A New Conceptual Framework for Understanding Displacement: Bridging the Gaps in Displacement Literature between the Global South and the Global North

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Abstract

Forced displacement caused by development has become a global pressing issue. This article critically reviews the literature on urban displacement and discerns two divides, related to terminology and Global North-South divide. To overcome these gaps, we propose a new conceptual framework of urban displacement that positions the experience of being displaced at the center. By setting aside preconceptions based on terminology or the Global North/South divide, this article articulates five concepts encapsulating meaningful aspects of being displaced: power, positionality, eligibility, temporality, and resistance. This framework shows that while urban displacement has different economic, social, and political contexts, the experience of being displaced has shared global qualities.

Keywords

displacement, seeing from the south, Global South, Global North, planning theory

Forced displacement caused by development has become a pressing issue in recent years. The year 2018 alone presented the highest figures of displacement yet, as approximately 70.8 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide that year (UNHCR 2019). More specifically, urban development causes the displacement of millions of people every year, and the proportion of displaced urban residents is rapidly growing (Cernea 2008).

A critical review of the vast literature on urban displacement discerns two divides: the first is related to terminology, and the second is related to geography. The terminology used in urban displacement distinguishes between events based on the urban processes that trigger displacement and represent a certain policy, stated goals, and practices. Among the prominent terms used in the literature are evictions (Roy 2017; García-Lamarca and Kaika 2016; Anunziata and Lees 2016; Kolodney 1990; Harms 2013), slum-evictions (Boonyabancha 1983; Miraftab 2015, 2017; Broudehoux 2007; Bang Shin and Bingbin 2013; Bhan 2009; Benson 2016; Tibaijuka 2005), slum clearances (Glen 1880; Greer 1965; Kaplan 1963; Collins and Shester 2013; Macharia 1992; Rahman 2001; Tarlo 2001; Bhan 2009; Benson 2016; Tibajuka 2005), gentrification (Grier and Grier 1978; Marcuse 1986; Lee and Hodge 1984; Sumka 1979; for a full review see Zuk et al. 2015), and development-induced displacement (DID; Shaw and Saharan 2019; Ambaye and Abeliene 2015; Yntiso 2008; Megento 2013; Oyefara and Alabi 2016; Patel, Sliuzas, and Mathur 2015). It appears that these terms are often used interchangeably in the literature. Slum clearance, for example, refers to a life improvement policy in the United States and United Kingdom in the past century and also to an enforcement act of clearing illegal activity in recent years in countries such as Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, and India. Gentrification is another inconclusive term that is stretched to describe many different urban processes (Atkinson 2000; Clark 2015; Lees 2012). Indeed, these processes represent various practices, policies, and goals. Nevertheless, they all end in people being removed from their homes. Surprisingly, this shared aspect had not been positioned as a foundation for more theoretical structuring.

The geographical divide refers to the separation between urban processes in the Global North and Global South. We acknowledge the differences associated with each part of the globe yet question the determinist nature of this divide and...
query whether it impedes an underlying narrative of urban displacement. Most of the literature evolves around the utilization of concepts and theoretical frameworks addressing urban processes in northern and southern cities. Some scholars explain urban displacement in the Global South with the term gentrification, although the term was originally created to describe an urban process situated in North America and northwest Europe (e.g., Islam and Sakizlioglu 2015; Smith 2002; Atkinson and Bridge 2005; Porter and Shaw 2008). While some authors reveal reservations about applying the term (Yetiskul and Sule 2018; Rodriguez and Virgilio 2016; Lees 2012; Lopez-Morales 2015; Ren 2015; Janoschka and Sequera 2016; Visser 2002; Esher and Peterman 2000), more critical accounts argue for the need for an entirely different set of terms and conceptual frameworks to understand urban displacement in cities of the Global South (Ghertner 2011, 2014; Roy 2009, 2011; Holston 2007; Benjamin 2008; McFarlane 2010; Parnell and Robinson 2012; Miraftab 2009; Watson 2009, 2016). Most of the calls for new perspectives remain restricted within the familiar distinctions and do not seek to challenge the Global North/South divide.

However, in our thorough literature review of urban displacement, we have identified three main deficiencies produced by these divides. First, the overarching phenomenon of the involuntary movement of people from their homes has been seldomly treated as a stand-alone process but rather as multiple particularities stemming from various political/economic/social/historic contexts. Second, aligning the displacement process with existing epistemologies of the Global South and Global North or with existing terminology eclipses much of the complexity of experiencing urban displacement. Third, the objective and subjective processes of being uprooted from one’s home in the name of development have not been comprehensively unpacked and framed.

Therefore, to address these gaps in the literature, this article seeks to build a conceptual framework of urban displacement that positions the experience of being displaced, by any process, at its center. By setting aside preconceptions based on terminology or geographic location, this article identifies and articulates five concepts encapsulating meaningful aspects of being displaced. The positionality of the displaced people is, then, the guiding approach in constructing the framework as well as a core concept within that framework. The particularities of different case studies are incorporated into the framework as representing different intensities or compositions of the five suggested concepts. Our suggested framework conceives of urban displacement as a global housing crisis and suggests understanding the facets and magnitude of its shock waves through the subjectivities of the people experiencing it.

In this article, we are well aware of the tension arising from the attempt to generalize a conceptual framework within a sensitive phenomenon such as urban displacement and its representations in the Global South and North. Neoliberal, postcolonial, and race theories are often utilized as the theoretical backdrop for explaining the different nature of urban processes in the Global North and South (Bhan 2019; Jabareen 2017; Miraftab 2009; Roy 2009, 2017; Watson 2009).

In this article, we propose a new conceptual framework in order to reposition the displaced in urban displacement processes. Therefore, the following elaborates on the theoretical backdrop of the terminological and geographical distinctions that we question and sets the background for our proposed conceptual framework of urban displacement. The following section discerns and defines the five concepts of displacement we have extracted: power, positionality, eligibility, temporality, and resistance. Within each section, we indicate the particularities and different intensities that are found in various displacement events. Finally, we end with a discussion stating the contributions of this framework to theory and practice.

**Grounds for a New Conceptual Framework**

Urban displacement is a phenomenon associated with many urban processes across the globe. Gentrification, slum clearance, slum evictions, urban DID, and so on, are all terms indicating the involuntary movement of people from their homes due to development. Much of the literature on urban displacement distinguishes between these terms and between their geographic locations, situating them in the Global North or Global South (Watson 2009, 2016; Miraftab 2009; Bhan 2016; Chatterjee 2014). In doing so, the literature emphasizes the diverse cultural, historical, economic, political, and social backgrounds these processes have. In this section, we review the literature structuring this compartmentalization and present the theoretical backdrop of our proposed conceptual framework. Thus, the following two subsections deal with the dichotomies that we wish to overcome: the Global North/South divide and the terminological divisions.

**Global North-South Divide**

The literature discussing the Global North-South divide emerged as a counterresponse to a universal theorization of urban processes. Scholars such as Asher Ghertner, Ipsita Chatterjee, Ananya Roy, Vanessa Watson, Susan Parnell, and Faranak Miraftab, to list a few, have brought attention in urban studies to the need to acknowledge the colonization of knowledge and the definitions brought from the North to the South. De Satgé and Watson (2018) proposed the following:

Theorists taking a southern perspective have argued that “place matters” (whether in Global North or South), and that the degree of abstraction assumed in concepts claiming to be applicable everywhere sweeps away the possibility of a thorough understanding of *cities and regions*, and directly constrains potentially meaningful and effective planning intervention.

Thus, the prescription of Global North concepts and terminologies to Global South cities and regions overlooks “deep differences” between places (Watson 2006). The sharing of
ideas that is intended to be universal is, in fact, unidirectional and lacks the same context. Based on this critique, Chatterjee (2014) calls for reversing the arrow of theory building to originate from a southern perspective.

Another approach to readdress the North-South divide offers a crystallization of broad, common mechanisms of cities and urban processes, which then can encompass various manifestations. Robinson’s (2006) rejection of categorizing and labeling cities as Western, developed, third world, and so on, enabled a shift in the perceptions of difference. The underlying ordinariness of cities is articulated in a way that can relate to any city. Clark (2015) bridges the gap between the Global North and South through a generic notion of gentrification. He proposes an elucidation of what gentrification (i.e., investment in development) produces everywhere: it “bring[s] ‘growth,’ wealth and gentrified happiness” (Schulman 2013, 166) to some, and displacement (Davidson 2009; Lees 2014), domicile (Porteous and Smith 2001; Shao 2013) and root shock (Fullilove 2004) to others” (p. 453). Brickell, Arrigoitia, and Vasudevan (2017) assemble case studies of urban displacement from around the world and create a global notion of dispossession by eviction. They perceive Global North and South displacements as different formations of the same phenomenon.

Another approach to redress this divide is through planetary lenses for analyzing urban processes involving displacement. Scholars have deployed feminist theories and positioned “un-homing” as the phenomenon about which they are theorizing (Elliott-Cooper, Hubbard, and Lees 2020; Lancione 2019; Fernández Arrigoitia 2014; Nowicki 2018; Baxter and Brickell 2014). By doing so, they have succeeded in assembling displacement events in the Global North and South alike while also attending to the different contexts of those events. Elliott-Cooper et al. (2020) position displacement and the violence of un-homing as the focal point around which new readings of gentrification are necessitated. Their conceptualization addresses “the diverse scales and temporalities of displacement demonstrated in various locations” and also suggests an emotional–psychological standpoint to succeed in framing them together. Lancione (2019) observes urban processes worldwide through the “politics of life.” His conceptualization of “dwelling as difference” enables numerous ways of living and “home” to be gathered under a single framework. These accounts recognize the need to delve into the individual reality and meanings the displaced experience in order to succeed in forming a concept encapsulating similarity and difference at the same time.

Positioning ourselves within these approaches that negotiate the tension between particularities and differences on the one hand and a comprehensive, abstract and essential understanding of urban displacement on the other hand, we draw on the latter accounts. While “seeing from the South” has established that urban research should grow from diverse locals rather than be imported from one to the other, the technique remains restricted within the North-South dichotomy (Watson 2009). Global research approaches have worked mostly deductively to identify common manifestations of grand concepts in cities all over the globe. The later approach works inductively to assemble specific aspects of human experience in different cities across the globe, differencing between scales and meanings. We deploy this inductive approach and further develop it to analyze a wider scope involving both geography, which is planetary, and an in-depth investigation of the phenomenon as a whole with its possible different processes and consequences for human experience.

Thus, the result of this work is a comprehensive framework of urban displacement founded on the positionality of the displaced. In this way, we propose to bridge the North-South gap, arguing that whether a person lives in Rio de Janeiro, Chicago, Istanbul, London, Madrid, Lagos, Cape Town, Moscow, Shanghai, or Melbourne, she or he will be subjected to commonalities of the experience of being displaced.

The Terminological Divide

Despite attempts to step out the North/South divide mentioned above, the literature remains restricted to terminologies such as “gentrification” or “evictions.” Wyly (2015) broadens the scope of gentrification and asserts the need for a generalized theory of urban transformation. Roy (2017) agrees yet adds the restriction of not confusing generalization with universalization, bringing to our attention the need for a framework that can hold similarities and particularities simultaneously. To begin this task, we first had to establish the scope of the urban transformation processes we inspect. There are an overwhelming number of terms in the literature that refer to the eviction of people from their homes in a city. At the risk of oversimplifying, we have identified four main terms that are often used in case studies around the world: DID, slum clearance, gentrification, and eviction.

1. DID originated in the literature on large development projects such as dams (Scudder 1968; Mcdowell 1996; De Wet 2006; S. Robinson 2000; Hall 1994; Baboo 1992; Hasan 2016; Baviskar 1999; Gizachew 2017; Cernea 1997; Mahapatra 1999; Dwivedi 1999, 2002), industrial factories and mining (Mathur 2006; Sahoo 2005; Dash and Samal 2008; Kumar 2006; Downing 2002; Owen and Kemp 2015), and enclosures of forestland for conservation (Igoe and Dan 2007; Agrawal and Redford 2009; Baviskar 2003; Brockington 1999; Ganguly 2004; Chatty and Colchester 2002; Snodgrass et al. 2016), which displace tribal and indigenous people. Some authors use this term when discussing displacement caused by development in a city as well (Shaw and Saharan 2019; Ambaye and Abeliene 2015; Yntiso 2008; Megento 2013; Oyefara and Alabi 2016; Patel, Sliuzas, and Mathur 2015). Nevertheless, other scholars have pointed out that this utilization may dismiss some of the specific context emerging from displacement processes within the urban arena (Oliver-Smith 2009; Koenig 2015).
2. “Slum clearance” describes two distinct processes. The first refers to processes in Western Europe such as Haussmann’s renovation of Paris and the UK’s Artisans’ and Laborer’s Dwellings Improvement Act, 1875 (Glen 1880) and to the Housing Act of 1949 in the United States. According to the acts above, the main purpose of clearing out and displacing residents was to improve their life conditions (Greer 1965; Kaplan 1963; Collins and Shester 2013). The second process that is also termed “slum clearance,” concerns government operations involving the clearing of informal settlements and illegal activities, as seen in Kenya (Macharia 1992), Bangladesh (Rahman 2001), India (Tarlo 2001; Bhan 2009), South Africa (Benson 2016), and Zimbabwe (Tibajjuka 2005).

The fact that this term describes two essentially different processes may indicate a linguistic gap with the usage of “slums.” The UN’s global report on human settlements (2003) specifies the different meanings that the word “slum” holds in different parts of the world:

English language terms used to describe such [squatter or illegal] settlements include self-help or self-built settlements; spontaneous settlements; marginal settlements; squatter areas; shanty towns; and slums. Terms in other languages include barrios, tugurios, favelas, bidonvilles, gecekondu and kampungs. . . . They can be the result of organized “invasions” of land, which may have occurred overnight (especially in Latin America), or they can be the result of a gradual process of occupation and incremental growth. (The challenge of slums: global report on human settlements 2003, 82)

Later in the report, a few categories are offered to indicate differences between various settlements that are labeled slums.

3. “Eviction” is another term that is often used interchangeably with “displacement” (Harms 2013). Urban scholars (Garcia-Lamarca and Kaika 2016; Annunziata and Lees 2016; Kolodny 1990; Roy 2017) use eviction, mostly in case studies from the United States and Europe to describe events in which municipalities issue warrants of eviction to households that fail to pay the mortgage or rent. Annunziata and Lees (2016) perceive these evictions as pertaining to the larger process of gentrification. This raises the question of whether the usage of these terms is interchangeable, since evictions are also associated with another process of slum eviction. Boonyabancha (1983) noted that slum eviction, as experienced in Bangkok, is composed of two stages: demolition of the houses and eviction of the residents from the area. This term is common in the literature discussing mega events and the urban transformation such events invoke in their host cities (Mirafab 2009; Chance 2008; Müller 2015, 2017; Broudehoux 2007; Bang Shin and Binggin 2013; Bob and Majola 2011; Maiello and Pasquini 2015; Silvestre and de Oliveira 2012; Bhan 2009; Porter et al. 2009; Lensky 2002; Rizzo 2017; Morka 2007; Orjuela 2010).

4. “Gentrification” is probably the widest term associated with displacement. Some central scholars writing about gentrification (Grier and Grier 1978; Marcuse 1986; Lee and Hodge 1984; Sumka 1979) have attempted to identify the characteristics of displacement caused by gentrification. Zuk et al. (2015) offer a thorough literature review of gentrification research and conclude that displacement takes many different forms—direct or indirect, physical, or economic, and exclusionary—and may result from either investment or disinvestment. The elusiveness of the actual cause of displacement by gentrification, the length of the time associated with the displacing causes, and the integration with other urban and economic processes leads to a rather broad variety of cases that are all referred to as displacement by gentrification.

As part of the plethora of terms that characterize different processes, some terms and processes are less relevant to the scope of this article, including “land grab,” “ecological displacement,” and displacement due to war or ethnic disputes. “Land grabs” predominantly refer to agricultural or rural land that is “grabbed” by foreign investors for producing food or biofuel (Graham et al. 2009; Cotula et al. 2009; Zoomers 2010). This term also relates to grabbing either land that is annexed to the city or land that is designated to other land uses such as tourism (Lunstrum 2016; Klein 2007; Cohen 2011). Ecological displacement (discussed at length in the case of Mongolian citizens in China) also refers to rural communities (Yeh 2009; Tan and Guo 2007). Displacement caused by wars or ethnic disputes is defined as a knowledge body in and of itself. Muggah’s (2000, 2003) and Oslander’s (2007) extensive accounts of displacement in Colombia, for example, show the different characteristics of this kind of displacement. According to the literature, development and the planning system in postwar countries are influenced by national aspirations (Jabareen 2018). Examples from Sri Lanka (Mittal 2015), Israel/Palestine (Schectha 2001), and Lebanon (Saliba 2000) show the complex relations between the dominant group in each country and the minorities that group controls. Hence, we suggest that these events require a distinct conceptualization.

Despite the different circumstances leading to urban displacement, one aspect is predominant. Whether they are displaced by evictions, gentrification, DID, or slum clearances, displaced people usually suffer from impoverishment in every aspect of life (Fullilove 2004; Terminski 2013; Gogoi and Lahon 2014; Ambaye and Abeliene 2015; Yntiso 2008; Megento 2013; Oye- fara and Alabi 2016; Patel, Sluizas, and Mathur 2015; Muller 2017; Broudehoux 2007; Bang Shin and Binggin 2013; Bob and Majola 2011; Maiello and Pasquini 2015; Silvestre and de Oliveira 2012; Bhan 2009; Porter et al. 2009; Lensky 2002; Chatterjee 2014; Porteous and Smith 2001; Shao 2013). Thus, whether or not urban displacement includes compensation, is evoked by enforcement or the planning institutes, or represents land value shifts or attempts to improve life conditions, the resulting impoverishment remains. This led us to think that
examining urban displacement through people enduring the same experience is a sound stepping point for a new framework of urban displacement. Porteous and Smith (2001) began this task when coining the term “domicide” in reference to the global destruction of homes and the harsh emotional implications of such an act. Although encompassing various urban processes that lead to displacement, their conceptualization is restricted to feelings of loss and remains within the boundaries of US cities.

Early on in our endeavor to organize the literature discussing urban displacement, we categorized case studies according to the terminology used in the literature (e.g., gentrification, slum clearance). Soon after determining the defining lines of our framework, it became clear that this categorization is not aligned with the distinctions and particularities we had identified. Cases labeled with the same terminology revealed different particularities in some respects and similarities in others. Alternatively, cases that were classified with different terminologies presented similar characteristics in most aspects. As in the Global North/South divide, we do not argue that these categories are incorrect in their mission to identify political, economic, and social processes. We argue that these definitions limit our capacity to generalize the experience that urban displacement produces since they frame each displacement process as a distinct phenomenon.

As will be shown in the next section, displacement acts are a process that begins with hearing about the plans of displacement and ends at varying points. Many people live in fear and are threatened to move out years before an actual eviction takes place. In some cases, the implications of displacement are perceived to have influenced subsequent generations. Meanwhile, social bonds are ruined through rumors, deals are done between developers and some of the residents, and mistrust becomes a vivid component in the communities’ lives. Other residents need to fight in court and pay lawyers to be considered eligible for compensation or to exercise their rights. Individuals and entire communities are being received with hostility in their new locations, which, in turn, compromises their sense of security and ability to find work. These are the stories that create the experience of being displaced, and through this framework, we wish to stress that they are not merely a side effect of development. Rather, they are the essence of current urban processes.

The Concepts of the Urban Displacement Framework

In the process of encapsulating the various narratives of displacement, it became apparent there is a need to build a new conceptual framework. To do so, we deployed the “conceptual analysis method” offered by Jabareen (2009). Applying this method relies on the assumption that to develop a new conceptual framework, there is a need to “generate, identify, and trace a phenomenon’s major concepts” (p. 53). Hence, we reviewed the extensive literature on urban displacement and identified the repeated concepts that portray the intricacies of the displacement experience. Accordingly, this article conceptualizes urban displacement as a set of concepts that addresses the different stages of the displacement process, the subjective experience of the displaced, and the objective implication they have endured. Each concept invites further investigation on its own and is also intrinsic and interrelated to the other concepts. Furthermore, we constantly reflected on urban displacement as an involuntary process happening to people. The everyday challenges and coping practices are the thread we have weaved to connect the diverse displacement events.

Power

The legitimacy to displace people from their homes lies in the various offices constituting the state. Legislative, enforcement, planning, welfare, treasury, and juridical responsibilities all influence the power relations between the “state” and its collaborators and citizens. The withdrawal of the state from specific decision-making processes plays a role in these dynamics. Bernt and Holm (2009), for example, mark three major policy shifts, indicating a decline in the way decision-makers comprehend their role in protecting low-income residents from being displaced. This decline is supported by legislative changes, cuts in investments, planning decisions, and so on.

In Rome, Athens, and Madrid, Annunziata and Lees (2016) show how the reform in different laws enabled the evictions of families who were late on their mortgage payments. Focusing on Spain, Garcia-Lamarca and Kauka (2016) coined the term “biotechnology,” which refers to the “supremacy of power over life” through the “intimate relationship between global financial markets, everyday life and human labor” (p. 313). As people failed to pay mortgages, unemployment escalated, and housing values dropped, mortgages became a punitive technology for marginalized population groups, and hundreds of thousands were evicted. These policy changes have also occurred in Upsala and Stockholm (Baeten et al. 2017), Chicago (Roy 2017), Istanbul (Islam and Sakizlioglu 2015), Addis-Ababa (Gebre and Abeliene 2015; Yntiso 2008; Megento 2013), Lagos (Oyefara and Alabi 2016), Delhi (Bhan 2009), and more cities around the world.

Although there is a recurring attempt to obscure these decisions as being for the “common good” (Kamat 2015), critical scholars have raised concerns over the shifting notion of decision-makers regarding displacement. Ormerod and MacLeod (2019) bluntly articulated that seemingly neutral planning practices are actually deeply politicized. Wyly and Hammel (2001) and then Slater (2006, 740) identified the “far from innocent role of both public and private institutions [in] the clear injustice of the displacement of working-class residents.” Thus, other sources of power are collaborating in these projects. Kamat (2015) suggests that accumulation and personal gain for those in power are the main motivations in these kinds of plans, as can be demonstrated in many cases (Bose 2015; Bloch 2016; Campbell 2015; Gillespie 2010; Bre glia 2006; Lovering and Türkmen’s 2011). Nevertheless, there
are other kinds of power that can play a significant role when making decisions about displacement.

The power held by the affluent, or “class power,” is intertwined with the abuse of power mentioned above. Baviskar (2003) shows how in Delhi, a notion of “bourgeois environmentalism” adopted by the upper class had brought about the removal of polluting factories, yet later on, it was also utilized to advocate for the removal of slums. The phenomenon of displacement in light of upcoming international events such as sports games (Müller 2015, 2017; Broudehoux 2007; Bang Shin and Binggin 2013; Bob and Majola 2011; Maiello and Pasquinelli 2015; Silvestre and de Oliveira 2012; Bhan 2009; Porter et al. 2009; Lensky 2002), conferences (Rizzo 2017; Morka 2007; Murphy and Anana 1994), and festivals (Morka 2007) are an extreme manifestation of these power relations.

Plans, goals, funds, and measures are directed to create a perfect environment for such temporal occasions (Maiello and Pasquinelli 2015; Silvestre and de Oliveira 2012). Although an ambiguous assertion by the authorities that the fortune coming into the city will trickle down to everyone, it has been evident it does not (Müller 2015, 2017; Goldman 2011; Bob and Majola 2011). Naturally, such occurrences evoke a clash between long-rooted challenges of cities, such as poverty pockets and unsatisfying infrastructures and other services, which lower-class people suffer from, and the desire of cities to appear modern, world-class, and equipped for the requirements of the event, which works in favor of the upper-class (Greene 2003; Black 2007).

When discussing power, it is also imperative to recognize the sources of power deployed by lower-class residents, as such residents are far from passive in these relations. Residents in the city have electoral power, which can aid displaced people (Narayan 2015). Gans (1959) shows how in Boston’s renewal plan, some neighborhoods were designated for demolition, and other neighborhoods—which had stronger social and political power—were discouraged from being cleared out. Thus, people assigned to be displaced also participate in the “power game” and influence their situation. Confronting and resisting “the game” will be detailed later in the subsection on resistance (3.6).

One insufficiently discussed perspective is that of the power relations within the displaced community. Chatterjee’s (2014) work is insightful in distinguishing between the two main groups that occupied a demolished neighborhood in Hyderabad, India. The Muslims and Hindus experienced their displacement and power relations in a different manner, and hence, their resistance differed as well. Another distinction is between the leaders and activists of the community who speak differently from people who were not involved with the decision-making process.

Urban displacement, as opposed to displacement by a natural disaster or war, has less of a sense of emergency or force majeure than purposeful displacement by the state. The people in power who advance such processes are within reach; thus, displaced people can operate before the event and position their own power. It is essential to further understand who displaced people consider to be against them, what power they hold, who their allies are, and what they believe their source of power is.

**Coercion and perceived control.** The degree of coercion utilized by the authorities and the perceived control laying in the hands of the displaced are the physical expressions of the power relations discussed above. Each country or city utilizes the power in its hands in a different manner. The legislation, deployment of enforcement forces, and planning decision-making processes demonstrated by the state on the one hand, and the practices of negotiation, resistance, or acceptance shown by the displaced on the other hand, ultimately shape the particular coercion-control tension that each displacement event exhibits. Newman and Owen (1982) point to the ability of people to choose as a basic distinction between voluntary and involuntary acts of displacement. A study about public housing renovation shows that people preferred to move to open-market dwellings in worse conditions than those they lived in before only if they could freely choose where to live (Buron 2002). While this is an insightful observation, Newman and Owen (1982) restricted “choosing” to the question of where to move. They did not consider other important aspects, such as when to move and how to move, which often remain in the hands of the people leaving their homes due to gentrification.

Grier and Grier (1978, 8) consider three conditions that were later used in many studies on gentrification and displacement (Zuk et al. 2015):

Displacement occurs when any household is forced to move from its residence by conditions which affect the dwelling or immediate surroundings, and which:

1. are beyond the household’s reasonable ability to control or prevent;
2. occur despite the household’s having met all previously imposed conditions of occupancy; and
3. make continued occupancy by that household impossible, hazardous, or unaffordable.

Another definition of displacement based on gentrification research suggests that “displacement occurs when any household is forced to move from its residence by conditions which affect the dwelling or its immediate surroundings,” and this is beyond the household’s control, including by physical means such as demolition and upgrading (Grier and Grier 1978, 480; LeGates and Hartman 1981; Kearns and Mason 2013, 180-81; Marcuse 1986). Sumka (1979) emphasizes the difficulty of pointing out who “moved” and who was “displaced.” Thus, coercion becomes a wide spectrum in which each case demonstrates very different characteristics.

The issue of control is also related to the ability to negotiate displacement or compensation agreements between the displacers and the displaced. In the following excerpts, there are
examples from Beijing, Dar es Salaam, and Phenom-Penh, stipulating the inherent tension in this dynamic:

Residents who resist are sometimes physically threatened and beaten by demolition squads. In some cases, night raids are conducted: residents are forcibly removed, and their house is demolished with all their possessions inside. (Broudehoux 2007, 389)

Compensation was paid in the presence of bulldozers, armed police, and police dogs, and physical altercations took place between the police and individuals who questioned the eviction process. (Hooper and Ortolano 2012, 279–80)

My situation is cruel [crying]. I had to tear down my own house to receive compensation. Later, when I went to the City Hall for help, the authority said that I had come only to annoy them . . . . That I had already gained compensation. They did not want to listen to my miserable life after I had left. This is an inhumane act . . . . They made me ruin my own house . . . . It is so distressing. This development is not fair at all. Why do the authorities treat us badly this way? (Phorn Sophene, married with children, forties, evicted BKL resident, in Brickell 2014, 1261)

These stories illustrate the evasiveness of the choices given to the displaced while utilizing force to actually narrow their leeway. Displaced people who need to decide between taking a low-valued compensation package or fighting for better terms face tremendous pressures—police brutality, threats, disagreements with family members, and risking all of their possessions.

While above cases from China, Tanzania, and Cambodia show brutality, it is important to also indicate instances of aggressiveness in places pertaining to the Global North. Pain (2019), for example, describes a long history of state violence directed toward the residents of a coalmining village in northeast England. The aggressiveness of the displacement process was manifested in “physical brutality against striking miners on the picket line” (p. 9) and a rapid and brutal closure of the mine and sale of the public housing apartments. Through a feminist-psychological lens, Pain conceives the relations between authorities and residents as a form of abuse: “Echoing Herman’s (1997) powerful description of the dynamics of abuse that involves long-term captivity, housing dispossession traumatizes where those affected are still trapped in place, and an ongoing relationship with the perpetrator is hard to escape” (p. 9). Fullilove’s (1996, 2004) long-term study of the psychological effects of urban renewal in US cities also reveals some violent accounts. In-depth interviews with displaced people from Harlem, New York, Hill District, Pittsburgh, and others (Fullilove 2004) resemble the feelings and experiences described in studies of displacement acts in the Global South. In addition, physically removing people from their homes, blocking windows and doors to prevent them from coming back, and sending them to homelessness are practices of displacement also in the Global North (Roy 2017; Garcia-Lamarca and Kaika 2016; Annuziata and Lees 2016).

In sum, coercion can be manifested in many ways. It can take shape as disinvesting in a neighborhood or beating up people who refuse to move. The perceived control people hold also has a broad range. Within the frame of involuntary displacement, being able to choose when to move (during a period of time when prices are rising or when there is a warrant with a due date), how to move (alone or as a community, being physically removed, or moving out on one’s own), and where to move (to homelessness, resettlement, or another rented apartment) are life-defining decisions. The magnitude of the repercussions of these decisions is tremendous, not only to the people experiencing the displacement but also to the next generation:

Kawthar: Where will we go from here? We don’t even have anything in Bihar now also. What will happen to my kids? My kids’ future will be ruined, their schooling, etc. My whole life has been ruined; their future will be ruined also. (Ramakrishnan 2014, 765)

Thus, although the coercion-control tension differs in numerous ways, it is a principle and a repeated representation of urban displacement. The concept of power represents a wide spectrum of severity and intensity of practice. Unfortunately, from the positionality of the displaced, power in the form of coercion and utilization of forceful measures can be found in displacement incidents in the Global North and South alike. Thus, understanding displacement through the subtheme of power challenges the common association of a more aggressive approach with the Global South.

**Positionality**

Much of the literature on urban displacement strives to configure who the displaced are. Some base their answer on race and ethnicity (Janoschka and Sequera 2016; Keisha-Khan 2004; Roy 2011, 2017; Rajagopal 2007; Chatterjee 2012; Gidwani and Reddy 2011; Chatterjee 2004; Benjamin 2008; Doshi 2013; Casolo and Doshi 2013), and others base it on class (Lovering and Türkmen 2011; Tibajika 2010; Ockey 1997; Kapoor 2012; Fernandes 2004; Chatterjee 2004), caste (Narayana 2012; Mehra 2011), or religion (Hameed 2016; Willford 2003). Guha (2003) argues that it is a combination of all these aspects and adds gender as another discriminating factor.

An essential component of people’s identity, especially those of marginalized groups, is their physical surroundings (Marris 1996). In their *Domicide the Global Destruction of Home*, Porteous and Smith (2001, 110) indicate the important role of place. They suggest that although the West End in Boston was the home to Italians, Jews, and Poles, “ninety percent of the residents identified themselves specifically as West Enders, perceived a sharp boundary between the West End and the rest of Boston, and formed a distinct socio-cultural system.” This is also true among people living in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, where a specific culture of relations, music, and clothing became identifying characteristics of favela residents despite their different ethnic origins (Custódio 2017). Hodkinson and Essen (2015) also point out that one of the three specific forms of place-based dispossession indicated by the
residents of a public housing estate in London, UK, was the erasure of place identity.

As displacement puts an end to place-based identity, it appears that this vacuum is filled with other identity components. For the women of Boeung Kak Lake in Phenom Penh, Cambodia, their realization of their own marginality as poor women evoked their resistance. The members of the resistance movement in Salvador, Brazil, empowered themselves as black women. The Yamuna Pusha residents in Delhi, India, who were resettled in the Bawana resettlement colony, claimed their citizenship as they pleaded to the government, high courts, and human rights office time and again (Menon-Sen and Bhan 2008; Ramakrishnan 2014), exercising their civilian identity. The evictees in Chicago connected their actions to the resistance of black people in the 1950s and 1960s:

There have been way more people willing to risk going to jail, ‘cause what we do is illegal. And so we tend to frame it like this: It was illegal for black folks and white folks to be in a room like this back in the ‘50s and ‘60s, right? So we say it like this: during the civil rights, they did something ILLEGAL for something that was morally right. They did sit-ins, wherein 2011 we’re doing something illegally that’s MORALLY RIGHT, you know what I’m saying, and we’re doing it in forms of livin’ in, on live-ins. So we said during civil rights, sit-ins, to human rights live-ins. That housing is a human right, and we’re gonna enforce it ourselves. (Roy 2017, 4)

In other cases, displaced people have identified themselves as being poor in addition to other characteristics:

When they announced the cleansing, before the elections, it was not just trash that they want to remove from the center of the city but also the blacks, the poor people, the beggars, the street vendors, the street children and everything that they think dirty’s the city. We are not going to let them treat us like trash. We are working people, and we have rights. (Gamboa de Baixo community bulletin, 1997, in Keisha-Khan 2004, 823)

In the above quote, alongside an acknowledgment of race as a factor of displacement decision-making, the speaker mentions other identity disclosures, all of which “dirties the city.” Similarly, Chatterjee (2014) also highlights that in Hyderabad, the displaced are composed of Hindus and Muslims alike, and Brickell’s (2014) the interviewees identified themselves as poor people. Thus, a unifying characteristic of poverty is recognized alongside a sense of ethnic/religious/racial identity components.

Being displaced then compels people to rearticulate how they define themselves and their reference group. With the subtheme of positional identity, we show the wide array of identities subjected to displacement in both the Global North and South. We also show that displacement entails a process of articulation or reticulation of the positional identity of the displaced within society. This reidentification process shapes their renewed positional identity toward the state and their sense of citizenship, the discriminating components of their identity (e.g., being a woman/black/poor), and how they interact with the forces oppressing them. While the identity of each community or person is different in each displacement incident, as researchers, it is important to attend to the process of identification produced by displacement. While all displaced people share the loss of the place-based identity, agency is being materialized by the process of articulating the displaced people’s positional identity.

Eligibility

The question of whether the displaced are entitled to resettlement, compensation, or merely a notice before eviction determines much of the experience the displaced will endure. Their eligibility is a factor not only for the posteviction period but also indicates the treatment they will receive from the authorities throughout the displacement process. The following subsection presents a wide scope of considerations that determine the eligibility of displaced people to receive compensation.

The purpose of the displacement is a crucial element for determining eligibility. The stated goal of the slum clearances in the UK in the previous century was improving public health and living conditions. Thus, all displaced people were eligible for other accommodations in proximity to the area from which they were displaced. The Artisans and Laborers’ Dwelling Improvement Act 1875 (Glen 1880) explicitly states that the municipality is responsible for compensating the displaced people and providing them with other accommodations. The 1949 Housing Act in the United States also stated that slum clearance is a policy tool for generating an improved standard of living, and municipalities were required to take responsibility for the displaced residents (Greer 1965; Kaplan 1963; Collins and Shester 2013).

Currently, slum clearances and eviction, on the other hand, are measures for enforcing the law and stopping illegal activity. Examples from Zimbabwe (Tibaijuka 2005), India (Tarlo 2001), Chicago (Roy 2017), Spain (García-Lamarca and Kaika 2016), South Africa (Benson 2016), Kenya (Macaria 1992), Bangkok (Boonyabancha 1983), Brazil (Sánchez and Brousse 2013; Corrarino 2014), and Bangladesh (Rahman 2001) show that illegal activity can be defined by authorities as dwelling in illegal structures, vending, loitering, or failing to pay mortgage bills. Evictees under these circumstances are not eligible for any compensation, and the examples show that evictions are made with much violence and brutality.

Other displacement cases are more complicated in terms of eligibility. Miraftab (2009) and Chance (2008), for example, describe the displacement process from the Joe Slovo to the Delft settlement in Cape Town. To make room for a new national housing project along the N2 Gateway road, some 6,000 shack dwellers from Joe Slovo faced displacement. The authorities built them resettlement apartments in Delft. To the surprise of the authorities, “the swelling numbers of backyard dwellers in over-crowded houses in Delft, some of whom had been on the housing waiting list for 30 years, took advantage of the almost completed temporary houses constructed in Delft for
the relocation of the Joe Slovo families. On 19 December 2007, Delft families in need of housing moved into these vacant units and claimed them as theirs” (Miraftab 2009, 37). The authorities then sought to evict the Delft squatters and relocate the Joe Slovo shack dwellers, despite the resistance of both communities.

This case is intriguing for our debate since it demonstrates a rather arbitrary process of decision-making about eligibility. Miraftab (2009) also discusses the tight deadline for finishing the housing project in schedule for the FIFA World Cup games in 2010, bringing up another set of considerations in the resettlement of the Joe Slovo residents. Accordingly, while this community was considered eligible for resettlement, it was decreed that the Delft squatters would be evicted with no alternative housing solutions.

In Istanbul, Lovering and Türkmen (2011) also show different perceptions of eligibility by the authorities in three different case studies. Eligibility for compensation was negotiated between private developers, the court and the resistant residents. Thus, within one city and with one legal status of the displaced, three different modes of eligibility were exhibited. In Bangalore, India, a verdict by the High Court (The High Court of Karnataka at Bangalore, W.P. Nos.42743/2012, and 29393-29531/2013, and W.P. Nos.46496-46718 of 2014) compelled the private developer to build a resettlement colony for the renters who lived in the demolished quarters of the Ejipura neighborhood. This was an uncommon acknowledgment of the eligibility rights of renters in displacement events.

Another interesting case is that of the Serra do Mar project, Sao Paulo, Brazil (Cavalheiro and Abiko 2015). The development of an industrial area in the fringes of the city attracted workers from all over the country, and they informally occupied whatever land was available, leading to the emergence of a large squatter settlement known as Bairros-Cota in an environmentally sensitive area. Once the municipality decided to take action in preserving the Atlantic Forest, housing developments specially created Cubatão for the Serra do Mar Project were built for an estimated residential population of 7,350. Like the example from India, here too, although the law did not state that the residents were eligible for compensation, other considerations took greater weight.

The question of eligibility, then, is not a matter of legal rights but a subjective comprehension of the displaced people by the state. Thus, there is a need to study more about the factors and state-citizen relations that form the versatile possibilities of eligibility. There are two essential notes in this matter. The first, as Atkinson (2000) states, it is hard to track down the people affected by gentrification and to estimate whether and how they should be compensated. Thus, it is important to realize that people being displaced by gentrification (as Atkinson comprehends gentrification) are usually excluded from an eligibility debate. The subtheme of eligibility reveals that displacement processes in cities of the Global North include fewer measures of responsibility toward the displaced population than processes of displacing low-income neighborhoods in the Global South that include more discussion over compensation.

Second, it is essential to examine the persistent gaps between the declared eligibility and the actual process, as most processes of displacement, regardless of geography, result in impoverishment (Muggah 2015). Compensation packages are usually unnegotiable and low in value (Zaman 1996; Broudehoux 2007, Sánchez and Broudehoux 2013).

The resettlement plans, more common in displacement events of the Global South, have three obstacles in addition to the inherent problems of most resettlement colonies (being far from job opportunities and public transportation and often lack education, health, and other municipal services). The first obstacle is related to temporality. Sometimes, the construction work of the colony begins only well after the demolition has been executed. In Dar es Salaam, six months after the eviction, the displaced had yet to receive a plot of land for the construction of their resettlement (Hooper and Ortolano 2012). The verdict given to the former Ejipura residents in Bangalore, mentioned above, was given to them approximately two years after their eviction.

The second obstacle is related to quantity. The number of apartments built is often less than the number of households being displaced (Ramakrishnan 2014; Sánchez and Broudehoux 2013; Yntiso 2008). The third obstacle is related to legality. The displaced often need to prove eligibility to obtain an apartment (Baviskar 2009). These obstacles raise serious concerns, such as whether guidelines and policy recommendations are a sufficient tool to fight the impoverishment of the displaced or a more critical approach is needed.

**Temporality**

All displacement events invoke a time frame from the initial decision on the process of redevelopment to the notice the residents receive and to the actual eviction/demolition act. The timeframe is crucial for the displaced, as it can enable or block their opportunity to organize themselves, obtain alternative housing solutions or form a resistance movement. The initial timeframe is dictated by the authorities. Thus, temporality becomes an expression of how tolerant the authorities are to the presence of the soon-to-be-displaced people in the city. Nevertheless, it is also the point for initiating negotiation and resistance. Eventually, each displacement event exhibits a different mode of temporality according to the interaction between authorities and residents.

In Addis Ababa (Ambaye and Abeliene 2015; Yntiso 2008; Megento 2013) and in Beijing’s preparation for the Olympics (Broudehoux 2007), notices of eviction were issued a month before the execution. In other displacement incidents in Beijing, it had been documented that residents were noted merely a few hours before eviction (New York Times 2017). In Brazil, residents of century-old favelas (Sánchez and Anne-Marie 2013) “awoke to eviction notices ordering them out . . . within ‘zero days’” (Corrario 2014, 180).

Knowing about the plan beforehand can at least lead to a discussion, as in the eviction of the slums along the Yamuna River in Delhi, where slum dwellers succeeded in delaying
eviction by a few months, allowing their children to finish the school year. However, despite residents’ ongoing resistance, no further negotiations over the terms of eviction were allowed beyond this delay (Bhan 2009).

Atkinson (2000) notes that gentrification is a process whose start and the end are hard to define. He also raises a more fundamental question of whether people moving out of a neighborhood when the threat of displacement arrives can be counted as displaced. A long-lasting displacement process was experienced in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, under the “new urban zone” project slated to be built on top of the ruins of Thu Thi’em neighborhood:

They live amidst the crushed bricks, smashed plaster, and broken ceramic tiles that remain from the homes of former neighbors, kin, and old friends who have demolished their homes after accepting the terms of compensation offered by project authorities. By most accounts, the Thu Thi’em project is taking a long time, and eviction is proceeding slowly. Yet the ratio of rubble to residents has increased steadily, if ploddingly and incrementally, over time. The central debate is not, ultimately, whether Thu Thi’em residents will leave, but when, and under what circumstances. In the meantime, large numbers of them are hanging (treo), lingering (ol’i), waiting (ch’odot). (Harms 2013, 344)

Wyly and Hammel (1999) addressed a somewhat similar process in American cities as “islands of decay in seas of renewal.” Residents are given different timeframes to move out of their homes. Nevertheless, from the first sign of a redevelopment plan, the stable life of the residents is infected with the understanding of the temporality of their home. The process of uprooting people from their daily routines and positioning them in a temporal existence is shown through the examples above. Indeed, the aggressiveness of being displaced in a few hours versus that of being displaced in a few years produces very different experiences; yet in every displacement incident, what was previously perceived to be constant and reliable becomes temporal and unstable (Fullilove 2004). The subtheme of temporality suggests that while abrupt displacement incidents might be associated more with the Global South, long-lasting processes of displacement characterize both Global North and Global South.

Resistance

Much had been written about resistance to displacement. Common channels include turning to the court, submitting petitions, and conducting meetings with various municipal workers (Islam and Sakizloglu 2015; Bhan 2009; Jabareen and Switat 2019; Zaman 1996; Newman and Wyly 2006; Chatterjee 2014; Roy 2017). The formation of residents’ associations and alternative housing organizations that fight rent escalation are also considered a form of resistance (Eizenberg 2019; Rodriguez and Di Virgilio 2016; Anunziata and Lees 2016), as are demonstrations (Goodman 1971; Newman and Wyly 2006; Smith 2002; Slater 2006; Förste and Bernt 2018; Naeglar 2012; Bob and Majola 2011; Maiello and Pasquinelli 2015; Bhan 2009; Müller 2015; Silvestre and de Oliveira 2012; Goldman 2011; Roy 2017). In most cases, resistance will be practiced through more than one channel.

Although the next excerpt refers to rural displacement caused by the Sardar Sarovar Dam, raises a less discussed issue that is highly relevant to urban displacement as well:

We have realized that we are expected to fight against the dam, remain naked, and keep performing our traditional dances. We are deliberately encouraged to remain like this so that photographs can convince the world to halt the dam. We don’t care if the dam is built or not. We want a good deal for our children. We have fought for the activists for years but have got nothing in return. (Dwivedi 1997, 22)

For several years, the residents of the village mentioned above persistently resisted displacement. Nevertheless, eventually, the toll of resistance became too high for most of the people, and the fight had become “for the activists” instead of to serve their own interests. Dwivedi opines that the risks of displacement and resettlement gained much attention, yet the risks of resistance were not given the same importance.

Lancione’s (2017) ethnographic work with displaced residents in Bucharest, Romania, also delves into the personal challenges to those who resist. What began with uncanny expressions of resistance and solidarity evolved into harsh daily life experiences: “The evicted people saw their emotional resources and strength chipped away by a life made of patch-worked tents, self-built shacks, rain, cold meals, cold clothes, endless bureaucratic entanglements and vague or absent responses from the authorities” (p. 13). In addition, Lancione describes how people cope with illness and constant uncertainty while trying to maintain their livelihoods.

Brickell’s (2014) work with the resisting women of Boeung Kak Lake in Phenom-Penh demonstrates this aspect of resistance:

Honestly speaking, my husband blames me every day that I was wrong to accept compensation; he blames me for being too impatient. On the other hand, my children begged me to accept compensation and leave. They didn’t want me to face arrest and detention. I cannot even describe how I felt after leaving my home. (Phorn Sophea, married with children, forties, evicted BKL resident, in Brickell 2014, 1262)

My husband’s supervisor was threatened by City Hall and said: “If you allow your wife to continue her protest, you will have nothing to eat.” I continued to protest, and from therein, my husband did not receive any more project work. For five years of protest, my family survived on US$60/month. (Srey Pov, evicted BKL resident, in Brickell 2014, 1268)

The compromises and threats resisting people face are overwhelming. Going to meetings instead of being with the children and taking care of the household cost some women their marriages. Going to demonstrations under the threat of being beaten and arrested means that children might be left with no
guardian for an unknown period. Not accepting compensation risks not receiving any kind of compensation later. There is also an aspect of women’s empowerment through these actions, as can be understood from the following quote:

If they slammed their hands on the table, we slammed loudly too, looking at them in their faces, things I would not have done before, and today I do them... I learned that we can’t hold our heads down because we’re poor, because we’re black women. (Keisha-Khan 2004, 822)

Nevertheless, it is imperative to situate the personal costs displaced people pay when deciding to resist.

Lees, Annunziata, and Rivas-Alonso (2018) recognize everyday life practices as a means of survival through practices of resistance, opening a broader scope for understanding resistance. To some, survival is equated with staying put:

I think that the woman got to see that Gamboa [Brazil] and the environment is a way of surviving. It is the natural environment of Gamboeiros. We need this here. (Cristina, personal interview, in Keisha-Khan 2004, 822)

To others, accepting compensation and moving out may be their way to survive. Lees, Annunziata, and Rivas-Alonso (2018, 349) assert that “the concept of resistance itself can be highly relative and context-dependent, and there is an urgent need to unpack it further.”

We urge scholars, then, to further investigate resistance from in-depth work with displaced people in order to unravel their challenges in resisting. Reviewing the literature through the subtheme of resistance suggests that less attention is given in cases of displacement from the Global North to questions such as what would displaced people consider a successful outcome? How does the resistance period affect daily life? And what are the countering pressures resisting people face?

Discussion

This article proposes a new conceptual framework of displacement that is centered on the positionality of the displaced and is structured around five concepts. The framework focuses on the experience of being displaced—its material, emotional, and psychological challenges—as the foundation of our proposed framework. The analysis of existing literature through this approach made it clear that although urban displacement across the globe has very different economic, social, and political histories and contexts, the experience of being displaced has some shared qualities. Thus, from the perspective of the displaced, urban displacement can also be understood as a global phenomenon.

By repositioning the displaced in urban displacement, we exerted five concepts that structure the components of their shared experience: (1) Power—each displacement event encompasses different power relations between local, national, and international forces, and the displaced. The dynamics that were exposed are expressed through the tension between coercion of the authorities and the perceived control of the displaced. (2) Positionality—undeterred by differences anchored in geographical and historical contexts, displaced people go through a reidentification process as their place-based identity is compromised. (3) Eligibility—the rights given or associated with the displaced in the form of eligibility to compensations, resettlements, and the like seems to be arbitrary and undefined in both the Global North and South. More research on decision-making and implementation processes is needed. (4) Temporality—the timeframes in which displacement incidents occur vary dramatically. Nevertheless, the severe psychological implications of living with imminent displacement or of being uprooted dominate the experience of displacement everywhere. (5) Resistant—the reaction of the displaced to displacement is widely discussed in the literature. Nevertheless, the risks of resistance and framings of success or failure by the displaced are underdeveloped, especially in the Global North.

This proposed conceptual framework offers several contributions to theory and directions for further studies. First, although this is a work in progress, it has begun to answer the call for conceptualizing urban displacement beyond the division of the Global North and Global South. Throughout the literature review, we found similar attributes of displacement processes both in the Global South and in the Global North as well as essential differences among cities in the same part of the globe. Positioning the human experience at the core of our focus enabled us to apply several concepts, connections, and classifications without “patrolling” the borders (Roy 2009) and develop an informed and grounded theorization.

More research stemming from the perspective of displaced people is needed. Studies aimed at describing the process of urban displacement may use this framework to analyze and compare displacement processes occurring in various locations and through different urban processes. Mounting these experiences within a single framework can assist in structuring a consistent counterhegemonic narrative of development and contribute to a more humanistic understanding of urban processes.

It is tempting to end this article with the question of whether urban displacement should happen at all. Nevertheless, to remain grounded in the current social-economic reality, we will remain within the limits of practical contributions. Some circumstances of involuntary displacement—loss of one’s home, familiar surroundings, neighbors, routines, community, and so on (Jabareen, Eizenberg, and Zilberman 2017; Eizenberg, and Jabareen, 2017) cannot be attended by a resettlement plan. Other circumstances—uncertainty about rights, options, eligibility, who one’s allies are and who they are not—are added to the process and can be attended if such circumstances are taken into consideration. Hence, resettlement plans should begin long before the actual resettling and should actually become a safeguarding plan throughout the process.

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