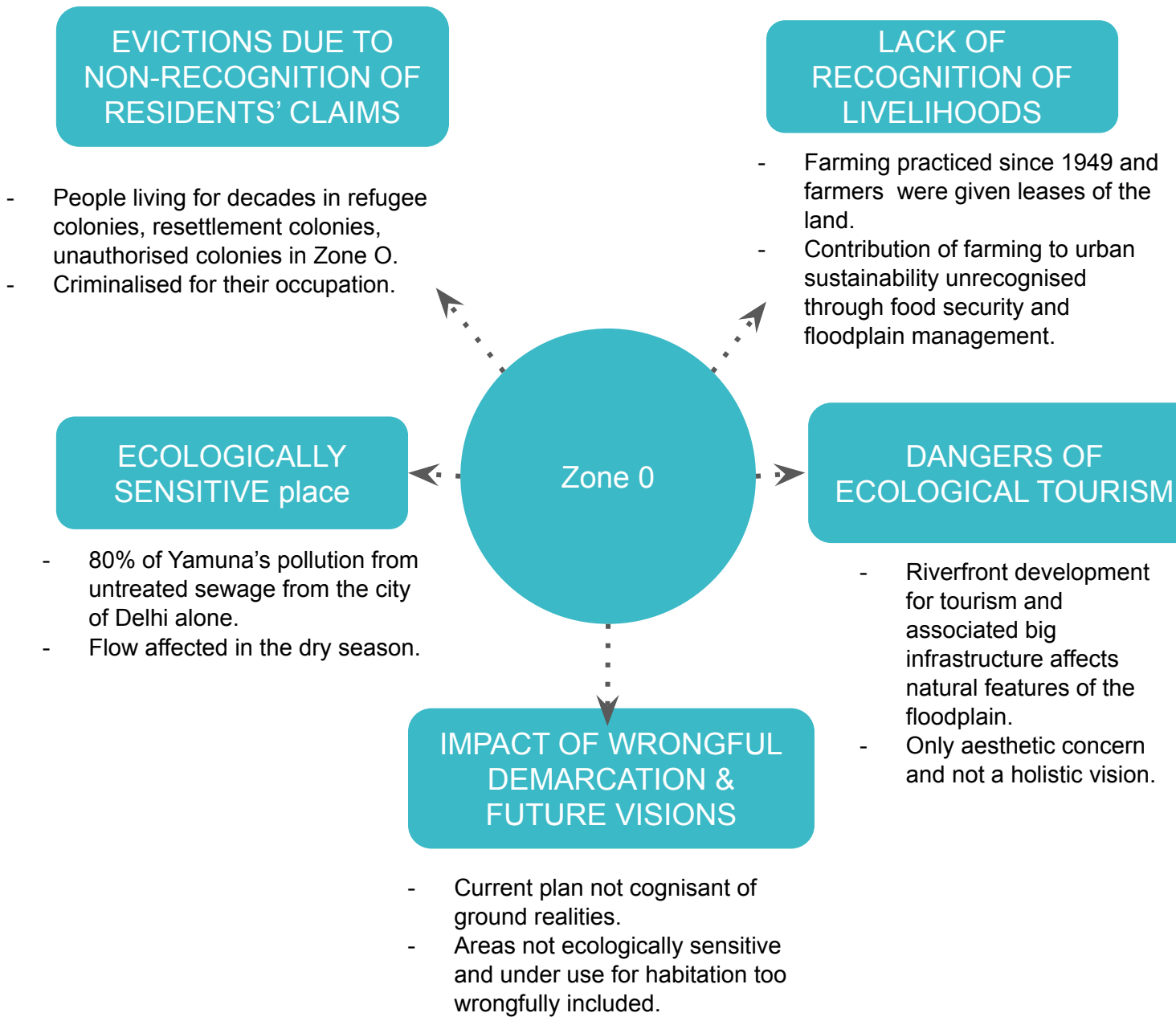


Source: DDA Zonal Development Plan

Unfortunately, most of these planning imaginaries do not acknowledge ground realities when pushing these aspirational agendas for this region. What has been zoned as green area is home to lakhs of people, many of whom are farmers who have been there since the 1940s. Many bastis within Zone O were demolished between 2000 and 2004 and an estimated 8 lakh residents were displaced. Only 16%, or 1.28 lakh, of these displaced residents received plots as per the then resettlement policy.

Simultaneously, though, sewage treatment capacity is still to be augmented to desired levels despite heavy investment of public funds: DJB's interceptor sewage project, which has already cost more than ₹ 3000 crores, has missed multiple deadlines and is nine years past its initial inauguration date in 2010.

KEY ISSUES



WHAT CAN MPD '41 DO FOR ZONE O?

1 INCLUSIVE VISION FOR ZONE O IN MPD 2041

- Acknowledging presence of housing and livelihoods and their rightful claimants- to be included as equal partners for protecting the ecology.
- Based on principle of Intergenerational Equity expounded by the NGT in OA 6-2012 along with the Right to the City endorsed by the Delhi High Court in W.P. (C) 11616/2015
- Yamuna river and floodplains as an urban common.

2 MAPPING OF ZONE O

- Physical and satellite mapping as mandated by the NGT and others which identifies all existing land uses.

3 INCORPORATION & REPURPOSING OF EXISTING LAND USES

- Recognition of seasonal farming.
- Creation of wetlands and biodiversity zones only in areas not under cultivation.
- Farming to be brought under the ambit of DDA's YFRD Plan as per MoEF's Expert Committee recommendations.
- Existing institutional structure of cooperative societies to be revived and repurposed for settling farmers' claims to land and managing agriculture in this region.

4 HOLISTIC ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

- Yamuna's drainage system — including drains, wetlands, lakes, and ponds — to be accorded the same protections as Zone O and developed as ecological assets and urban public commons for neighbouring residential communities.
- Existing NGT guidelines to be followed against the concretisation of drains and creation of buffer zones.
- Rigorous EIA and SIA of any further transportation infrastructure and/or utilities proposed in Zone O.
- Defunct Rajghat Power Plant to be given back to the city and developed as a Yamuna Museum and Botanical Garden.
- Time-bound augmentation of the city's sewage treatment capacity will allow for other riverine livelihoods, such as fishing, to become viable again.
- Ensuring no sewage enters the Yamuna from any of the major or other minor drains, and preventing construction debris from being dumped in or by the river.

5 DEVELOPMENT FOR CULTURAL REVIVAL

- Major ghats such as Yamuna Bazaar and Wazirabad/ Majnu ka Tila to be notified for cultural tourism potential.
- Area specific heritage bylaws to be notified for these ghats, to regulate construction and infrastructure provisioning in lieu of seasonal flooding of the Yamuna.