

Dwelling by persistence: an ethnography of everyday practices of footpath dwellers in Mumbai

Paroj Banerjee

A thesis submitted to the Department of Geography & Environment of the
London School of Economics and Political Science for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, London, October 2018.

Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. Quotation from it is permitted, provided that full acknowledgement is made. This thesis may not be reproduced without my prior written consent. I warrant that this authorisation does not, to the best of my belief, infringe the rights of any third party.

I declare that my thesis consists of 86365 words.

Statement of use of third party for editorial help

I can confirm that my thesis was copy edited for conventions of language, spelling and grammar by Pia Maria Malik.

Abstract

This thesis examines how urban poor groups persist in environments that are physically dangerous while having no ‘legitimate’ claims over the place in which they dwell. Acknowledging the everyday vulnerabilities that footpath dwellers in Mumbai navigate, my research explores the lived experiences of groups that are dwelling by persistence. By using the term ‘dwell’, I am alluding both to attempts at seeking provisional shelter or even inhabiting a place, as well as to sustained practices of becoming enmeshed within the city’s geography, of using available material and social networks to hold on to place, and developing emotional ties with spaces that retain footpath dwellers’ ties with the city. These practices play themselves out in a city that has long been framed around two distinct narratives: as one of opportunity and of dispossession.

Drawing from literatures on *dwelling*, *home* and *urban navigations* and *contestations*, I frame my key conceptual framework of dwelling by persistence. It is an embodied experience of existence rooted in place which is enabled through perseverance to retain one’s place. If dwelling entails remaining and creating place in spaces, persistence is about persevering through and sustaining these creations. Based on a year-long ethnography, my empirical chapters explore the three key contributions of my work. One, people foster emotional ties and regard the street as their home in order to endure the larger vulnerabilities of the city. Second, I argue that people navigate official and spatial obstacles to selectively make themselves visible in order to remain in the city. Third, I argue that in the presence of an ambiguous institutional realm, inherent in contradictions, people persist in between multifaceted contestations.

Acknowledgments

There are countless people to thank, so here's an inadequate attempt to express my gratitude:

Maa, Tata, Babuji and Mummy; my four pillars, this thesis is a result of your unconditional love towards me. This would not have been possible without your persistence in enabling me to fulfil my dreams. You exhausted your life's savings to prioritise my PhD, in setting me in a life-changing journey. I hope I am worthy of your sacrifices.

This thesis would not have been possible without the extremely generous and patient support of my supervisors Professor Gareth Jones and Professor Claire Mercer. Thanking you is not enough for being such gracious teachers, for constructively pushing me to think about my research critically and, for close reading and commenting on multiple drafts sent to you at the oddest hours of the day and for giving me space to think of my work independently. Your careful supervision and constant motivation have provided support in despairing times and made me value each milestone in the PhD process.

I express immense gratitude to Dr Romola Sanyal, who supervised me in the initial years, and helped me significantly shape my ideas. Thank you for watching out for me even when you did not have to. I express my heartfelt thanks to the academic staff of the Geography Department, who has reflected with me on my research and have inspired me through their work. Thank you Dr Alan Mace, Dr Austin Zeiderman, Professor Hyun Bang Shin, Dr Murray Low, Dr Nancy Holman, Dr Ryan Centner and Professor Sylvia Chant. I am deeply grateful to my teachers in Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Professor Amita Bhide, Dr Ratoola Kundu and Dr Lalitha Kamath for initiating my interest and providing continuous guidance in shaping my thinking in the field.

A big thank you to my friends in Room 505, Laura, Jordana, Jeanne, Muna, Yi, Meredith, Carwyn and all those who streamed in and out in 4 years. Thank you for putting up with my messy desk, irritable rants and occupying extra chairs with my junk.

Some people in my life, my friends and philosophers, have stuck with me every moment. Ayesha and Kanu, thank you for being such incredibly caring, forgiving and unconditional friends. A big thank you to a group of friends who made the PhD process easy and enjoyable. Nammu, Cansu, Sangeeta, Polo, Bonia, Ari, Dipon, Rini, Karim, Priyanka, Mariya, Ranja, Prakash, Ishani and many others.

Thank you to all those, who shared this PhD journey with me and provided inspiration at different points in time (in no specific order): Andreas, Zeynep, Anthony, Sebastian, Ssu-Han, Billy, Mara, Harry, Alessandra, Carl, Kate, Yimin, Nicola and Do Young. I

am thankful to Jayaraj, Taneesha, Tucker and Ulises for your mentoring and reminders that only tenacity will get me through this process.

I am really grateful to my huge family who has provided constant support and encouragement and for genuinely caring about my well being. Thank you Mam, Kuttu, Babia, Mamamoni, Mesho, Mimmi, Pushpo Mashi, all Pishis, Pishus, Pinki bonu, Mamma, Ipshita Mashi and Anjan Mesho, Chak-gunya clan, Jyotsna di and Bhombol. A very special admiration and gratitude for Roy dida for trusting me with your house, which was a great source of emotional comfort and most importantly financial assistance during fieldwork in Mumbai.

I sincerely thank the organisations that provided me with funding at various points in my PhD. Thank you Royal Geographical Society for considering me worthy of the Slawson Awards. Thank you Calcutta University, Sir Ratan Tata Trust, LSE for the postgraduate travel fund and the LSE Research Fund. I am very grateful to the LSE Equity, Diversity and Inclusion office, staff at Bankside House and Geography Department, especially Elaine and Sam for providing me work opportunities and being wonderful colleagues.

Thank you to my students for your patience in class, for asking hard questions and making me realise the value of simplicity.

And most importantly, a very big thank you to all respondents, without whose cooperation, love, immense tolerance to my unending questions and acceptance, this research would not have been possible. I hope that through this research I have been able to tell your stories well.

I dedicate this research to one person who has taught me to question and rebel against expected norms for women. It was you who planted the PhD seed in my head and said you would break my leg if I thought of marriage before career. I miss you each moment and I hope that you are reading this somewhere (perhaps with dadu). My grandmother, Shila.

List of Abbreviations

ALM - Area Locality Management

AWC - Anganwadi Centres

BJP – Bharatiya Janata Party

BMC – Bombay Municipal Corporation

FIR – First-hand Information Report

GBP – Great British Pound

ICDS – Integrated Child Development Scheme

JICA - Japan International Cooperation Agency

MCGM – Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai

MLA – Member of Legislative Assembly

MMRC - Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation

MP – Member of Parliament

MUTP – Mumbai Urban Transport Project

NGO – Non Governmental Organisation

RTI – Right to Information

SBM – Swachch Bharat Mission

SEEPZ – Special Electronics Export Processing Zone

SPARC – Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres

SRA – Slum Rehabilitation Authority

Glossary of Vernacular Terms

Aadhaar - foundation

Aankh – eye

Anganwadi – courtyard of a house

Bahar ka khana –food from outside

Bajula – adjacent

Basti – settlement, also widely associated with slums

Buildingwale – people living in buildings

Budhwar Mela – Wednesday fair

Chinal/Randi Nagar – prostitute’s town

Dada – big brother

Dahar – municipal raid

Dalda – cheap vegetable oil consumed widely across south Asia

Diwali – festival of lights

Diya – small oil lamps that are used during Diwali and other (mostly) Hindu religious festivals

Hafta - loan

Hak – right/entitlement

Ghar – home

Ghar ka kaam – domestic work

Gutkha – a form of tobacco that is chewed, mostly used across south Asia

Izzat – honour and shame

Kharab aurat – an immoral woman

Kharab dhanda – immoral business

Madakchod – mother fucker

Makaan – house

Mandavali - compromise

Matlabi - selfish

Patra – thin, poor quality sheet of iron

Potla' - a sack made out of cloth

Pucca – permanent

Rangoli – patterns made out colours

Samor – facing

Tokri-wala – Basket makers

Table of contents

Declaration	2
Abstract	3
Acknowledgments.....	4
List of Abbreviations.....	6
Glossary of Vernacular Terms	7
Table of contents	9
List of Figures	13
1 Introduction	15
1.1 Looking for postman no. 17	15
1.2 Motivations for the study	19
1.3 Urban poor, homelessness and footpath dwellers	27
1.4 Politics of housing activism in Mumbai	32
1.5 Mumbai is ‘still’ upgrading: An introduction to the field-site	35
1.5.1 Mahim	39
1.6 Introducing the footpath dwellers.....	43
1.7 Research Questions	52
1.8 Chapter Plan and Thesis Objectives	55
2 Framing Dwelling by Persistence.....	59
2.1 Introduction	59
2.2 Conceptual framework	60
2.3 Key debates in dwelling	65

2.4	Home	71
2.5	Urban Navigations.....	80
2.6	Encroachment, illegality and informality	85
2.7	Dwelling and persisting on a footpath.....	89
2.8	Conclusion.....	93
3	Methodology	95
3.1	Introduction.....	95
3.2	“This time I am on my own”: accessing the field, insider/outsider debate and initial dilemmas.....	96
3.2.1	Negotiating the insider versus outsider status	100
3.3	Participant observation and informal interactions	103
3.4	Interactions with other actors	112
3.5	Use of camera and dictaphone.....	124
3.6	Street ethnography: calibrating risk and performing purpose	130
3.7	Research ethics	134
3.7.1	Promise of change	134
3.7.2	Exiting but not really leaving	136
3.8	Writing the fieldwork and data analysis	138
3.9	Conclusion.....	140
4	Home in the Street.....	142
4.1	Introduction	142
4.2	An ordinary scene of the everyday	144
4.3	From railway ‘basti’ to footpath ‘ghar’	147
4.3.1	We were here before the footpath was built.....	151
4.3.2	The transformation of the area	158

4.4	Home in the street ‘culture’	163
4.4.1	Maintenance of physical limits.....	165
4.4.2	Home food.....	170
4.4.3	Home décor	173
4.4.4	Dwelling with animals.....	177
4.5	Blurring of home and work space	180
4.6	Conclusion.....	187
5	Navigating the City	191
5.1	Introduction	191
5.2	The message	195
5.3	One must know how to climb a wall.....	205
5.4	The raid.....	214
5.5	A wall but not a barrier.....	219
5.6	Navigating legalities.....	224
5.7	Request for Aadhaar card applications.....	231
5.8	Getting the Aadhaar.....	235
5.9	Conclusion.....	240
6	Persisting between Contestations	243
6.1	Introduction	243
6.2	Introducing the “AC Toilet in Mahim”	245
6.3	The objection.....	251
6.4	Civic bodies and citizen’s associations, Zameen ALM.....	254
6.5	The right of the footpath.....	258
6.6	“Citizen” confrontation, politics of digression.....	263
6.7	The compromise	270

6.8	Negotiating resolution	274
6.9	Conclusion.....	280
7	Conclusion.....	283
7.1	Thesis findings	285
7.1.1	What constitutes ‘home’ for the footpath dwellers?.....	286
7.1.2	How do footpath dwellers navigate spatial and official barriers to respond to everyday challenges?	289
7.1.3	How do contradictory spatial claims enable the persistence of urban poor groups in the city?	291
7.2	Scope of future research and policy implications	294
	Bibliography.....	298
	Annexure 1 – Profiles of Key Respondents	320

List of Figures

FIGURE 1.1 MUMBAI IS UPGRADING	36
FIGURE 1.2 A TEMPLE AND A DARGA SHARING THE SAME SPACE	40
FIGURE 1.3 REPRESENTATION OF THE FIELD SITE, MUMBAI DEPICTED ABOVE AND MAHIM REPRESENTED BELOW.....	41
FIGURE 1.4 CONSTRUCTION OF A GATED COMMUNITY, KANAKIA MIAMI, UNDERWAY.	43
FIGURE 1.5 AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS AGAINST HELPING BEGGARS IN MAHIM.....	50
FIGURE 3.1 THE FIELD SITE REPRESENTING RESPONDENTS' USE OF SPACE	106
FIGURE 3.2 FOOTPATH DWELLERS FETCHING WATER FROM A TANKER STOPPED BY THE TRAFFIC CONSTABLE.	114
FIGURE 3.3 ARROW IN THE LEFT IMAGE POINTS TOWARDS THE BAG WITH THE NGO NAME, IMAGE ON THE RIGHT SHOWS REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE NGO WITH DONORS VISITING FROM ABROAD.	119
FIGURE 3.4 RESPONDENTS DISPLAYING THEIR ARTEFACTS COLLECTED OVER THE YEARS FROM THE PASSING TOURISTS, SRI LANKAN RUPEES, NIGERIAN NAIRA AND SAUDI RIYAL.	124
FIGURE 3.5 TOURISTS STOP AND CURATE A FRAME TO PHOTOGRAPH TWO GIRLS WITH TODDLERS ON THEIR LAP, WHILE OTHER CHILDREN OF THE GROUP LOOK ON	126
FIGURE 4.1 DEEPIKA COMPLETING HER EVERYDAY HOUSEHOLD TASKS.....	144
FIGURE 4.2 OBJECTS USED TO DECORATE AND ORDER DOMESTIC SPACES ON THE STREET	174
FIGURE 4.3 DEEPIKA AND VARSHA POSING IN FRONT OF DEEPIKA'S PAINTING OF AN 'IDEAL' LIFE IN THE VILLAGE.	176
FIGURE 4.4 ALAM PROTECTS HIS PET CHICKENS WITHIN THE CONFINES OF A MOSQUITO NET	178
FIGURE 4.5 RESPONDENTS EXPRESS THEIR INTEREST TO LEARN 'EMPLOYABLE' TRAINING AT A SKILL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP.....	184
FIGURE 5.1 FOOTPATH DWELLERS APPROPRIATE A TRAFFIC POLICE BARRICADE TO DRY THEIR CLOTHES.	192

FIGURE 5.2 URMILA, A YOUNG FOOTPATH DWELLER WAITS TO TRANSFER MATERIALS FROM ONE SIDE OF THE WALL TO THE OTHER.	207
FIGURE 5.3 LEFT, A REGULAR SOCIAL GATHERING ON THE FOOTPATH; RIGHT, THE SAME SPACE CLEARED OUT IN PREPARATION FOR THE RAID.	210
FIGURE 5.4 SPACE ON THE FOOTPATH BEFORE (LEFT) AND DURING (RIGHT) THE CLEARANCE OF THE FOOTPATH.	211
FIGURE 5.5: THE PHOTOGRAPH SHOWS HOUSEHOLD ITEMS PLACED ON THE WALL (LEFT), WAITING TO BE TRANSPORTED TO THE OTHER SIDE (RIGHT).	213
FIGURE 5.6 MUNICIPALITY TRUCK AND POLICE VEHICLE CARRY OUT CLEARANCE DRIVES IN EARLY JANUARY, 2017.	216
FIGURE 5.7 DIFFERENT WAYS THE WALL IS USED TO SUPPORT OBJECTS REQUIRED IN EVERYDAY LIVES.	222
FIGURE 5.8 COPIES OF VARIOUS OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS THAT BEAR THE FOOTPATH AS THE ADDRESS	227
FIGURE 5.9 A BANNER OUTSIDE THE AADHAAR ENROLMENT CENTRE THAT MENTIONS IT IS 'VOLUNTARY' BUT COVERS THE 'FREE' ASPECT OF IT.	238
FIGURE 6.1 THE COMPLETED TOILET BLOCK ON SHANTI NAGAR FOOTPATH	246
FIGURE 6.2 CONSTRUCTION OF TOILET ON THE FOOTPATH BEGAN OVER-NIGHT.	249
FIGURE 6.3 THE MEETING OF ZAMEEN ALM MEMBERS WITH COUNCILLOR SHEETAL GAMBHIR REGARDING THE TOILET BLOCK.	260
FIGURE 6.4 MCGM'S NOTICE ON THE TOILET, ITS USAGE AND FUTURE USE.	272

1 Introduction

Bambai mein to khane ka jagah mil jata hai, par sone ka jagah nei. Chhaapa chhaapa napa hua hai is sehar mein ... hum usi mein baste hai.

(It is easy to get food for survival in Bombay, but not easy to get a place to rest. In this city every space is meticulously occupied. We remain somewhere in that).

Valli, a friend of a key respondent, interview conducted on 01.08.2016

1.1 Looking for postman no. 17

It was hot afternoon, a Wednesday. Rekha, a footpath¹ dweller in Mahim, a key respondent, and I set out for the third time to look for the postman who was supposed to deliver the Aadhaar card² to her family. Having not received the Aadhaar card even though it had been two months since they made their application, Rekha and her husband had begun to worry. Their worry was not about the application being rejected, but the possibility that the card had been lost or sent back because they lacked a postal address. As we set out to trace the package at the local post office, we were directed to a person whom we would pursue for the next few days. The man at the counter casually said “look for Mr Tawde, postman no. 17, and ask for your item”. Where do we look for him, I asked, to which he replied, “roam the streets of the locality and you will find

¹ The synonyms for this word are pavement, sidewalk, walkway etc., however I choose to use “footpath” owing to its current usage in Mumbai’s culture. While in material terms footpath refers to an “elevated margin of the street shaped by distinct architectural order and regulations” (Bandyopadhyay, 2010, p. 123) in its daily usage the footpath extends beyond the elevated margins and the portion between the carriageway and the edge of the pavement are intense areas of activities in Indian cities (*ibid.*). In this thesis I use the terms footpath and pavement interchangeably, although the former is used more predominantly than the latter.

² The Aadhaar card is a unique identity document for residents of India comprising 12 digits and is registered through biometric and demographic data. There is a detailed discussion on the navigational practices of acquiring this document in Chapter 5. The Aadhaar card application requires the declaration of a postal address, which could often be a reason to reject an application if the information is not valid. I came across many Aadhaar cards where the ‘footpath’ is mentioned as the address. To me this appeared as a very interesting aspect that points towards a de facto acceptance of a “public” place as an address.

him”. So we did exactly that. For three afternoons we roamed the streets of Mahim, looking for a man in a grey uniform with a post bag. For two days we were unsuccessful, although the activity provided an overwhelming experience of walking through the neighbourhood, amidst the traffic, past the farsaan (Indian sweets and savoury) shops, car repair workshops, into the slum of Naya Nagar, and to witness the skyline of Mumbai from a secret spot that Rekha took me to.

The search for Mr Tawde was an opportunity to understand that while Rekha dwells on the footpaths along the railway line, her social networks are spread across and embedded deep within the city. This was a chance for me to befriend her friends, and to learn how the grocer located deep in the labyrinth of Naya Nagar had looked after some of the personal belongings of Rekha and her family when the municipal trucks had last come to clear off the footpath. For me it was an opportunity to understand Rekha better, as we navigated away from her dwelling place and her immediate family, so that we could discuss the latest developments in our private lives. It was during one of these walks that she casually mentioned that she may have conceived for the third time, and this time she was contemplating terminating her pregnancy because her two other children were still young and it would be very hard to manage such young children living on the street.

On the third day, as we steered our way through the car repair workshops, we saw a postman sipping tea at one of the stalls on the other side of the road. Rekha leapt with her toddler son to cross the road, forcing a car to screech to a halt. Uninhibited, Rekha continued her sprint, while the driver rolled the window down and yelled insults at her. I followed hurriedly but far more cautiously, holding the hand of Rekha’s three year old daughter. Our search had come to an end. We had found Mr Tawde, a new postman

who had been recently assigned to the area. By the time I reached them, Rekha had finished telling him what she was looking for. Mr Tawde opened his bag and sifted through a heap of mail, but said that he was not carrying her post. He also assured her that he would be more vigilant about Rekha's mail and that if he found something, he would deliver it to Rekha's spot on the footpath. They also made an alternative arrangement to leave the post with a fruit seller next to the station if Rekha or her family were not around. On our way back she told me that had it been the previous postman she would not have needed to worry, as he knew her family and their movements. Years of dwelling in the same location, and established urban routines (in this case the postman passing by their dwelling places every day and occasionally delivering mail) cultivated a form of sociality that was based not on 'formal'³ connections but everyday interpersonal exchanges.

The opening vignette gives me scope to present an account of the everyday navigational practices through which urban poor groups dwell in a city like⁴ Mumbai. Ordinarily, once an Aadhaar card application is processed, it is sent to the postal address of the beneficiary in the applicant's house. But Rekha's case was different, although not entirely unusual, because in Mumbai such informal ways of accessing institutional services constitute an established practice of getting by (McFarlane, 2011). The search for the postman goes beyond a practical exercise of ensuring a secure receipt of the mail despite lacking an address. It is symbolic of the everyday realities of numerous street

³ I stress on the word formal to highlight how such categories have become established in recognising practices within the city. Although these categories help identify the realms of operation, I exercise caution in using these terms. Use of words like 'formal', 'legal', 'legitimate' are imbued with normative undertones that usually imply it is the poor who engage in practices that are not within those categories. In an urban context where elites and the state engage in so-called "illegal" practices which are not only tolerated but sometimes even celebrated, ascriptions of these terms require caution (See Roy, 2009 and Ghertner, 2015 for more).

⁴ I use the expression "like" to connote that while my study is located in Mumbai, these are regular practices in the city, particularly in the global south.

and footpath dwellings that dot the various spatial geographies of Mumbai. Looking for postman no. 17 is therefore not just about locating a person, it is an instance of navigating the formal procedures of the city to achieve ends. It is symptomatic of how in conditions of spatial, social, economic and political vulnerabilities, things get done in Mumbai.

This thesis examines how urban poor groups persist in environments that are physically dangerous while having no ‘legitimate’ claims over the place in which they dwell. When I use the term ‘dwell’, I am alluding not only to attempts at seeking provisional shelter or even inhabiting a place, but also to sustained practices of getting enmeshed within the city’s geography, of using available material and social networks to hold on to place, and developing emotional ties with spaces to retain their places in the city. These practices play themselves out in a city that has long been framed around two distinct narratives: as a city of opportunity on the one hand, and of dispossession on the other. These images of Mumbai allude either to the lauding of the global elites shaping the city in the ‘world class’ spirit, and towards the critique of neo-liberal city development that is cleansing the poor from the public sphere. Acknowledging the everyday vulnerabilities that the groups of footpath dwellers navigate, my research explores the lived experiences of groups that are dwelling by persistence, i.e. inhabiting, embedding in, domesticating, navigating, and resisting the city in the face of numerous obstacles.

Based on 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork with footpath dwellers, I interrogate how and why urban marginal groups in Mumbai persist in place, under conditions of precarity. Drawing from literature on dwelling (Heidegger and Krell, 1993; Ingold,

2005; Young, 2005; Jones, 2009; McFarlane, 2012; Blunt and Sheringham, 2018), urban navigations (de Certeau, 1984; Bayat, 2000; Benjamin, 2008; Anjaria and McFarlane, 2011; Weinstein, 2014; Anjaria, 2016) and urban contestations (Mitchell, 1991; Blomley, 2004; Anjaria, 2009; Yiftachel, 2009b), I argue that people persist in the city by developing emotional attachment with place, navigating everyday obstacles and by taking advantage of the presence of an ambiguous institutional realm. While revanchist discourses frame visions of the city in which the elimination of visible markers of poverty is key to the city's aesthetic appeal, urban poor groups remain in the public sphere through persistence, which is a kind of urban tenacity of remaining in place. This is an expression of a kind of steadfastness that is exercised not necessarily through an act of rebellion, but through sustained efforts of holding on to location and returning to place (Mitchell, 1997).

1.2 Motivations for the study

The motivation for my research was prompted, not by an event in Mumbai, but by something that happened in Delhi. In 2008, an extremely harsh winter had caused the death of rough sleepers living on the streets of Delhi. Seeing the inaction of the state government, a group of activists organised to agitate for shelter homes⁵ for people sleeping rough. As Mander (2010) writes in his opinion piece in *The Hindu*: “It began when, last winter, the public conscience was stirred briefly by media reports of homeless people dying in the winter cold. Many of those who succumbed to the fierce winter chill were young working people: balloon sellers, rickshaw pullers, casual workers, street vendors” (no page). A group of former civil servants, journalists, lawyers and housing rights activists launched a scathing attack on the government for

⁵ A shelter home is an institutional refuge meant for people living without ‘homes’.

neglecting its “citizens”. Following a public interest litigation that was filed in the Supreme Court of India, the government was ordered to immediately provide for shelter homes in Delhi. Picking up from the success in Delhi, activism around homelessness gained momentum and spread across other major urban centres, particularly Mumbai. The sudden attention to homelessness within India is the result of a combination of the attempts of the state to reconfigure the landscapes of the millennial city (Baviskar, 2003; Ghertner, 2015) and the “conjectural alignment of South Asian urban transformation and Euro-American policy...” (Anjaria and McFarlane, 2011, p. 1). Although activism around homelessness in Mumbai has picked up momentum, the specificities of the urban landscape are quite different from that of Delhi and therefore I was keen to undertake research that narrates the urban spatial stories of homelessness in Mumbai.

My initial motivation for the study emanates from an interest in questions of marginalisation in the lives of these ‘dispossessed’ groups. It emerges from a concern to ensure that all people living in the city, particularly “homeless” women and children, have secure shelter. I pursued this interest in my postgraduate (M.A.) studies at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai where my dissertation focused on a group of workers in garment production units living and working in one of Mumbai’s most volatile slums, Behrampada. A key finding that emerged from my study was that, despite living in tenement structures, they considered themselves homeless and had been rendered politically and socially invisible. This invisibility in policy circles and at the local administration level became obvious, when, after a fire that gutted their neighbourhood, these groups did not receive compensation as they were deemed not to have been living there. Thus, despite living and working in the locality, a lack of proof

of address in the city rendered them ineligible for compensation. This study furthered my interest in questions of what constitutes home and its different meanings to people (Tuan, 1978; Young, 2005; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Charlton and Meth, 2017). I realised that shelter, although a significant aspect of housing, is not by itself sufficient to make people feel secure (Turner, 1972; Charlton and Meth, 2017). Therefore, despite living under a permanent roof, which as per the official definition constitutes a house, this group of workers was technically homeless.

The popular understanding of homelessness is associated with footpath living, or as some activists call it, “Living Rough” (Mander, 2009). These conceptualisations lack a consideration of the lived experiences of these groups, which is essential to understand how people cope with their vulnerabilities in their everyday lives. An interview with Abhishek Bharadwaj (Mumbai Social Action, 2012), a Mumbai-based activist who has been working on the issue of “homelessness” and who had worked with the same group amongst whom I conducted my fieldwork, describes them as occupying the lowest rung of the urban poverty hierarchy. As I engaged with these questions in the field, I came across stark instances of lives on the street that were highly (or could be described as) precarious.

As I will elaborate later in this chapter and through subsequent empirical accounts developed in the thesis, their everyday lives are subjected to “ever-present forms of risk” (Appadurari, 2001, p. 27). They have built their homes along a street, and with materials that either perish easily or may be taken away by municipal officials. I often heard my respondents narrate that members from the ‘encroachment’ removal department of the local municipality would confiscate their belongings and the blue tarpaulin sheet that they use to build their homes. Respondents would share with me,

how they painstakingly rebuilt their dwelling after every torrential downpour. Their everyday lives along a railway track, open sewerage lines and a busy traffic route, makes them susceptible to numerous health risks. They constantly negotiate the threat of being attacked by animals, such as stray dogs and rats. During fieldwork, I regularly heard accounts of how someone got attacked by stray dogs or bitten by rats that are in abundance along the railway tracks in Mumbai. Thus respondents not only navigated police, municipal officials, harsh weather conditions, but also physical vulnerabilities that were intrinsic to living in an exposed condition on a street. In fact, it was due to the fear of attracting rats that people on the footpaths never stored food items or raw ingredients in bulk. This often meant that instead of being able to economise on the costs of everyday living, respondents spent time and effort buying food items in small quantities on a daily basis. Living alongside a busy transport route made them vulnerable to frequent accidents. Physical suffering that was specific to living on the street was so normalised that people would often refer to them as usual occurrences of their everyday living. Yet on a regular basis, I learnt of accounts of how someone was hit by a car or how a stone hit someone on the head as a car sped by. These hardships, although not acknowledged by people in similar terms, took a massive toll on their mental health. People were often anxious and irritable and this mental volatility resulted in constant skirmishes, some of which would take violent forms.

While people made the footpaths their home, they were perpetually anxious about being subjected to municipal actions, as they understood that the footpath was after all a 'public space'. These empirical accounts of everyday vulnerabilities associated with street dwelling, aligns with what Butler (2009, pii) terms "precarity", i.e:

“... condition[s] in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death. Such populations are at heightened risk of disease, poverty, starvation, displacement, and of exposure to violence without protection.”

These accounts of footpath dwelling can be read as forms of “housing precarity” (Muñoz, 2018, p. 370) that denies poor people a right to the city. Indeed, as my accounts show, precarity⁶ has become a constitutive aspect of the contemporary city. Yet, as pointed out by scholars and as shown in the thesis, urban precarity is an ‘unfinished’ (my emphasis) aspect of urban life (Munck, 2013; Das and Randeria, 2016; Simone, 2016; Lancione, 2018; Muñoz, 2018). Thus, precarity is both product and producer of urban life. Lancione (2018) argues that precarity is “instantiated at the level of the body, where it leaves its marks, but also where it can be challenged and re-appropriated” (p.2). In other words, even the most marginal urban actors are not passive agents, but as my examples show are constantly responding to precarities in their everyday lives. This way precarity plays a crucial role in shaping the poor as political actors (Das and Randeria, 2016) and presenting “different possibilities of action” (p.10) in responding to the volatilities of urban life that goes beyond material scarcity.

The accounts of precarities associated with street living have been elaborated throughout my thesis. However, rather than foreground these precarities, I pay attention to the ways that people navigate them to retain their places in the city. While limited scholarship on homeless groups in India (SPARC, 1985; Banerjee-Guha, 2011, 2013;

⁶ The term ‘precariat’ became popular following Guy Standing’s (2011) book *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. While many scholars regarded this work as new sociological commentary on the urban poor, there has been a long genealogy of this debate. Moreover it is important to note that there is a distinction between precarity and the precariat. Critiquing Standing’s work scholars from the South have claimed that the literature on precarity and the precariat to be “almost totally Northern centric in its theoretical frame and its empirical reference points” (Munck, 2013, p.752). Instead scholars call for a Southern understanding of urban precarity that has been influenced by nature of the postcolonial state and later by the developmental state. Thus, precariousness in the global south, is far more multifaceted and widespread than in the global north, and conforms to different political economies of labour and state relations.

Wardhaugh, 2012; Jha and Kumar, 2016) have pointed towards how these urban marginals are excluded from the city, they have overlooked how groups, such as those in my study, are attached to place (Anjaria and McFarlane, 2011; Cresswell, 2014) and invoke a sentiment of home to stake a claim to urban space. Similarly a significant debate in urban studies has stressed the sway global capital has had in transforming cities in a way that marginalises vulnerable people even further (Gandy, 2008; Harvey, 2008; Banerjee-Guha, 2013). There has been a growing interest in either the counter-movements, or everyday, less sweeping yet sustained “series of daily transgressions – some quite unconscious – that challenge existing configurations of space and power” (Weinstein, 2014, p. 16). While these theorisations of the urban around precarity highlight the “condition of maximized vulnerability” (Butler, 2009, p.ii) of the urban marginals, they do not account for how the poor cope with these conditions. In these accounts, there is an absence of individual or collective practice, i.e. agency, that acquires the form of resistance but also goes beyond to “bring about more subtle forms of transformation” (Williams, 2013, p. 234; Simone, 2016).

As my empirical chapters will show, these groups do not perceive themselves as homeless, but as actors who have an intimate relationship with place. Thus these practices point towards a “politics of the urban poor” (Bayat, 2000, p.545) that is more about adaptation and navigation, rather than outright resistance or submission (Anjaria, 2016; Simone, 2016). I am therefore keen to understand how people dwell, as reading the city through this framework has significance in terms of how housing, home and inclusion within the city are practiced (Ingold, 2005; McFarlane, 2011; Anjaria, 2016). My study fills these gaps by moving away from the narratives of precarity and marginalisation, instead showing how everyday acts of holding on to place makes

persistence possible. As articulated by Simone (2016, p.151): “If we only pay attention to the rollout of contemporary spatial products as exemplars of urban neoliberalism, we might miss opportunities to see something else taking place, vulnerable and provisional though it may be”.

Over time and through ethnographic engagement, I simultaneously also encountered the cracks through which people recalibrated power and the material practices that enabled them to get by in the city. I observed that in their everyday discourse, the reference to domesticities and practices of home was simultaneously taking place with mentions of how they protected themselves from the extreme weather conditions or circumvented a municipal action. For instance, paying attention to the “diverse ways people use mundane city spaces such as walls, bridges, and the side of the road to build homes and establish communities and livelihoods” enables an understanding of the city beyond “political economic approaches that focus solely on structural inequality and deprivation” (Anjaria, 2016, p. 162). These framings disregard the efforts of the homeless, thereby undermining their agency and ability to make improvements to their everyday lives.

My present focus on a group of footpath dwellers was also prompted by a desire to question the ‘slum’-centric representation of urban marginality. This slum-centric representation, both celebratory and derogatory, “fails to address the fact that the most extreme levels of poverty are not necessarily found in the slums” (Arabindoo, 2011, p. 638), and in doing so attention is turned away from people like Rekha who are fighting hard to claim a space in the city. Born and raised on a busy street in Mumbai, she has internalised a distinction that has emerged from her spatial condition. According to another key respondent, Basanti, the slums appear as a place of “buildings”, a space

where people have a greater economic capacity than her community. To her, life in the slums is a life of “more permanence and safety” where at least the everyday is not determined by whether the municipal trucks will come to evict them (see Chapter 5) or whether someone in the family will be hit by a moving car. To her, the slums are an aspiration. Basanti’s comment is telling, as it reveals that groups like hers inhabit the lowest domains of an urban poverty hierarchy. This representation not only obscures understanding of these varied spatial practices, but also obfuscates the role of these marginal groups in shaping the city.

Notwithstanding the political significance of this term in understanding subaltern urbanism (Roy, 2011), there has been a fixation of urban scholars and practitioners in using the term ‘slum’, as an analytical category (Arabindoo, 2011) to read the ‘crises’ in the cities of the global south. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with footpath dwelling groups in Mumbai, I argue that in order to understand the breadth of marginal living practices in the city, attention needs to be extended to spaces ‘beyond slums’, spaces that embody a set of practices and negotiations within the city that are spatially distinct from the slums. The exposed nature of dwelling makes their everyday living dangerous and this constant adaptation to vulnerabilities sets forth a form of spatiality that is distinct from living in slums. While slums are being peripheralised (Rao, 2013; Björkman, 2015a) through various policy and state interventions, these groups continue to hold on to places within the city that are undergoing gentrification. And it is this ‘holding on’ or what I call persistence that makes their everyday lives more vulnerable to the spatial and social vulnerabilities that are distinct from those living in slums.

1.3 Urban poor, homelessness and footpath dwellers

In India, the homelessness issue, it is claimed (Kothari, 2003; Mander, 2007; Chaudhry, Joseph and Singh, 2012), is not only understudied in academia, but has also been trivialised within policy circles and urban planning initiatives (Banerjee-Guha, 2011, 2013). It is argued that the literature that currently exists on homelessness mostly constitutes news articles and NGO reports (Banerjee-Guha, 2011). These are either polemical expressions of the failure of the welfare state or policy prescriptions to end homelessness. Banerjee-Guha (2011) argues that “[A]lthough no exhaustive study exists on the homeless population in Mumbai, the few studies and surveys that have been conducted by NGOs and researchers in different parts of the city do throw light on the overall hapless situation of the homeless in this budding international financial centre of India” (p. 69).

My examination of the literature on homelessness in India reveals a more nuanced set of observations. I forward three arguments to assert that the topic has been addressed not so much through a limited literature, but rather that there has been a disjunction in its conceptualisation, which explains why there is limited work on the lives of the homeless. First, in the context of Mumbai, I came across literature that looks at similar groups, i.e. street and footpath dwelling communities. This literature frames homelessness as the marginal existence of these groups on the basis of their spatial condition. A study conducted by The Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centre (SPARC) called “We the Invisible, A census of footpath dwellers”, throws light on the growing magnitude of the “problem” and uses this document to advocate for the rehabilitation of these groups (SPARC, 1985). Similarly, more recent academic work that refers to SPARC’s “politics of inclusion” (Appadurai, 2001; Roy, 2009a) makes

references to footpath dwelling groups “living along Mumbai’s railway tracks” (Roy, 2009, p. 167) and suggests the further embedding of these mobilisations in the city’s geography:

The Federation was used to the strategies of the rights based approach, vocal and public opposition on the streets and pressure for legal reform . . . In the 1990s, as the women leaders in Mahila Milan gained in confidence, they began to challenge the way in which they were being used by the male leadership . . . In 1985, when the city threatened to demolish the footpath dwellings, all NGOs and youth groups wanted to fight street battles to defend the rights of footpath dwellers to reside on the footpaths of Bombay . . . SPARC, the support NGO, asked women in the Byculla area, who were living on footpaths, and members of Mahila Milan what they wanted to do . . . The women said ‘. . . we don’t want to fight and we don’t want to stay on the footpaths either! Go and speak to the municipality and to the state government and see if you can explain to them our situation.’ Mahila Milan and NSDF began to work on their re-housing strategy and, in 1995, as a result of footpath enumerations and other lobbying, were able to ensure that footpath dwellers were included in the group of slum dwellers entitled to relocation under the Slum Rehabilitation Act . . . Federation members have become very conscious that they cannot defeat the state. Their experience is that the more oppositional their position, the more likely they are to risk violence and other forms of repression (Mitlin and Patel, 2005b, in Roy, 2009, p. 167).

Influential NGOs have historically mobilised these footpath dwellers to engage in a brand of politics which has further set forth a process of sorting, wherein those who align with the governmentality of the NGOs are rehoused in tenement-style buildings. For those who do not, they are then left out of these housing provisions (more on this in Chapter 5). I therefore contend that groups who are currently framed as homeless (and I stress, mostly by civil society) are the ones who have not been amenable to the “politics of inclusion”.

Second, the language of homelessness has been a strategic move by contemporary activism and civil society organisations to fight legal battles to get some immediate entitlements like shelter and food to resist evictions. Framed in the language of ‘rights’ these mobilisations construct the ‘homeless’ as the most marginalised sections of

society, “belonging nowhere” (Chaudhry, Joseph and Singh, 2012, p. 2), who are being pushed into further deprivation through state negligence and criminalisation. One such work is a report by Harsh Mander (2009) that was drafted for the Planning Commission of India to suggest avenues for policy interventions to redefine urban poverty by taking into account situations of deprivation. The study claims to highlight homeless people in four cities and it aimed to understand the “lived experiences” of the homeless, and included a wide range of precarious housing conditions:

It is remarkable that so little is known about the lived experience of homelessness in towns and cities in India: of how urban homeless men, women and children survive and cope; how they sleep, bathe and eat; why do they live on the streets and the work they do; their denials and access to public services and food schemes; and how they organise and plan their personal and social lives and their relationships. This neglect is not just of official studies, but even by economists, sociologists, anthropologists, nutritionists and development students (*ibid.*, p. 4).

However, despite the intended objective of understanding lived experiences, the study is limited to highlighting the causal factors of homelessness and describing some of its broad demographic features. Similar other works remain confined to a narrative of marginalisation that has not been able to explain the relations of space to peoples’ everyday living (Chaudhry, Joseph and Singh, 2012). At the risk of homogenising the urban poor, these works limit their analysis to shelter-centric recommendations meant to “end homelessness”.

Third, the literature considers that in India there is no official definition of “homelessness”⁷. The homeless are officially enumerated as “houseless” and are defined as all those who are not living in a census house, i.e. a structure with a roof

⁷ The census of India defines “houseless households” as those not living in a census house, i.e. “a building or part of a building used or recognized as a separate unit because of having a separate main entrance from the road or common courtyard or staircase etc. It may be occupied or vacant. It may be used for a residential or non-residential purpose or both” (Census of India, 2011, p. 8)

(Dupont, 2000; Mander, 2007). Academic discussions either conflate homelessness with the urban poor in slums, or remain limited to seeking technical solutions to housing. This gets reflected in policy with homelessness being seen as a pathology that needs to be remedied through standardised policy and planning prescriptions. There has therefore been a major failure to address the issues of secure housing and more fundamental questions of citizenship (Speak, 2004). I therefore argue that in geographical contexts where kinship ties and social networks form a central aspect of organising life and learning to survive in the city (Roy, 2009; Vasudevan, 2015), the conflation of the two terms does not explain the specificities of dwelling practices of the urban poor. It draws attention away from the myriad ways in which people move through the city, address everyday vulnerabilities, and negotiate spaces. For instance, referring to a group of street children in Mumbai, McFarlane speaks of the “urban worldliness” through which they “learn to negotiate multiple groups and spaces in the everyday struggle to survive, through which they develop a sensitivity to the role that different individuals and groups play in urban life, as well as where and when to be in particular places (McFarlane, 2011, p. 44).

Footpath dwellers and rough sleepers have been viewed as “homeless” not just in the planning arena but also by NGOs who advocate for the rights of the homeless to participate in and gain access to the resources of the city (Kothari et al., 2006; Chaudhury et al., 2010). Critiquing this conflation of homelessness with houselessness, Blunt and Dowling (2006) argue that although the lack of a physical structure is a key feature, it does not signify a total condition of ‘lack’. I reiterate my point here to argue that it is not that less has been written about groups who inhabit places like “roadside, drainage pipes, under staircases or in the open – temple mandaps, platforms, etc.”

(Mander, 2009, p. 4), but that these writings have either framed these populations as abject groups without agency or homogenised them as “homeless” rather than highlighting the spatial specificities and particular “tactics” (de Certeau, 1984) of their everyday lives. This study therefore aims to fill this gap by examining the specific life-worlds of marginal urban dwellers to highlight how they negotiate “identities, spaces and temporalities” (McFarlane, 2011, p. 44) of dwelling in the city.

Referring to the literature on homelessness in the global south more generally, Speak (2013) accounts for the limited scholarship on the topic. She argues that much of the work has avoided “reconceptualization” and that definitions and concepts developed in the Western countries have been borrowed without considering the country specific contexts. She further argues that homelessness is conceptually different owing to the scale, understanding of home in relation to kinship, the role of the extended family, social networks, gender norms and attitudes to ownership (Tipple and Speak, 2004; Speak, 2013). Academic work focused on North American cities, where heightened measures of policing and urban surveillance (Wolch and Dear, 1993; Gowan, 2010; Gibson, 2011) rendered cities far more exclusionary as compared to cities in the global south where “informality” was an accepted way of living (Nakamura, 2014; Anjaria, 2016; Kidambi, 2016), has helped refine our understanding of homelessness. For instance, Gibson’s work, where she mentions the formation of spatial regimes whereby the poor were swept away from the city centres, demonstrates that the empirical condition in Indian cities has been very different (Gibson, 2011). The spatial regimes that she mentions are formations of the state, whereas in the context of my research I observed multiple spatial regimes among various groups that opened up spaces of contestation. Several scholars point out that the act of moving in and out of institutions

forms a crucial part of the homeless experience (Hecht, 1998; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Gowan, 2010).

1.4 Politics of housing activism in Mumbai

In a working paper that evaluates the status of citizenship of footpath dwellers in Mumbai, Burra provides a description of pavement homes:

Pavement dwellers are households who live and raise families on pavements (sidewalks). The basic requirement for the establishment of a dwelling is a stretch of pavement, free from vehicular traffic, usually 2-3 m long and 1-2 m deep from the kerb to the wall of the property bordering the pavement. The first occupation of a stretch of pavement is usually a family settling to sleep on the pavement surrounded by their meagre possessions, followed by the erection of a plastic or sacking sheet stretched from the wall to a point near the curb of the pavement. Thereafter the 'lean-to tent' will gradually be replaced with slightly a more permanent structure of second-hand poles, packing cases, timber boards, cardboard, occasionally loose bricks covered with plastic sheets. A second floor loft is often built to provide additional sleeping space, though the ground floor 'ceiling height' is rarely more than 1.5 m and that of the loft a metre" (Burra, 2000, p. 1).

The footpath dwelling groups in my study display similar characteristics to the description provided by Burra. Although they display very specific ways of inhabiting the footpath and addressing everyday challenges of street dwelling, they are reflective of the general conditions of urban poor groups who are not in slums. Their conditions resonate with the way Appadurai (2001, pp. 27-28) describes the "poorest of the poor" groups as the city's toilers. Referring to these groups as "citizens without a city", he argues that their housing status is fundamental in giving them access to substantive citizenship. Not only are their housing conditions unstable and dominated by "ever

present forms of risk”, but their temporary shelters remain under the constant threat of demolition. And it is this instability, he asserts, that makes them ineligible to document⁸ their claims, making them largely invisible in urban life.

Following a spurt of judicial activism in the 1980s, footpath dwellers in Mumbai emerged as a strongly mobilised group and a distinct category of the urban poor who had gained official recognition for being included in the housing programmes of the city (Appadurai, 2001). Particularly significant here is the court case of *Olga Tellis vs the Municipal Corporation of Mumbai (BMC)*⁹, where the petitioners advocated for the footpath dwellers in Mumbai who faced mass evictions. Reinterpreting Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, the Right to Life and Personal Liberty, the petitioners argued that that the colonial laws were violating not only the constitutional guarantees but were also in contravention to the welfare commitment of the state. The outcome of this case was significant because although the court upheld the decision of the municipal commissioner to evict the footpath dwellers, it also made the state government responsible for rehabilitating these groups (see Chapter 6 for more).

This set forth a concerted effort by activists and NGOs to identify “beneficiaries” who were eligible for the resettlement scheme. SPARC¹⁰ was one of the leading NGOs that undertook the survey of pavement dwellers for beneficiary identification¹¹. Simpreet Singh, a housing rights activist in Mumbai, confirmed to me in an interview that one of their victories in the housing struggle was when pavement dwellers were included under

⁸ I deviate from this assertion in Chapter 5 by showing how people negotiate access to formal documents in order to navigate the city.

⁹ For more on this court case and the legal impacts on city dwellers see Chapter 5.

¹⁰ For more on the work of SPARC and its politics of alliance see Appadurai, 2000.

¹¹ I learnt about this through my interviews with Simpreet Singh, Assistant Engineer (AE) of the G/North Ward and the peon to the AE, who showed me the full list of eligible beneficiaries that was undertaken by SPARC. I verified this by making trips to the SPARC office and obtaining documents that had the list of these beneficiaries.

the purview of the Slum Act (interview conducted on 21.04.17). However, what seems like victory to housing rights activists appears to me as the creation of further crevices between people in the city. While on one hand the declaration of pavement communities as ‘slums’ was a victory for a group of housing rights activists, on the other it entailed administering this beneficiary scheme through a host of governmental dictates, that excluded all those who did not fit into the eligibility criteria. This form of governmentality (Appadurai, 2001) internalised by NGOs, entailed in an immediate sense rehousing “slum-dwellers” into neatly packed tenement style housing at distant locations (Amin, 2013). In a more broad sense, I stress that this form of urban transformation fits with the contemporary practices of governance (Ghertner, 2010) where the city is imagined along the aesthetics of the world-classness in which the presence of any marker of poverty is rejected or considered backward. This logic of governmentality emerges from a spectacle that “operates as a diffuse signifier, training a particular way of seeing and putting in place an aesthetically grounded form of power/knowledge – the world-class aesthetic – that inspires in its potential subjects a will to participate in its discourse and to make its visual criteria their own” (Ghertner, 2015, p. 9). Thus unlike how some scholars have theorised this as “deep democracy” (Appadurai, 2001, p.23), others see this as the deliberate invisibilisation of marginal groups (Mander, 2007; Bhide and Spies, 2013).

In the struggle to gain recognition and legal status of slums and footpath dwellers, the former achieved this status to some degree, while the pavement dwellers in Mumbai continued to struggle for access to basic services like water and sanitation. In this thesis I show that their socio-spatialities are deeply embedded within the material and social urban form, and constitute a politics of persistence. Thus while these groups may be

politically and socially invisible, their physical presence in the city is very clearly discernible. These groups are as much a part of the historical, contemporary and future narrative of the city, as those who constitute citizens with “legitimate” rights to the city (Nakamura, 2014; Anjaria, 2016). The community of footpath dwellers that I worked with during my fieldwork, comprise this group of “toilers”, and are a vital part of the history and geography of the city. My framing of these groups departs from the kind of framing that, although it is critical of their exclusion, gets entangled in a narrative that ultimately pits them outside the “city”. Rather, based on the ethnography of these families living on footpaths adjoining a busy street in Mumbai, I borrow from Anjaria and I term this group of footpath dwellers as “margins of the margins”, who inhabit the extreme end of graduated illegalities” (p. 76).

1.5 Mumbai is ‘still’ upgrading: An introduction to the field-site



Figure 1.1 Mumbai is upgrading

Photograph credit: Author. Date: 07.07.17

“Upgrading” is a word that describes an ongoing scenario, and signals a state that has not been achieved but is on its way to being attained. It also represents my field site. During my fieldwork I saw these barricades with the tagline “Mumbai is Upgrading”¹² (Figure 1.1) in numerous parts of the city. The photograph that I have shown here is not very far from the footpaths where I conducted my ethnography.

This photograph is significant in many ways. First, if one takes a closer look at the phrasings and illustrations on the barricades, there are clear projections of the future of the city as a clean, planned and sanitised urban form. This narrative resonates strongly with the “Vision Mumbai” document (Bombay First and McKinsey, 2003) that aimed to transform Mumbai into a “world-class city” (Mumbai Transportation Support Unit 2011) by 2013:

Mumbai’s vision statement for 2013

Mumbai’s aspiration is to become a world-class city in the next 10-15 years. In order to achieve this, it needs to be distinctive on the dimension of economic growth and above average on quality of life. It will, therefore, need to step up economic growth to 8-10 per cent by becoming one of Asia’s leading service hubs, with a fast-growing manufacturing base in the hinterland. On the quality of life dimension, comparing it to the benchmark cities revealed that it needed to move from average to above average on mass transport, from poor to above average on private transport, housing, safety/environment, financing and governance. It will also need to make improvements in the remaining areas, i.e., go from being average to above average in water/sanitation and education and from above average to world-class in healthcare (*ibid.*, p. 6).

¹² This photograph shows the ongoing construction of the Third Phase of the Mumbai Metro Rail project executed by Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation (MMRC), a joint venture of the Government of Maharashtra and Government of India. This project is being partly funded by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and aims to connect a 33.5 kilometre long stretch of the city running through some of its most valued real estate, the Colaba-Bandra-SEEPZ (Special Electronics Export Processing Zone) corridor.

This report, published with the approval of the government of Maharashtra¹³ became the:

roadmap for urban transformation, placing particular emphasis on massive investments in infrastructure..., to facilitate the growth of high end services ... attract investment,... and to create 'hygienic and aesthetic surroundings' that will increase land values (Björkman, 2015, p. 249).

This photograph (Figure 1.1) reflects the fact that in 2017, the project of modernity that was meant to be completed in 2013 was still under construction. There have been several disruptions to the project since its inception, owing to some strong resistance from environmental groups who filed petitions in the court to stall the project (Karkaria, 2017). The global vision of Mumbai has been punctured by the spatial persistence of urban poor groups but also by the city elites through their social power and legal interferences.

Second, a close examination of the photograph reveals that people have re-appropriated the spaces by sliding the barriers and have gradually begun to regain their dwelling spaces. In walks across the neighbourhood with respondents, I would often come across these barricades and they would tell me how some of the dwellers had been removed. Concurrently they would also tell me that some of the families were making their way back and were placing themselves around these barricades. The green cloth strung between two barricades is a sign that erstwhile dwellers have returned to the footpath. This is not only symbolic of the improvised conditions in which urban poor groups

¹³ The report, entitled Vision Mumbai: Transforming Mumbai into a World Class City was commissioned by a private body called Bombay First, a policy advocacy group in 1992 by Business Elites of Bombay Chamber of Commerce. The report received approval of the Maharashtra government and an alliance was formed between World Bank, US AID and a Mumbai based NGO called Cities Alliance (Björkman, 2015b).

dwelling but also their persistent efforts to return to place after being evicted. As such, the dwellers' appropriation of the gaps between the two barricades could be read as the crevices that "undermine narratives of total urban transformation" (Anjaria, 2016, p. 15).

Contemporary Mumbai exists on the crossroads of its historical contingencies (Chandavarkar, 2003; Nakamura, 2014; Kidambi, 2016) and transnational processes that frames more recent contestations over urban space (Anjaria and McFarlane, 2011). In its current form, Mumbai,¹⁴ with a population of over 12.44 million as per the 2011 census (MCGM, 2016) is therefore a classic example of the paradoxical metropolis in the global south (Roy, 2009). An expansive breadth of academic literature (Roy, 2009, Doshi 2013) and the plethora of depictions of Mumbai in the popular media point to this duality which is manifest in no other Indian city. The two main parallel narratives on Mumbai are: one of a glitzy world class city with "new malls, gated communities, shimmering office towers, and glittering hotels" (Björkman, 2015b, p. 17) and the other of a city where close to sixty percent of its residents live in slums (Doshi, 2013, Björkman, 2015). These paradoxes therefore present Mumbai not just as a city of inequalities but also as a contested landscape, characterised by iniquitous access to urban resources and differentiated political privileges. Writing about the more recent politics of slum redevelopment in Mumbai, Doshi (2011) argues that urban transformation in Mumbai has been mediated by diverse groups in myriad forms and unpredictable ways. Here she emphasises the need for moving beyond the homogenised

¹⁴ The name of the city was changed from Bombay to Mumbai in November 1995, by the state government in power that was a coalition of the regional Shiv Sena party and Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The vernacularisation of the English name into Marathi, was meant to highlight the local origins of the city and the act stirred intense debates across the city. In this respect, Hansen (2001) argues that the name change from "English spelling to vernacular pronunciation" put forth larger questions on claims to history, territory and culture.

understanding of the urban subalterns to one where political subjectivities and the opportunities for mobility within the city are shaped by varied social affiliations based on class, religious, caste, ethnic and gender lines.

1.5.1 Mahim

Mahim historically formed a part of the seven islands that comprised the “original island of Bombay” (Da Cunha, 1900, p. 208). In J. Gerson Da Cunha’s book, *The Origin of Bombay*, there is a mention of the Makhdum Ali Mahimi Darga, “a tomb in great veneration of for a Peer (Pir)” (*ibid.*). Today the tomb is popularly known as the Mahim Darga, and is revered as a crucial institution for charity. Many of the footpath dwellers visit this religious shrine as they believe it is “alive” and powerful in granting the wishes of its devotees. While they mostly go to pray when facing particular hardships (such as a police arrest, or ailment), community members also go here to beg or eat the free food that is served twice every day. In popular culture – such as in literary fictions like *Scent of Yesterday* (Kamlani, 2014) and *Maximum City* (Mehta, 2009), *Bombay Lost and Found*, and among people living in the area, Mahim is regarded as a secular place where one can witness the simultaneous coexistence of practices of diverse faith. In addition to the Mahim Darga, the other two religious attractions are St Michael’s Church and the Sitaladevi temple. The church has an important connection with respondents, as many of the devotees of the church form the customer base of the basket-makers (in the subsequent section I will introduce the vocations of the footpath dwellers). Years of acquaintance and commercial exchange have fostered social relationships between them.



Figure 1.2 A temple and a darga sharing the same space

Photograph credit: Author. Date: 06.01.17

References to Mahim’s character of religious tolerance are not just made in newspapers and popular writings, but also very frequently by the footpath dwellers with respect to the 1992 Mumbai riots¹⁵, where the middle-class families around the area provided shelter to respondents, particularly the Muslim families living on the road. The photograph (Figure 1.2) taken during my fieldwork, shows a Muslim shrine and a Hindu temple existing in the same place. While many would term this an exemplary instance of religious harmony, I call this an ordinary practice of everyday faith, produced “through the interactive work of practice and narrative”, emerging from established cultural practices, and closely “linked to local structures of politics and power”

¹⁵ Following the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya on 6 December 1992 by a group of Hindu fundamentalists, Mumbai witnessed one of the most violent confrontations between Muslim protestors and authorities. In this “anti-Muslim pogrom” (Hansen, 2001, p. 65), close to two hundred, predominantly Muslim protestors lost their lives.

Figure 1.3 is a collage of images that shows the geographical location of my field site within Mumbai (a detailed map of spatial usage has been provided in Figure 3.1). The image on the left is a map of Greater Mumbai where I have demarcated with a red circle the location of my field area. For those familiar with the geography of Mumbai, this area is known for its extremely high real estate values and the road leads to what journalist Bachi Karkaria calls the “pampered districts” of Mumbai. During my fieldwork, I observed at least two gated community projects under construction within less than a kilometre radius of my exact field site. Figure 1.4 shows a housing project under construction that proudly proclaims itself to be a “gated community in the heart of Mumbai” and promises a lifestyle of world-class standards. I use this photograph to give a sense of the exclusionary nature of real estate developments in the area that are changing the built form of Mahim at very fast pace.

The satellite image on the right in Figure 1.3 has been obtained from Google Earth and the portion highlighted in yellow is an aerial representation of the precise location of my field site, flanked by the Western Railway tracks on the right and Senapati Bapat Marg and Tulsi Pipe road on the left, a very important and busy road transport route that connects the suburbs with south Mumbai (the central business districts). As shown through the yellow highlight the respondents live on two footpaths along Senapati Bapat Marg and Tulsi Pipe road, adjoining the wall that separates the street from the railway tracks. Varughese describes Tulsi Pipe as a “long stretch of road, busy with all kinds of traffic; it is not the sort of road one wanders along. As an arterial road, movement is typically wheeled, not pedestrian, and thus is experienced at speed” (Varughese, 2018, p. 175).



Figure 1.4 Construction of a gated community, Kanakia Miami, underway.

Photograph credit: Author. Date: 01.09.16

1.6 Introducing the footpath dwellers¹⁶

I first met the group under study three years before I engaged with them as a researcher, in the capacity of a representative of an international donor agency. My involvement with the group that were to become my research subjects was mediated through Abhishek Bharadwaj (mentioned earlier), a housing rights activist who was working with them around issues of “homelessness”. Framing them around a language of homelessness disregards the affective ties that have been established with the place as a rationale to subvert the adversities of everyday street living. This stigmatisation is reflected in the labels that I encountered referring to respondents during my interaction

¹⁶ See Annexure 1 for profiles of key respondents.

with different actors¹⁷. Pejorative labels such as “vagrants”, “beggars”, “encroachers”, “migrants”, “homeless” and “nomads”¹⁸ reveal the various subject formations of the poor, particularly groups such as the footpath dwellers, by the state, political representatives, elite residents, and service providers and also suggest an outright denial of their legitimate place in the city.

Thus, my initial involvement with the group was framed in a language that looked at technical solutions to their ‘housing’ problem but overlooked the ways in which space featured in an important way in their everyday lives. Through my fieldwork I realised that marginal groups within the city, often recognised through their conditions of living, were either categorised as “slum-dwellers” or as “homeless”. Instead, the group of footpath dwellers revealed distinct spatial practices that are not only highly precarious and transient compared to those of people living in slums, but their relationship with their living spaces was deeply tied to the practice of home. The ebbs and flows of their everyday lives, the networks that enabled them to get by, the constant threats of eviction from the local state, the eviction drives and the process of returning thereafter; all are aspects that are inadequate to understand when the city is read solely through the lens of slums. In this regard, Arabindoo writes:

In the process, not only is much of what we have learned about urban poverty being erased, there is a tendency to distort our understanding of the nature of poverty, reducing the lives of all poor people to the lowest common denominator ... extending the argument, this paper suggests that as the conceptualisation of poverty constitutes to be dominated by the challenges of measuring it, slums have come to act as a stand-in for analysing and representing poverty... Social science research has equally developed the bad habit of overlaying the social category of the urban poor over the spatial terrain of slums anticipating a neat fit. Few

¹⁷ See Chapter 3 for a discussion on the methodological significance of interacting with different actors during my fieldwork.

¹⁸ While some of these labels, such as migrants, homeless and nomads, are also applied to slum dwellers they are more commonly used to refer to footpath dwelling groups. In their everyday usage these labels have a negative connotation.

actually go that extra mile to unpack qualitatively the heterogeneity of the urban poor and the spaces they inhabit (Arabindoo, 2011, p. 638).

Out of the 30 to 35¹⁹ families living on these footpaths, 25 are from Sirohi district in Rajasthan and are related to each other. While 30 families are permanent fixtures, living in very neatly delineated spaces, family units increase or decrease in number periodically. The families from Rajasthan are basket makers and are very easily discernible on the street, not just by their vocation but also by their cultural practices, particularly the style of dress. The rest of the non-basket making families are engaged in economic activities that are either carried out from the footpath or in locations easily accessible on foot. However, each member of the basket making families is engaged in the vocation, and they not only live and work in the same space, but simultaneously have created a bustling market for their products. Each family specialises in a specific kind of basket production and has their own dedicated customer base.

Regarding the use of space, a consistent tension exists between the basket making families and those who engage in other practices (See Chapter 4 for more on this tension). Due to their larger number, the basket makers have a spatial dominance over the place. Spatial dominance by this group is also established through claims of their early arrival and historical association with the neighbourhood. In a city where citizenship is hinged on status of housing (Hansen, 2001) the period of domicile becomes ingrained in the everyday discursive terrain to claim space. People made constant references of arriving at the place before one another. Referring to the families from Rajasthan, very often the non-basket making families claimed (almost alleged) that the basket makers

¹⁹ The number of families dwelling on the footpath changes throughout the year. This change is either due to an increase or decrease in the family members due to marriage, death and migration.

practiced endogamy as a territorial manoeuvre to increase their spatial dominance over where they lived²⁰.

From the various accounts of people I gathered that the early settlers arrived in the beginning of the 1980s, when it was a wooded area. They were here much before the adjoining slum settlements, high-rises, apartment complexes, offices, roads: even the footpath on which they currently live had not been constructed. Over time, as the real estate values escalated in Mumbai, infrastructure projects (such as road widening) were initiated and the area began to transform. From living in much more spread out and durable structures, the settlers were pushed to one side of the road as more people moved in to the area. Eventually, as the Tulsi Pipe Road developed and this part of the city became an important transport route, the NGO SPARC undertook a resettlement project in collaboration with the state government (Burra, 2000). While many settled families had been rehoused in tenements in a distant suburb of Mumbai, these basket making families were rendered ineligible for the resettlement as they did not have adequate documents to prove their domicile prior to the cut-off date of 1995²¹. For many of these families, relocation in far flung places would mean severing their economic and social ties. The lack of documentation for the purpose of resettlement was therefore not due to an inability to organise secure housing, but an active refusal of the welfare measures of the state (Chakrabarty, 2002; Anjaria, 2016).

After the demolition of footpath “slums” in 2006, these groups dispersed for a few days and then came back to live along the street on Tulsi Pipe road. Some of the non-basket making families came back to live on the footpath after selling off their flats, as tenement

²⁰ This dynamic has been explored in further detail in Chapter 4.

²¹ I learnt about this from my interactions with respondents, as well as in an interview conducted with a member of the municipal staff.

living had proved to be unsustainable for them (see Chapter 5 to understand the spatial tensions between these groups). At present this community of footpath dwellers, like many similarly dispersed groups within the city, lives in highly precarious conditions. Exposed to the street, their lives are characterised by risks from the moving traffic, extreme weather conditions, periodic demolition drives from the municipality, threats of disease, vulnerabilities to crime and overall social stigmatisation.

An experience of accompanying some of the young respondents to their school underscored the discrimination they faced. I noticed that the class was divided into two sections according to the physical appearance of the pupils. Students in one group, who the class teacher seemed to be more attentive to, looked visibly ‘well-off’ compared to the young respondents. Later that afternoon, I had an opportunity to speak with the class teacher and ask her about this division. She informed me that the separation was based on the learning capacity and performance of the students. Students on the “right”, she said, were more intelligent and quicker learners and those on the left (those I accompanied) showed less interest in studying and were usually disruptive. The presence of footpath dwelling children in the class, which for the teacher was a compulsion to accommodate, had not only slowed down the progress of the class but also had a polluting effect on other children, according to her. She attributed the “home” environment and parental care as reasons for this kind of behaviour in class. :

Even these children (pointing to the “better performers”) belong to slums, they are poor. But still they are so much more serious and sincere in their school work. I don’t understand why their parents (pointing to my group) can’t pay more attention towards their children’s education. All they do all day is loiter around. Do you know the real reason for them to join school? (Interview conducted on 13.08.16)

According to the teacher, the students who perform better in her class have a better home environment, as compared to those who live on the streets.

The differentiated and “spatialized” (Gibson, 2011) reasoning of why two groups perform differently, justifying her decision to segregate the class, was couched in a sympathetic language for the conditions of hardship that the slum children endure. She views the slum as ‘home’, as a place of “nurture” (Hecht, 1998). In contrast she presented the street as a realm where childhood is not nurtured responsibly. Her further assertions of why, or as she says the “real reasons”, the children in her class are sent to school confirmed her perceptions. She stressed that the footpath dwelling children are sent to school in order to evade detention from the police or official agencies that criminalise begging. She mentioned that as per official procedures, a child cannot be detained and her/his parents cannot be arrested if enrolled in school²². This assumption (or conviction) that the street families do not send their children to school to learn reinforced her view that footpath dwelling is coterminous with a lack of care for children.

The words of the class teacher echo many popular perceptions on childhood and the normative ideas around it, where the place of the child, defined by “particular experiences”, is not on the street but within the secure confines of the home. Hecht for instance illustrates through his analysis of a UNICEF publication titled ‘Brazil: The Fight for Childhood in the City’, where “one reads not about the struggles of millions of children in the favelas and rural settlements across Brazil, but about the plight of the comparatively tiny number living in the street” (Hecht, 1998, p. 70). He draws attention

²² While I could not find any official evidence to corroborate her claims, i.e. that a child detained under the begging act cannot be arrested or taken custody in a beggars home, I came across the prevalence of this notion several times during my fieldwork. On another occasion when acquaintances of respondents living in another part of the city had their children detained, I noticed that they were trying really hard to gather evidence that their children were enrolled and were regular attendees in school.

to the title of the publication, which he claims contains the clear suggestion that “street children lack this thing called childhood” (*ibid.*, p. 71). Implicit in the attitude of the class teacher is that the children who she considers neglected and not nurtured, are children of the street, an identity so peculiar that it becomes a mark of identity (*ibid.*)

Picking up from the teacher’s assertion that these groups are associated with “begging”, it is worthwhile to reflect on the “beggar” tag that I encountered frequently in reference to the respondents. This label came up during conversations with the upper class residents of the area who have been trying for several years to evict the footpath dwellers (see Chapter 6 for the residents’ claim over the footpath). The chairperson of the Area Locality Management (ALM), a citizen’s collective, informed me during an interview of the sustained “battle” they have been fighting to remove the “beggars” who have “encroached” on the pavement (Figure 1.5). He used the term “nuisance” and explicitly held the pavement dwellers responsible for the aesthetic degradation and traffic congestion of the area. Disregarding their economic activities, he accused them of being lazy and resorting to begging. The perceptions of the chairperson were not a surprise as this is a familiar trope attached to poor people, a label that is easily associated with groups who inhabit the streets. His emphasis on presenting the footpath dwellers as beggars goes beyond the issue of poor people seeking alms, and is symptomatic of the urban tensions that emerge out of occupations of space with contradictory claims.



Figure 1.5 Awareness campaigns against helping beggars in Mahim.

Photograph credit: Author. Date: 02.09.16

In my interactions with municipal officials I came across the term “vagrants”, a term closely associated with beggars. The usage of this term denotes a spatial category, wherein it refers to those living on public property in temporary shelter. In official usage, this term makes a clear distinction between vagrants and “homeless” people or street vendors. Municipal officials categorically pointed out that homeless people are those who live in shelters (meaning institutional shelter homes) while street vendors use the street for economic purposes. Therefore, although both these categories are regulated by laws, in official discourse they are not equated with vagrants. What do these disparate

discourses on vagrants, the homeless and street vendors tell us about the official perceptions of poor people's relations with space? Do they not reveal that in the official imagination the place of the vagrant is associated with the street?

During my interview with a senior municipal officer I had asked if "slum" dwellers can also be categorised as vagrants, to which he responded in the negative, alluding towards the differences in dwelling practices of those who live in slum and pavement dwellers, but also in their behavioural traits. The officer explained that vagrants are those who "encroach" on public land by erecting "fixtures", such as a tent or furniture etc. Furthermore his reluctance to categorise these groups as homeless also implies that in the official understanding, while the homeless are those who take shelter in institutions, these groups of footpath dwellers defiantly inhabit places that they are not meant to. Therefore when groups inhabit the footpath, which falls under the jurisdiction of the municipality and is meant to be "encroachment" free, they are termed as vagrants. What struck me as interesting is the presence of a separate "encroachment" removal department at the municipal office that regulates street vendors but not "vagrants".

I had asked him to clarify how he differentiated the vendors from the footpath dwellers under study, who were also vending, in their case baskets and other wares, and could be included under the definition. Although in his response he reiterated that vagrants were not under his team's jurisdiction, he suggested that it was a difference in the primary usage of the pavement that set apart the two. Therefore while the vendors used the pavements solely for carrying out economic transactions, the "vagrants" inhabited them. In this official understanding of vagrants, there is a lack of acknowledgement of their work that is simultaneously undertaken along with their everyday domesticities (see

1.7 Research Questions

My research examines the persistence of urban poor groups within Mumbai and their everyday practices of dwelling. In doing so my study is located in a specific geography of Mumbai, where I study a group of footpath dwellers. Drawing from the Heideggerian concept of dwelling, where he urges us to understand life as an embodied experience rooted in place, I read the practices of urban poor groups being shaped not in abjection (Anjaria, 2016) but in conjunction with the opportunities that are created through everyday living in the city. The key research question that guides my study is:

Despite tenuous spatialities, how do urban poor groups – namely footpath dwellers in Mumbai – persist through dwelling?

This question has been appended by three further enquiries:

- a. What constitutes ‘home’ for the footpath dwellers?
- b. How do footpath dwellers navigate spatial and official barriers to respond to everyday challenges?
- c. How do contradictory spatial claims enable the persistence of urban poor groups in the city?

By ‘spatialities’ I am referring to a set of practices that shape space in specific ways. These range from using a space (in this case the footpath), through developing emotional attachments to it (such as ascribing a sense of home), its functional purposes (such as working, sleeping, cooking, eating, or socialising) or managing the contestations within it. These spatialities are tenuous because despite living in the same spot, their claims to the space are shaky. The space which they inhabit falls under the

category of a “public place”, which with respect to the city regulations is meant to be free of congestion (Blomley, 2004; Bandyopadhyay, 2010). Moreover, against the backdrop of more recent “citizens’ movements” (Baud and Nainan, 2008; Anjaria, 2009) hinged on the rhetoric of belonging to the city, uninterrupted access to public space has been advocated as a key means to exercise democratic rights:

... to be understood as part of larger movement for claiming “right to the city,” as much as other democratic rights movements, enshrined in law. To claim Urban Planning and Design rights is to assert peoples’ power over the ways in which our cities are created, with a determination to build socially and environmentally just and democratic cities” (Das, 2015, no page)

However, despite this, these urban groups have not only remained in place, but they have infused these spaces with meanings in ways that conjure the “notion of home” (Bachelard 1964, in Anjaria, 2016, p. 105). Notwithstanding these unstable formal spatial claims, these people have established practices and networks that enable them to get by and continue dwelling in those places. My research questions therefore seek to understand how people, in the context of deep inequalities and vulnerabilities, retain their dwelling by attaching a sense of home, navigate everyday challenges to hold on to their places and remain in between the multifaceted contestations in the city. Thus the primary goal of my research is to find out how, despite their tenuous spatial relations, footpath dwellers have persisted and indeed intensified their claims to the city. By engaging with their lived experiences, my research aims to uncover how attachments to place are created through symbolic markers and how they are “deeply felt” (Herbert, 2000, p. 553).

In addressing these questions, I am attempting to reinsert the agency of the most marginalised in to our understandings of urban space and the city. Many scholars

writing about the marginalisation of poor groups in Mumbai attribute the neoliberal trajectory of city transformation in conjunction with state support for capital investment as the key causes of social and economic vulnerability. Criticising the neo-liberal model of Mumbai's transformation, Banerjee-Guha argues: "in creation of more land and more space has become the base point of making the cities investment-friendly that again makes it an imperative that the poor are driven off" (Banerjee-Guha, 2010, p. 4). While it is imperative to attend to "the regulatory reforms that presumably facilitated a rush of foreign investors into Mumbai's newly liberalized land markets" (Weinstein, 2014, p. 15), it is also essential to pay attention to the ways in which these power relations are reconfigured. This is an attention to urban processes that "preserves the possibilities of new strategies and coalitions and alliances, as well as deep changes in long established methods of critical analysis" (Soja, 2003, p. 271). My research examines ways by which urban poor groups strategically reconfigure power to hold on to their places as well as actively participate in manoeuvring through the challenges that threaten their dwelling.

In addressing these questions I engage with Heidegger's classic text, "Building Dwelling Thinking" to structure my framework of dwelling by persistence, the central concept of my thesis. In other words my thesis argues that despite their shaky spatial claims, footpath dwellers in Mumbai make place by dwelling by persistence, wherein the dwelling is a condition of "Being" (Ingold, 1993; Jones, 2009; McFarlane, 2011) and persistence is a set of material practices that make possible this form of urban living (de Certeau, 1984; Bayat, 2000; Yiftachel, 2009; Weinstein, 2015; Anjaria, 2016). Dwelling extends beyond inhabiting a *place*, i.e. a geographical location, but is infused with temporality and processes that are spatial (Ingold, 1993; Cresswell, 2004) and,

only by engaging with the temporal dimension of practice can one begin to understand the natures of current landscapes and how they are immanent to their emergence rather than expressions of some fixed preformation (Jones, 2009, p. 268).

Therefore taking cognizance of the temporalities of the footpath dwellers in my field site, I depart from the Heideggerian idea of dwelling which is discussed as an “authentic” experience. Wherein Heidegger writes from an idyllic rural setting, of seeking authenticity, this is problematic for my research because everyday living on the footpath is associated with various social, economic, political and physical vulnerabilities. Is the “authentic experience” to be celebrated? Is the life that is characterised by extreme hardship to be mourned? My thesis rejects these assumptions and instead explores the potentials of urban persistence made possible not just by “quiet encroachment of the ordinary” (Bayat, 2000), “occupancy urbanism” (Benjamin, 2008), or “gray spacing” (Yiftachel, 2009b), but as a form of stasis. This stasis is not symptomatic of lack of movement, but is rather reflective of the fact that despite contestations and competing claims to urban space, marginal groups retain their places, albeit in increasingly precarious conditions.

1.8 Chapter Plan and Thesis Objectives

This thesis has been divided into seven chapters. Chapter 2 elaborates the conceptual framework of dwelling by persistence through a discussion of the literature on dwelling, home, and urban navigations. This chapter gives me an opportunity to discuss the key debates within geography that deal with dwelling/housing, home/homelessness and urban marginalisation/agency. The objective of this chapter is to highlight how the debates within academic scholarship have been positioned with respect to concepts that

I mention here. The aim here is also to make explicit my contributions to the literature on being in the city by dwelling by persistence. In this chapter I also include a discussion on encroachment, informality and illegality, terms that I encountered frequently during fieldwork. Although my initial plan for the thesis was not to focus on the ‘state’, this discussion became necessary following my fieldwork, where I observed state actors engaged in practices that are ‘illegal’, ‘informal’ and ‘encroaching’.

Chapter 3 is an account of methodology and lays out my motivations for conducting an ethnography, as well as the rationale behind selecting the group of footpath dwellers and the site. It reflects on the entire fieldwork and the collection of the data, and also includes my personal experiences of and reflections on conducting an ethnography on the street. In highlighting the processes of the research collection, the larger objective of the chapter is also to point out how ethnography enabled me to understand the specificities of practices and power relations in the field. This chapter further includes a section on the analysis of the data that emerged from the field, and the thematic organisation of the three empirical chapters that would follow.

Chapter 4, titled ‘Home in the street’, answers the question: what constitutes ‘home’ for the footpath dwellers? This chapter looks at how these groups make place through emotional practices with material objects in the spaces they inhabit. This place-making is undertaken as a means to establish a sense of home in spaces that are not only prohibitive (for example through municipal laws) but also dangerous (exposure to a busy street, threats to women’s bodies and sexualities). Through an elaboration of some of their everyday practices such as cooking, decorating, rearing of pets, work and a discussion on violence, I show the multiple uses and the transformation of space, as

well as home as a logic of endurance in a realm that is already “outside”, i.e. the street, and has its own normative bindings.

In Chapter 5, titled ‘Navigating the city’, I look at how groups circumvent evictions and acquire official documents to make substantive citizenship claims in order to navigate their ways through the city. It answers the second research question: how do footpath dwellers navigate spatial and official barriers to respond to everyday challenges? I draw my conceptual framework of navigation from work “that privileges the complex, contradictory and multi-layered qualities of urban landscapes over neat stories of urban change” (Anjaria and McFarlane, 2011, p. 2). I sketch out two vignettes which highlight material navigation and circumvention of official processes. In the first vignette, I show how people make use of a wall to evade municipal actions, and in the second I highlight the networks that people form to acquire official documents, as a means to make formal claims. These vignettes unsettle much of the assertions around the contemporary city development where the urban is said to be neatly segregated into opposing enclaves.

Chapter 6, ‘Persisting in between contestations’, is an account of the contested space of the footpath, namely between the middle-class residents of the area, the various agencies of the state and the footpath dwellers themselves. It answers the third research question: how do contradictory spatial claims enable the persistence of urban poor groups in the city? Through the story of a toilet block that is built on a space that is meant to be free of obstruction, the chapter highlights how despite the mobilisations of the middle class (for example through the threat of judicial mechanisms) the conditions on the ground do not change. It also highlights larger questions of citizenship and belonging to the city through the politics of toilets.

The concluding chapter is an analytical reflection on the three empirical chapters. It reiterates the findings from my study and also makes explicit the key contributions. This chapter also elaborates on avenues for future work, based on some of the recent developments from the field.

2 Framing Dwelling by Persistence

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the concepts and theory necessary to analyse dwelling by persistence, builds on the narratives around city-making introduced in Chapter 1, and attempts to frame the empirics discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. In drawing from works that look at the city as a set of “fluid negotiations” (Benjamin, 2008, p. 726) emerging through the interstices of power rather than top-down governance or even neo-liberal transformations, I use dwelling by persistence as a lens to read how groups produce and hold on to their place in the city. This chapter begins with a discussion of the conceptual framework of dwelling by persistence and engages with the concepts of home, navigations and contestations. It begins with my interpretation of the Heideggerian concept of dwelling wherein I establish its relevance to my work, before turning to key debates and recent interpretations of his work by scholars who theorise dwelling as a way of being in the world that captures the essence of life immersed in place (Thrift, 1999; Ingold, 2000b; Pons, 2003; Ingold, 2005; Jones, 2009; McFarlane, 2011; Meier and Frank, 2016).

After discussing Heidegger’s notion of dwelling, I will lay out why I find his concept of dwelling limiting in its exact sense, before moving on to a discussion of scholars who have reinterpreted the concept in ways that I find to be more useful. The chapter then proceeds to an analysis of work that focuses on meanings and practices of home (Grewal, 1996; Meth, 2003; Mallett, 2004; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Brickell, 2012; Blunt and Sheringham, 2018) and outlines the key debates that challenge the notions of

home as an interior space (i.e. away from the public), as idealised, and a key domain for women. Thereafter, the chapter proceeds to a discussion of urban navigations, which highlights how the agency of the poor enables persistence of practices, including the practices of home. The next section, on encroachment, illegality and informality, examines how some of these terms have come to be associated with the practices of the poor, although even the elites and most importantly the state engage in what I see as contradictory practices. In highlighting the literature on encroachment, illegality and informality, I will illustrate how these are avenues of contestations in the city through which persistence is enabled, where the state plays a key role. For instance although the footpath is a regulated space, which under the various by-laws of the municipality, operates to prohibit specific behaviour (Blomley, 2010; Bandyopadhyay, 2017), these regulations have been directly violated; the habitation of people on the footpath is one such example. The final section takes account of the place of the footpath in the city, in order to understand what domestication of this ‘public’ space means for the contemporary city.

2.2 Conceptual framework

Heidegger’s notion of dwelling views life as a process rather than an end, and considers a way of “Being in the world” which is receptive to its environments. To Heidegger, dwelling was thus an ‘authentic’ experience of existence that was rooted in place, experienced singularly, making the two concepts analogous to each other. In his words, dwelling is achieved only through means of building, and is achieved through a process of creation. He is careful in drawing the reader’s attention to disassociate from, what he thinks is the societal understanding of building. He gives examples of bridges, hangars,

stadiums, power stations (all of which are large-scale industrial constructions) to establish that these are not dwelling, although he claims that these “domains” are linked to dwelling. Further, to distinguish dwelling from these examples, he states that these built structures house “man” but do not enable dwelling. It is to be noted here that by associating the actors with their vocations, he makes a distinction between the place of work and home (my emphasis). He is also making a distinction between housing (probably a material structure) and lodgings, which not only comprise a specific set of values, but also does not account for practices which are beyond a physical space of inhabitation:

The truck driver is at home on the highway, but he does not have his lodgings there; the working woman is at home in the spinning mill, but does not have her dwelling place there; the chief engineer is at home in the power station, but he does not dwell there. These buildings house man. He inhabits them and yet does not dwell in them, if to dwell means to solely have our lodgings in them (Heidegger and Krell, 1993, p. 348).

As indicated by the quote, Heidegger’s conceptualisation of dwelling distinguishes between home and work as two distinct spheres. Building here is not referred to as a concrete structure, but as a continuous process to achieve its end, i.e. dwelling.

Heidegger seems to be suggesting dwelling as an experience that goes beyond relationships with materials and objects. In the later part of the essay, he expresses dwelling as the “way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *being* dwelling” (p. 349). Dwelling therefore is the basic character of Being, which enables “mortals” to exist. Therefore it is the essence of existence, “man’s everyday experience” (p. 349). In that way dwelling is a place-based, embodied experience of living, involving the everyday habitual practices that ensure the continuity

of life. His emphasis on the mortality of human beings is significant, as he suggests that human beings remain alive through dwelling.

This concept of dwelling has a “poetic and spiritual” (Jones, 2009, p.267) dimension whereby dwelt life is deeply rooted within the preserving of “the foursome” – the unity of Earth, sky, gods and mortals. Such an authentic form of life was to be achieved through the unity of these four elements which the modern world was incapable of providing. Through the example of a farm house in the Blackforest, in an idyllic rural setting, where ‘man’ is in oneness with natural elements, Heidegger states that authentic experience of dwelling takes place. In this his subsequent scepticism for the modern world (and modernism) is evident as he says that human beings have not attained dwelling. In the concluding thoughts of the essay, Heidegger asks “What is the state of dwelling in our precarious age?” (p. 363). Although he does not specifically outline what he means by precarious age, his explanation of the “housing shortage” in the subsequent lines, in my reading, comes close to an implication of precarity (p.363)²³. He laments the modern industrial society which is fragmented from the authentic experience of Being and full of hardships.

How is the remaining in place achieved? According to Heidegger this remaining in place is achieved through “sparing” or through remaining in peace, something that is in stark contrast with the lives of the footpath dwellers that I describe. In fact if Heidegger were to comment on the lives of the footpath dwellers that I study, he would probably disregard this form of dwelling, as his concept of “primal oneness” that included the “earth and sky, divinities and mortals” (p.351) would not be much in evidence. The

²³ The housing shortage, has been attempted to be addressed “by providing houses, by promoting the building of houses, planning the whole architectural enterprise” (Heidegger and Krell, 1993, p. 363).

plight of dwelling to his mind was not in the “hard and bitter ... hampering and threatening” (p.363) lack of houses, but that “mortals ever search anew for the essence of dwelling, that they *must ever learn to dwell*” (*ibid.*). Reading the lives of the pavement dwellers this way would be a romanticisation of the everyday hardships that these groups endure, by their exposure to “natural elements”. If dwelling implies “Being” then, in the context of the footpath dwellers, how can questions of power, contestations, and inequality be addressed? As a relational concept of remaining in place, it is my assertion that dwelling is not the ideal union of four elements, but an expression of urban persistence.

I find Heidegger’s concept of dwelling useful, as it views life as a process that is rooted in place. I depart from his ideas, however, where, for example, he states that, “Spaces open up by the fact that they are let into the dwelling of man. To say that mortals *are* is to say that *in dwelling* they persist through spaces by virtue of their stay among things and locales” (p. 359). Moreover, his concept of dwelling encompasses a singular experience of life rather than viewing it as connected forms of associated living. His example of dwelling was rooted in the “farm house in Blackforest” (Heidegger and Krell, 1993, p. 361) that in today’s context is not only problematic in terms of seeking an authentic experience of place (Massey, 1991; Dovey, 2009)²⁴, but the rural setting does not speak to the power relations that order the urban (Meier and Frank, 2016). Moreover, the space “to till the soil, to cultivate the vine” (p. 348), evokes peace and sense of a place “preserved from harm and danger” (p. 348), that is evidently different from the streets of Mumbai. The footpath, the locale which respondents inhabit, is a contested space. In that way, while dwelling occurs through a place-based fulfilling of

²⁴ Dovey (2009) cautions that this view of Heidegger essentialises places and is rooted in a rigid notion of homeland and history.

everyday activities, it is not without obstacles or opposition. Persistence is about addressing and managing these obstacles or hardships to remain in place. Dwelling by persistence is an embodied experience of existence rooted in place which is enabled through perseverance of retaining one's place. If dwelling entails remaining and creating place in spaces, persistence is about persevering through and sustaining these creations. Persistence is a response to the disruptions that occur in dwelling.

In my thesis I use the concepts of home, urban navigations and contestations to explain dwelling by persistence. Home, as I show in the empirical chapters, encompasses the material practices of dwelling as well as the emotional attachments that create and attach people to spaces. While reviewing literature on home and dwelling, what separates the two is that while home is framed as a set of feelings, dwelling is seen as a container in which those feelings are rooted. Dwelling is positioned in reference to a physical place, a shelter where home is located. In my research I associate dwelling with people, practices and sets of relationships located in place, although not any specific form of physical structure. Home takes place within dwelling, although it is not bound to a physical confine. It is instead practiced through the emotional and material attachments of holding on to place. This perception then goes beyond viewing home as being connected to a material object, but instead as one that fosters social and affective identities (Massey, 1994; Brickell, 2012).

In the context of my study, the concept of dwelling by persistence works to understand the lived experiences of urban poor groups who inhabit contested environments. This offers a ground on which to read the practices of the footpath dwellers who remain in the same location despite the adversities in their everyday lives. Thus, the notion of the city as a dwelt place implies all practices of inhabitation and calls for critically

examining the discursive framework of terms like ‘encroachments’, ‘illegality’ and ‘informality’, to explain “provisional forms of settlement” (Nakamura, 2014, p. 274) that have “mobilized lifelong struggles of the poor and the vulnerable to acquire work, shelter and, improved more secure circumstances” (*ibid.*).

2.3 Key debates in dwelling

In recent years, there has been an enhanced interest in the study of dwelling, partly in response to Heidegger’s essay, *Building Dwelling Thinking* (Pons, 2003; Ingold, 2005; Harrison, 2007; Jones, 2009; McFarlane, 2011; Meier and Frank, 2016; Blunt and Sheringham, 2018) which has helped me to refine the concept of dwelling and make it relevant for my work. Considering its emphasis on embodied experience rooted in place, dwelling has been an important theme in a range of disciplines interested in the examination of the relationship between society, nature and environment (Jones, 2009). Within geography, dwelling has been an important theme for those working on space, place and landscape. In the words of Meir and Frank (2016) “a phenomenological conceptualization of dwelling emphasises the actual physical experience and proximity to places of person” (*ibid.*, p. 363).

A reflection on Heidegger’s essay is imperative, particularly when discussing works of scholars who frame dwelling not in terms of a physical structure but as “relational, process-based notions of life” (Jones, 2009, p. 266). In the context of my study this thinking has been helpful in reading the empirical observations from the field, where, for instance, the everyday is lived not in binaries but in more interconnected forms. These interconnections are between dwellers inhabiting the footpath, as well as with

their built environment, material objects of domesticity, urban acquaintances and significantly, members of the state. Thus these connections are a necessary mechanism of holding on to their place on the footpath, these enable dwelling.

Feminist scholars have also criticised Heidegger's concept of dwelling as being "explicitly" male-centric. Young (2005) argues that although Heidegger's idea of dwelling involves both building and preservation, it is the former that takes precedence. Inspired by Young's reinterpretation, I allude to the notion of preservation that she considers fundamental in relation to dwelling. And within this broader fold of dwelling, which enables preservation, I include home. In this sense the place of the footpath dwellers is not an abstract space with uni-dimensional use (Blomley, 2008) but an "a priori ground" that has been attached with meanings and feelings by people to make their place in the city (Thrift, 1999). It is an "immediate, yet also enduring, relational process of bodies in environment (space and place) which are (with variation) mobile, sensing engaging, responding, exchanging, making, using, remembering and knowing" (Jones, 2009, p. 266). This positioning, I stress, has implications in the larger debates on housing, home and inclusion within the city (I will return to this later in the chapter).

As mentioned previously, Heidegger was highly sceptical of modern industrial society wherein "capitalism, consumerism, and the spectacular society, forcibly detached the self from the world and thus stifled true dwelling" (Jones, 2009, p. 267). The modern society led by industrial capitalism alienated human beings from their own processes of creation. Nevertheless, whereas Heidegger's concept of dwelling is useful in understanding the relational forms of life, his insistence on modern life as an end to dwelling is too restricted. Instead, drawing from Ingold's (2000) "dwelling perspective" (p. 153), I stress that dwelling in the city emerges from an "inescapable condition of

existence” (*ibid.*) that takes place through the immersion of the individual in her environment. Thus dwelling is an inherently physical activity that is undertaken not just by humans but also by non-humans as an “everyday skilful, embodied coping or engagement with the environment” (Pons, 2003, p. 49). On the pavement this can be read as an inescapable, embodied and embedded experience of dwelling, enabled through the persistent efforts of people to make place. This form of dwelling then does not signify rest or stasis, but rather a constant state of flux, owing to the contested nature of the place, i.e. a footpath meant for pedestrians. In this sense dwelling is a more encompassing concept that takes into account the different ways various groups make place for themselves in the city.

Drawing from the phenomenological literature to account for the politics of dwelling, Ingold (2005) states that from the dwelling perspective, it is essential to acknowledge that human lives operate within fields of power, a fundamental point of departure from Heidegger’s work. As “an inevitable form of existence”, all living things dwell, and spaces and places become imbued with temporality. And as Jones (2009) articulates, “only by engaging with the temporal dimension of practice can one begin to understand the natures of current landscapes and how they are immanent to their emergence rather than expressions of some fixed pre-formations” (p. 268). Ingold’s suggestion, while contextualising Heidegger’s work on dwelling, is that it encompasses the entirety of one’s life that is not only social but is also essentially structured by power relations. Extending from this, if dwelling is literally a way of Being in the world, the inscription of the body in space is central to making place as “emergent, relational processes” (Jones, 2009, p. 267). From the perspective of my research, dwelling goes beyond inhabiting the city within standardised frameworks of housing, but incorporates the

spatial practices and temporalities of the footpath dwellers, their tactics and strategies (de Certeau, 1984) and the navigations that enable them to remain in places that are meant to be prohibitive, in other words it is enabled by persistence.

This understanding segues with recent research on the urban experience in Mumbai. A study on street hawkers by Anjaria (2016) raises questions about the sustenance of what he calls “ordinary spaces of the city” (p. 16). This ten year long ethnography critically examines scholarship that “tends to portray city processes uni-dimensionally as products of power, whereas spatial contestations are interpreted as straightforward signs of class-based conflict, elite assertion, and a state captured by capital” (Anjaria, 2016, p. 14). The title of the book, *Slow Boil* alludes to an urban condition that is steadily churning rather than drastically transforming (Anjaria and McFarlane, 2011). In other words, it allows for the intermingling of practices, often held in binary frames such as legal/illegal, encroached/legitimate, housed/homeless, formal/informal and so forth. Slow boil then refers to a condition in which persistence is enabled through being embedded in the city’s social, political and imaginative process. Much like the image in Chapter 1 (Figure 1.1, Mumbai is Upgrading), modernity that allegedly dispossesses the marginalised is not a completed project, but one that “also contains a potential for productive negotiation and imaginative exchange” (Anjaria, 2016, p. 16). The work aligns with my modes of enquiry, particularly during and after the fieldwork, where for me questions of how these groups remain, retain and return to their places on the footpath were much more relevant than probing why these groups face marginalisation.

Anjaria inquires:

...however, in focussing on one question – How are large-scale evictions of the poor justified in the name of development, profit accumulation, or world class city making? – this approach overlooks other equally important ones. For

instance, how do people remain where they are between evictions? How do the poor engage with state practices that are, especially in India, heterogeneous and often in competition with one other? How do globally circulating development and governmental discourses work through the varied and often in competing political forces within the state? And finally, what are the historical genealogies of contemporary spatial contestations?” (p. 14).

In theorising persistence, I borrow the phrase “urban navigations” (Anjaria and McFarlane, 2011) to understand the city as functioning not solely as a top down mechanism but also as a medium where people use their agency to respond to the marginalisation in their lives. Negotiating physical safety, and attempting to avoid accidents caused by the speeding traffic, the weather, and crime is a regular feature of the everyday lives of footpath dwellers. For women, safety also entails protecting themselves from sexual harm. Their place of living, a footpath, is yet another contentious location that is periodically subjected to clearance drives from the municipality. Yet there is a paradox, i.e. despite the grave vulnerabilities in the lives of the footpath dwellers that is exacerbated owing to the location of their inhabitation, they nevertheless choose to dwell in these spaces. Urban navigation is about agency, it is about circumventing these obstacles and vulnerabilities associated with footpath living that in turn enables the continuity of dwelling. Thus navigation is about people’s agency, as much it is about being tolerated by the state. In this context, I use the contestations to highlight how the persistence of footpath dwellers takes place in a sphere which itself is rife with contradictory practices by the institutions that are supposed to regulate their use.

The “dwelling perspective” as theorised by Ingold (2000a, 2000b) drawing from Heidegger’s work is associated with the “building perspective” in which the latter is seen as being imposed through a blue-print and therefore contrary to dwelling. As discussed earlier, this coincides with what I see as the “housing perspective” in urban

thought. Dwelling rather than housing is therefore an appropriate lens to understand the production of life. To quote Ingold (2002):

Life, however does not begin or end anywhere, but is rather carried on through the successive acts that punctuate its flow. Producing their life human beings effectively produce themselves... The intransitive verb ‘to dwell’ aptly conveys this conception of the production of life as a task that has continually to be worked at... Dwelling encompasses building just as producing life encompasses the production of the material means by which it is carried on (p. 504).

Ingold, in his reflections on ‘society’, makes a similar assertion about the imposed standards through which dwelling or Being is understood which although not set in the urban context, could be extended to this realm to read the linear “development” trajectory that shapes cities. He states that often a generalised conception of “pan-human needs” is expressed “through a medley of structures built by others for you to live in, according to designs that answer not to your particular background and circumstances” (Ingold, 2000b, p. 502). I find the discussion useful because it provides a ground for understanding dwelling as a continuum, in which the “users – as a matter of economic, social, and psychological common sense – are the principal actors” (Turner, 1972, p. 154), are dwellers. The key assertion here regarding dwelling is that it is a way of remaining in place where a key set of activities such as “the cultivation and preparation of food, the clothing of ourselves, the care of our bodies, the procreation and nurture of children, and the sheltering of these activities” (Turner 1972, p. 154) might be fulfilled. I extend this concept of housing to that of dwelling to advocate for an understanding of not just housing, but the different ways of inhabiting a city, what Heidegger terms as dwelling as Being. Thus I borrow from this thought process where housing is seen as a set of activities where the users are the “principal actors”, whereby

the households “choose their own housing, to build or direct its construction if they wish, and to use and manage it in their own ways” (Turner 1972, p. 154).

2.4 Home

A concept fundamental to dwelling, that shapes the idea of persistence in this thesis, is home, as both an idea as well as a form of practice. Considered to be intrinsically linked to the idea of home, dwelling has been expressed as “being [at] home in the world” (Ingold, 2005, p. 503). For Ingold, not only are home and dwelling closely linked to each other, but unlike Heidegger’s notion, that is “altogether too cosy and comfortable, conjuring up a haven of rest where all tensions are resolved, and where the solitary inhabitant can be at peace with the world – and with him or herself” (p. 503), dwelling is neither a pleasant nor a singular experience.

Most commonly associated with a physical structure, home fundamentally represents a set of relationships lived over space and time, making experiences of it varied and a complex concept (Blunt and Varley, 2004; Mallett, 2004; Brickell, 2012; Blunt and Sheringham, 2018). The past three decades have produced a volume of scholarship on home, critically examining the concept, its meanings and the experience of the home as highly subjective. Within geography, home has been examined in the context of people’s relationship to place, space, landscape, practices and state of being in the world (Mallett, 2004; Brickell, 2012). What then is the idea of home in terms of experiences, feelings, and meanings that people attach to it?

In the Anglo-European world, or what is commonly understood as the West, home was understood as and associated with a physical structure that has very clear delineations of the inside and the outside (Grewal, 1996; Young, 2005; Blunt and Sheringham, 2018). This physical structure²⁵ moreover is central to a morality concerned with safeguarding wealth and property. As Young expresses, the conception of home is bourgeois and is conflated with house deliberately, as they “occupy central places in this consumer consciousness as the core of personal property and a specific commodity-based identity” (Young, 2005, p. 9). Thus, within debates that view the house as synonymous to home, the conflation of the two terms has been criticised by scholars who make distinctions between the two. Mallet argues that “House and home are often conflated in the popular media, typically as a means of selling real estate and promoting ‘home’ ownership” (Mallett, 2004, p. 66). Thus while the real estate lobbies clearly gain from a valorisation of home, so do governments with specific social agendas. In the Indian context²⁶ a recent trend of the withdrawal of state and entry of private players in providing housing for the poor in the housing market successfully magnifies this conflation (Doshi, 2013).

Blunt and Dowling (2006) argue that one might live in a house, but may not feel at home, associating it with an emotional concept of belonging. Home here has been described “as a series of feelings and attachments, some of which, some of the time, and

²⁵ With the rise of 17th century bourgeoisie in the West, it is argued, the meaning of home was appropriated by two kinds of moralists. On one hand the attachment of homeland with nationhood and patriotism took place with the rise of bourgeoisie who harped on this term for protecting land and wealth. On the other, home came to be associated with a “domestic morality aimed at safeguarding familial property, including estates, women and children” (Mallett, 2004, p. 65). This forms the fundamental basis of consolidating home and house and the larger conflation of the two terms.

²⁶ Whether it is prescribing “shelter-homes” for the homeless or undertaking redevelopment as a measure of providing adequate housing, policy prescriptions on housing in India have been focused around a physical structure. More importantly these policies have been ownership centric (Mallett, 2004; Mander, 2007) and reflect a neo-liberal trend, whereby the purposeful conflation of home and house is a part of a larger ideological agenda where the market plays a key role (Mallet, 2004).

in some places, become connected to a physical structure that provides shelter” (Blunt and Dowling, 2006, p. 10). Instances of negative experiences of home such as domestic violence, house arrest, home detention, and feelings of alienation establish that the home can be oppressive rather than supportive and fulfilling (McDowell, L, 1997; Meth, 2003; Charlton and Meth, 2017). Thus, home denotes complex, subjective, inter-related and even contradictory ideas about people’s relationship with “a dwelling place or a lived space of interaction between people, places, things and so on” (Mallett, 2004, p. 84). While on one hand home can be understood as a place which is a source of stability and security, on the other it can be associated with feelings of tyranny and exploitation. Both as a material and imaginative space, home then “is a space inhabited by family, people, things and belongings – a familiar if not a comfortable space where particular activities and relationships are lived” (Mallett, 2004, p. 63).

In their work titled *Home*, Blunt and Dowling (2006) advance the concept of “unhomely homes”²⁷ to describe the condition of living that does not reflect the usual understanding of home as a relatively permanent place of safety and comfort. Homelessness, the authors argue, is a type of “assumed unhomeliness” through which “feelings of being at home and not at home” overlap. The authors give examples of homeless people in the United States in a shelter and their experiences of ‘home-making’, suggesting that homelessness is an adversarial condition in a person’s life and one that is temporary. Although it does not explain the entrenched conditions of poverty that cause permanent homelessness, I find this analysis useful because it creates a possibility of moving beyond the binaries and evaluating the specific moments when both these conditions

²⁷Blunt and Dowling draw from Sigmund Freud’s work on the uncanny stressing on his influential concepts of ‘heimlich’ and ‘unheimlich’. While the former refers to familiarity the latter denotes unfamiliarity, and the authors use these concepts to unsettle the idea of home. They state that just as feelings of unfamiliarity or out-of-placeness may occur in familiar places, the so called unfamiliar spaces can also become a site of homeliness.

may be felt. In advocating for developing a critical geography of home, these authors argue that “the home is a vital space for understanding the micro-geographies of social and spatial uncertainty which influence, and are influenced by wider structural forces of unhomeliness, alienation, and homelessness” (Brickell, 2012, p. 227). However, this framing of unhomeliness, although it acknowledges that home can be felt beyond the conventional sense, nonetheless assumes a space of the ‘home’. This analysis, while relevant in a Western context, is inadequate in cultural contexts where the home is felt and practiced in spaces that are considered ‘unhomely’.

Understanding “homelessness” can provide a useful framework to understand how home in the Western context has been conceptualised as a condition of dispossession that is in relation to the term “home”. Homelessness was understood as a defiance of the socio-spatial geographies which cast the individual as being “out of place” (Wright, 1997; Gibson, 2011). Wright states “Homeless persons wander not only through the physical borders of our cities, but also through social borders, defined by moral, ethical and normative interpretations of behavior” (Wright, 1997, p. 2). As Brickell (2012) puts it, homelessness is reflective of an extreme geography of home that is tied to the landscape of exclusion. Thus as a ‘spatialized’ and ‘politicised’ concept, critical understanding of home has the potential to “re-envision” a fluid idea of home instead of considering it as a one-dimensional concept (Brickell, 2012).

Home, therefore, does not always act as an environment that provides shelter, and its meaning may vary with gender, class and race. Feminist scholarship portrays home as a political arena which is one of the key areas of patriarchal domination (McDowell, 1997; Meth, 2003; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Baxter and Brickell, 2014). A volume of feminist literature has argued that the meanings and experiences of home vary, thus

challenging the assumption of home as a safe haven (Meth, 2003; Brickell, 2012; Blunt and Sheringham, 2018). Thus for many women who are victims of domestic violence, home is repressive and an arena for exploitation²⁸. Analysing the meaning of home in relation to domestic violence, Meth (2003) argues that spatial imaginations greatly shape the idea of home in these contexts. In other words, it is often assumed that domestic violence takes place within the confines of a home, a physical space. However, through her research with homeless women from South Africa, she urges the rethinking of domestic violence in relation to home.

This resonates with Datta's (2016) work on squatter homes, where violence within the domestic sphere is accepted as adhering to traditional family values in the form of women's acceptance and internalisation of patriarchal norms. Datta's study is located in squatter settlements of Delhi where she studies the internalisation of exclusion from the "legal city" by playing out the differences in gender, caste and religion. She writes "...misogynist practices are supported by women through the anxiety over the incompleteness of this home in terms of its legitimacy... the violence over bodies was justified as attempts to sustain the symbolic home of the family" (Datta, 2016, p. 164) to which law was seen as 'invading' the home and inscribing itself upon women's bodies" (*ibid.*). This internalisation of violence is not just a phenomenon in squatter homes, but as Chapter 4 shows, even within street dwelling women who justify this violence. Similar to Meth's study on women street traders, the material practice of home, for the respondents is an instance of the "domestic within the public" (Meth, 2003, p. 320). However while she calls for a reconceptualisation of the understanding of domestic

²⁸ Although not explored here, this experience of home differs from theorisations by humanistic geographers who view home as an unproblematic arena of belonging.

violence based as “interpersonal violence” to account for the violence occurring within informal living practices, I point to a different direction. In the context of my study, I argue that locating domestic violence in the street points to different cultural practices of the home, where the public and private are much more blurred.

Drawing from feminist thinking on home by postcolonial scholars, and instances from my fieldwork, I build on more complex practices of ‘home making’ on three grounds. First, as a critique of feminist scholars who see the home as oppressive, as it confines women within a private sphere, I ask: what about instances where the home and work is being realised in the same place? What implications does home-making have when taking place in the public? In viewing home in relation to the workplace, they nonetheless imagine two distinct geographical spheres, obscuring practices where dualisms do not exist. In the context of my research, home and work happen in the same place, on the footpath. Conversely, seeing the sphere of home as essentially female does not reflect the gendered practices within a sphere where home and work are not separate and where the distinction between public and private is thin.

Second, if home is meant to confine women, it is argued that emancipation will be brought about by a separation of women from this oppressive sphere. However home also provides a strong sense of identity through the “meaning-making” (Young, 2005) activities of domestic work. Once again, drawing from examples of the women living on the street, I pose the question: to what extent do attachments with the idea of home liberate or limit women in these groups, in a context where they are living in a space that is predominantly considered public? How do these women negotiate the street in protecting their bodies and sexualities (Phadke, Ranade and Khan, 2009; Phadke, 2013; Shah, 2014)?

Third, the idea of home as a site of oppression then is largely drawing from experiences of white, upper and middle class women in the West (Hooks, 1991; Grewal, 1996; Young, 2005) where constructions of family/household came to be synonymously viewed with home. These ideas were “rooted in assumptions about discrete public and private spheres, nuclear families characterised by sex-segregated gender roles” (Collins 1991, p. 47 in Blunt and Dowling, 2006, p. 20) which were less likely to be found in other communities. However, as Young has illuminated through her examples of rural Botswana, home does not necessarily take place within the confines of the interior. Home is fulfilled in dwelling, which in a wider sense occurs outdoors or in collective spaces, as much as it does within the domestic. Similarly, in India, the street has historically been a place where the home extended (to be addressed later in the chapter).

Scholarship on home-making that takes place beyond the domestic examines the form and practice of the extended notion of home (Di Palma, Periton and Lathouri, 2008; Blunt and Sheringham, 2018). In their edited volume, Di Palma et al. study the contemporary city where the intimate has been a dominant feature of the urban public life. The volume of collected essays stresses that, just as the urban forces play a part in shaping the domestic, city spaces also reveal practices which are meant to be undertaken in private interiors. Written mostly using examples of cities in Western countries, these works highlight a crucial point in the home debate, i.e. that home can be formed and practiced even in spaces which are not conventionally interior. These arguments then respond to a strand of debate that views the domestication of the public space in a negative sense.

Building on these critiques as well as drawing from various vignettes during my fieldwork, I complicate the understanding of home, which is taking place not in private confines but within the sphere of the street. As I have argued, these practices of home defy the understanding of the home that is associated with a physical structure, or a house, as they fail to capture “the complex socio-spatial relations and emotions that define a home” (Blunt and Dowling, 2006, p. 3). Similarly, intimate practices like eating, which are usually associated with spaces that are in the interior, when taking place outside defy socio-spatial norms (Valentine, 1998). I discuss this in Chapter 4, where ‘home’ food, although cooked by the street side, is significant for respondents to feel a sense of attachment with the place. Valentine (1998) writing in the context of Britain, argues:

...eating, like other sin of the flesh, sex, has been constructed as notoriously privatised activity. It belongs to the home, the institution (school or workplace) or the privatised ‘public’ space of the restaurant and occasionally in the appropriate culturally (and seasonally) sanctioned outdoor space of the park or seaside, but not on the street (p. 192).

In the Indian context, although eating on the street has been an established practice, recent discourses on world-class urban cities are altering the continuities of these practices. Within these discourses of the global city, often dominated by city elites, public space has been ordered through impositions on bodily acts, particularly eating. In Chapter 6, I discuss this in more detail, but strong mobilisations of citizen’s groups in Indian cities against hawkers is a testimony to curb practices like eating and cooking, that have apparent contamination effects on the street (Bhowmik, 2001; Anjaria, 2016; Bandyopadhyay, 2017). By illuminating on private practices taking place in public realms, my study therefore unsettles the dominant understanding of both home and street.

As Grewal (1996) argues, in Western thought *home* has been seen as a “space of return” (p. 6). Whether it is the return from travel or work, home thus forms a place that consolidates identity and makes a stark distinction between the inside and the outside, between the Self and the other: “‘Home’ and its distinction from abroad/market or from ‘harem’ was a concept-metaphor that was fundamental to the comparative framework of colonial modernity” (Grewal, 1996, p. 136). Blunt and Sheringham (2018) argue that in the Anglo-European world, home, in the urban context, was further delineated as a space that was private, interior and intimate. Therefore as the “city life” became more pronounced, a stark distinction between the public and the private emerged in the “western bourgeois societies” (p. 3) to define “home life”. However, in the Indian context the public and the private in precolonial times were much more diffuse, and it was with the emergence of colonial administration that the public became more clearly defined (Kaviraj, 1997) and infused with “bourgeois sensibility of civic patriotism” (Young, 2005, p. 9). Kaviraj notes that although the upper- and middle-class segments of the Indian population were inspired by the colonial sensibilities of modernity, the “middle-class response to the Western idea of the public/private was thus one of partial emulation” (Kaviraj, 1997, p. 94). Writing about the fluid nature of public space in the precolonial era, Glover (2007) notes:

Indian cities had physical spaces that were shared in common, accessible to all or most of the city’s residents, and in many ways physically identical to what the colonial government would later call ‘public’ urban space. Newness, in other words, did not derive from novel physical arrangements of space or entirely unprecedented protocols of use. Rather, by naming certain urban properties and spaces ‘public,’ drafting rules governing what activities could take place there, and enforcing these rules through new urban institutions the colonial government created both a concept and a corporeal substance – ‘public space’ - that had no prior history in the Indian city (p. 212).

These debates establish the nature of the urban public space with the emergence of colonial governance, which in a significant way defined the private and the notion of home. As Blunt and Sheringham articulate, this way the home was equated with “femininity”, and “city streets and public spaces by contrast were depicted as principally male spaces, embodied by the male, middle class, figure of the flaneur” (p. 4). Framed largely by upper class sensibilities, the way home was understood and practiced came to be thus deeply tied to the understandings of property relations as well as notions of public space (Chakrabarty, 2002). Chakrabarty, in the context of the Indian partition, specifically notes that the expressions of being rendered homeless was in terms of loss of familial property and land, and a sentiment that was deeply felt by the society elites who became refugees in another land.

2.5 Urban Navigations²⁹

My discussion in this section turns to a strand of scholarship that, in the context of my study, illuminates the persistence of dwelling amidst uncertainties. Thus dwelling is enabled through persistent urban learning that “can interrupt and widen possibilities of urban dwelling” (McFarlane, 2011, p. 33). This urban learning is constitutive of a form of agency that is missing from accounts of urbanism, that explains what Pieterse (2008,

²⁹ The idea comes from Bourdieu's critique of subjectivist positions (such as phenomenology) about which he says these propose that people act with “creative free will [... that] reduce[s] the objective intentions and constituted significations of actions and works to conscious and deliberate intentions of their authors” (2006, p. 30). In place he proposes that agency operates within power terrains (fields) that are uneven but which capture constraints on actions through structure. He talks about peoples' abilities to operate in the fields. Henrik Vigh adapts this to ‘social navigation’, whereby people adjust and respond to change in the immediate environment according to how “they perceive as being better than their current location and the possibilities within them” (Vigh, 2009, p.432). Social navigation is therefore “to plot, to actualize plotted trajectories and to relate one’s plots and actions to the constant possibility of change” (*ibid.* 426). The idea is that people get by (hustle, make do etc.) in ways that relate to world around them subjectively but this imagination is not collectively felt (i.e. not everyone perceives world the same) but is learned by practice within structural constraints.

in McFarlane 2011, p. 33) calls “below the radar” set of incremental practices to “gain access to infrastructure or to extend housing space” (*ibid.*). One of the most influential works that examine agency is that of de Certeau’s (1984) and his theorisations of tactics and strategies in the everyday city. Everyday life, according to de Certeau (1984), is constitutive of “ways of frequenting or dwelling in a place” (de Certeau, 1984, pp. xxii) through the mundane acts of cooking, cleaning, eating, sleeping and so on. Within the framework of the everyday, exist *strategies*, ‘a calculus of force relationships’ (pp. xix, 35-36) which is the domain of the powerful, and *tactics*, “calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus” (p. 37), is “the space of the other” (*ibid.*). As McFarlane describes, “A tactic is a fragment that manipulates events and turns them into opportunities – its operation lies in ‘seizing the moment’, hence De Certeau’s (1984, p. 39) emphasis on the ‘utilization of time’” (McFarlane, 2011, p. 54). As explained previously (and will be elaborated through the empirical chapters later in the dissertation), the urban does not exist within these stark binaries of “tactics” and “strategies”, rather in a web of productive uncertainties, where power relationships are recalibrated in the wake of opportunities or “urban navigations” (Anjaria and McFarlane, 2011) as means by which “people make sense of and work their way through diverse urban environments, often in contexts of deep political, economic and social inequality. Navigation enables people to persist through the diverse physical spaces of their cities, as well the accumulated historical layers of the city that comprise the present” (McFarlane and Anjaria 2011, pp. 6-7). To account for agency, I find this concept useful as it alludes to practices that enable:

...kinds of action that are possible once people have been marginalised by different strategies, and include a range of everyday forms of speaking, walking, reading and shopping. De Certeau is concerned with the ways in which, in trying to get by ordinary life, people use practical knowledge of how things work that

can be translated into different uses and contexts. His notion of tactics, then, is rooted in learning through dwelling” (Mcfarlane, 2011, p. 54).

Extending beyond the “narrative reminiscent” (Benjamin, 2008, p. 726) of de Certeau’s (1984) tactics where “the space of the other” (de Certeau, 1984) in this context, the footpath dwelling communities, are not “passive poor” (Bayat, 2000), but actors who generate “new mobilizations and insurgent identities” (Yiftachel, 2009a, p. 250). It is these everyday movements that make their place in the city through dwelling. Place making then includes ways of mediating the threats of the everyday life through making use “of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of proprietary powers” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 37). The act of place-making is a challenge to the city’s denial of place through self-help efforts (Vasudevan, 2015). In other words it is an act of urban persistence in the face of the constant material deprivation in conjunction with the sustained outlawing of the urban poor (Bayat, 2000). Thus despite the violence experienced through law and the processes which cause their erasure, and their precarious living conditions, footpath dwelling groups have not only persisted (Mitchell, 1997), but over the years have increased in the city (Banerjee-Guha, 2011).

To pose Appadurai’s question, can these instances be seen as a “politics of patience” (Appadurai, 2001, p. 27) as set against the backdrop of tyranny of neoliberalism? Scott’s (1986) work on everyday peasant resistance which he theorises as “weapons of the weak” aligns with this thought. For Scott, these weapons are not “direct symbolic confrontation with authority or elite norms”, but comprise “foot-dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage and so forth” (p. 34). Thus, these often “covert” forms of actions through which the peasants in Scott’s work “encroach” on state properties in the contemporary Indian

practices, I argue, can be read together with works on what I mentioned earlier as “urban navigations” (Anjaria and McFarlane, 2011). More recent contributions stress these forms of actions or “tactics” as “forms of learning through dwelling” (McFarlane, 2011, p. 55) taking place in “an assemblage of fragmentary elements in space through which subaltern groups make room for themselves within a spatial structure that is not conducive to their existence” (Chattopadhyay, 2009, p. 135 in McFarlane, 2011, p. 61). This view then takes cognizance of the “contingent particularities” of urban dispossession and simultaneously views the city in “conjunction of seemingly endless possibilities of remaking” (Simone, 2004, p. 9). Reflecting on the urban experiences of four African cities, Simone (2004), resonates that urban poor residents are active subjects who are constantly resituating themselves in “broader fields of action” (*ibid.*), and that in this constant reconfiguration, “bodies constantly are ‘on the line’ to affect and be affected...” (p. 9) and the “city in general is a nebulous world” (p. 241).

Chakrabarty (2002) frames these disjunctures, not as outright resistances, but as refusals that are more aligned with compromise, negotiation and adaptation, instead of insurgencies that enable the execution of power, and making of spatial claims and, I stress, the more diffuse practices of *dwelling*. The contemporary use of footpaths, in the Indian context, and specifically in my study aligns with this refusal to adhere to the urban disciplining and planning norms. Not just the footpaths mentioned in my study, but in the Indian urban environments footpaths have been historically used beyond its intended purposes. In other words, footpaths that are intended to be used by ‘pedestrians’, as per the official norms, are hardly used by its intended users and for its planned uses. I elaborate more on the tensions between ‘pedestrians’ and ‘encroachers’ of the footpath in section 2.5, dwelling and persisting on footpath.

In line with scholarship that has enabled me to frame how persistence is enabled through navigation, I find a recent ethnography by Lisa Weinstein valuable. In her book, Weinstein (2014) uses political resistance as a tool to theorise durability, which resonates with my idea of persistence. Borrowing from Chester Hartman's concept of the "right to stay put", Weinstein explains the consistent struggles by residents of Dharavi to resist its redevelopment. She writes:

Both historically and in contemporary Mumbai, struggles around the right to stay put are a key feature of the city's built environment and political landscape. These democratic struggles, as I demonstrate in the context of Dharavi, are waged in a variety of arenas, including in ballot box, the courtroom, and the government planning agency, and on the street. In the electoral arena, these struggles often manifest as so-called vote bank politics – as a bank into which politicians make the occasional deposit or political favour and then cash in when elections come around. Yet counter to this rather cynical narrative, electoral politics have tangible consequences for the urban poor and working classes, and participation in this arena constitutes a deliberate act of political engagement with the built environment (Weinstein, 2014, p. 19).

Weinstein argues that it is this fuzzy terrain of democratic struggles that entails the "right to stay in limbo" (p. 20), and claims that without elections the removal of the urban poor would have been more violent and rampant. While I find her lens useful in understanding how urban poor groups deploy direct confrontational strategies as well as more covert forms of resistance, I find that there is an over-emphasis on political society (Chatterjee, 2004) in explaining urban durability. She makes consistent references to the potential of density and size of Dharavi which rendered its political strength in resisting its displacement. This is where my work fundamentally differs from her conceptualisation of durability. Unlike Dharavi, which with its "sheer demographic" (Weinstein, 2014, p. 164) can compel politicians to respond to the "moral assertion of popular demands" (Chatterjee, 2004, p. 41), the footpath dwellers have no such recourse to protection. Therefore I ask: what about groups who are not organised enough to form

a vote bank? What about disparate groups, weak in numerical strength, living in what I see as spaces of everyday disruption? Despite consistent threats, both real and imagined, how do these groups continue to subvert municipal actions of annihilation and return to place?

2.6 Encroachment, illegality and informality

Encroachment and informality has been the constitutive genealogy of Indian cities in which the state has been either complicit or provided avenues to renegotiate relationship with marginal groups (Roy, 2009b; Williams, Vira and Chopra, 2011; Nakamura, 2014; Weinstein, 2014; Harris, 2018). As Doshi and Ranganathan (2017) observe, “urban areas in India have long been governed via a dialectic of rational planning and disorderly, informal urbanism” (p. 186). Thus not just the poor, but all sectors and classes have taken part in “informal” and “illicit” practices (Roy, 2009b; Ghertner, 2010; D. Ghertner, 2015), but it is the poor who have been indicted. As Nakamura (2014) expresses, these communities have been misrecognised and the “prevailing public sentiment is that illegality, improvisation, informality, and opportunism are characteristics of the urban poor: rural urban migrants, adivasis (“original inhabitants”), the underemployed, the under-housed, street hawkers and so on. As such they remain an anathema both to the Indian past and future” (p. 273).

Instruments of appropriation or legal forms of encroachment, when practiced by the elites, have not only been tolerated, but have proliferated through “middle-class mobilizations... present new tactics in long-standing campaigns against the poor and working class” (Nakamura, 2014, p. 279). Thus the legal discourse circulated a rhetoric

whereby the poor were rendered “unscrupulous” while the property owning citizens would be absolved “from an ethic of state patrimony to one that increasingly emphasized self-government” (*ibid.*, p. 279) facilitated by market participation and worlding aspirations (Ghertner, 2011). What has changed over time is the logic of governance to justify these regulations. In a historical account of informality in Mumbai, Anjaria (2016) argues that the emergence of a new judicial discourse has further shaped the legitimacy of one’s claim to urban space based on inhabitation in the city. As Ghertner (2008, 2015) puts it:

My review of legal judgements here specifically shows how the basic statement ‘slums are illegal’ and reference to jhuggi colonies as ‘illegal encroachments’... gained widespread circulation in judicial discourse only after the equation of slums with nuisance in the early 2000s. From this point on, jhuggi dwellers became objects – nuisances, encroachers – to be managed, not citizens warranting equal protection.” (Ghertner, 2015, p. 18).

In Chapter 1, I referred to the various labels, of “beggars”, “encroachers”, “vagrants” that these groups are subjected to. Although these groups had arrived much before the “cut-off” date, a governmentality through which the politics of housing in Mumbai has been shaped, they continue to be labelled as encroachers. Similarly, various other floating populations in the city face marginalisation through these labels. In rejecting the governmentality that aims to fit the city into the visions of “world-classness” (Ghertner, 2015), these bodies demonstrate a native refusal of adhering to the “bourgeois order of the city” (Chakrabarty, 2002). Thus they constitute a politics of persistence which is enabled through learning the city (McFarlane, 2011) and forging tactical alliances (de Certeau, 1984) with forces that attempt to annihilate them from these spaces.

Encroachment and informality, as pointed out earlier, have been symptomatic of the urban trajectory, “a necessary strategy and eventuality of city life” (Nakamura, 2014, p. 278). However, while some forms of encroachments have been tolerated, others have been criminalised. The aspect of legality is in most cases tied to the understanding of encroachment, and although a lot of the urban form has been “encroached”, not all of it has been termed as illegal (Blomley, 2008, 2010). In Delhi, for instance, while the various slums have been rendered illegal, shopping malls and gated private housing estates proliferate despite violating several building codes and planning laws (Ghertner, 2008; Roy, 2009; Bhan, 2017). As pointed out by Ramanathan (2004), although encroachment has been a constitutive form of the urban, it is the poor who have been legally incarcerated, a move by which their claims to citizenship have been weakened. At work here is what the state chooses to designate as illegal and illegitimate, despite many of its own practices conforming to these labels. Such “informality from above”, as Roy (2009b) calls it, attests to how India’s planning regime comprises “deregulation, ambiguity, and exception” (p. 76)

While scholars have theorised this as “informality from above” (Roy, 2009b) or instances of “exceptions” (Ong, 2006), my thesis shows that the state in securing its turf (Weinstein, 2017) enters into practices that produce contradictions. These point towards the embedding of informal practices and beliefs in the functioning of urban governance (Meth, 2013). As we will see in Chapters 5 and 6, the explicit acknowledgement of the municipality of the footpath dwellers and their periodic management are instances of “directly complicit and flexible role of state action and authority” (Harris, 2018, p. 297). However, I refrain from using the language of “informality” or “exception” in order to avoid what I see as the conceptual trap of delineating informality to the urban poor. In

other words I deviate from the implicit idea that “formality is the norm and informality as the deviation” (Roy, 2009b; Harris, 2018, p. 297). In this regard, Kidambi (2016) writes that the state-society boundaries have been historically contingent, ambiguous and porous in the context of Indian cities:

While the state cannot be regarded as a discrete organization that was external to the society, the practices of its various agencies nonetheless produced a ‘structural effect’, simultaneously material and ideological, that set it apart as a transcendental entity. In other words, the ‘idea’ of the state became more firmly entrenched within local society. And no matter how indistinct the dividing lines between the state and the society might have been, they were nonetheless regarded as boundaries (p. 12).

Writing earlier than Kidambi, Mitchell (1991) makes a fundamental assertion about the difficulties in delineating the boundaries between the state and society. As I will elaborate in Chapters 5 and 6, cooperation between the state actors and the footpath dwellers, elucidates to a significant extent the porosity of the state and society. In this regard my study shows that it is not just the footpath dwellers who are existing in a contested terrain, but the state also engages in practices that are contentious.

A theoretical concept that highlights how the state plays a role in enabling persistence by allowing (not always directly) or deliberately overlooking (Anand, 2011) so-called ‘informal’ or ‘illegal’ practices of the urban poor is gray-spacing. Oren Yiftachel’s (2009a, 2009b) theorisation of gray-spacing³⁰ draws attention to the ambiguous zone that the urban poor are pushed into by tacit toleration by the authorities on one hand and explicit denigration on the other (Rao, 2013). In the context of my research, gray-spacing highlights the paradoxes in the dwelling of the footpath dwellers. As explained

³⁰ This is similar to the practice that Yiftachel (2009) describes as *Sumood* or steadfastness whereby despite being ascribed an illegal status, the Bedouin Arabs defied the Israeli state’s efforts to remove them from the land. It is the fear of losing their own lands that compels the Bedouins to hold their claims to the land through “perseverance, patience and quiet determination”.

earlier the domesticities of the dwellers on the footpath not only obstruct the intended functions (Blomley, 2008) but also point to the implicit acceptance of the state authorities. And it is between this “lightness” of legality approval and safety and the “darkness of eviction, destruction and death” (Yiftachel, 2009a, p. 250) that “tolerated encroachment” (Rao, 2013) takes place. These acceptances, as I will elaborate in Chapter 6, unsettle scholarship that claim that civil society participation “exclude poor populations from the city is more complex than a straightforward deployment of neoliberalism” (Baud and Nainan, 2008; Anjaria, 2009, p. 391). As several legal measures render them illegal, these groups have not only persisted but demonstrated an integral link with place facilitated by bodies of the state.

2.7 Dwelling and persisting on a footpath

As discussed above the issue of encroachment goes beyond the “problem” of free-flowing sidewalks or conversely the denial of place to the urban poor. It is significantly shaped by “transnational historical processes and conceptual, legal, and political genealogies” (Anjaria, p. 22). Several municipal laws in Mumbai have very strict codes of conduct that privilege the “public” (and in the case of pavements, the pedestrian), and anything beyond it is considered a nuisance. While these works highlight the privileging of the pedestrians, they do not explain why it is that people continue to dwell on the footpaths. Where does the state then feature in the enabling of these practices, as regulation of space is significantly shaped by formal governance institutions, as much as by vernacular practices (Kaviraj, 1997). As argued, unlike in the West, the pedestrian has been “an unstable construction susceptible to a number of appropriations” (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 125) in the Indian context. In other words, the ‘pedestrians’, rather than being in stark opposition to the ‘encroachers’, enter into collaborative

relations. As I have shown in my empirical chapters, the ‘pedestrian’ (much like the contested idea of the public) is not a homogeneous entity, as argued by Blomley (2010). Instead they are also street actors with their own logics of association and tensions.

My study focusses on the footpath as a site of home, a space which is not only in the public sphere, but is regulated through strict codes of conduct, on paper. These socio-spatial relationships challenge the dominant assumptions of home, which is further compounded by the fact that these are taking place in a sphere with its own spatial and social norms, the street and the footpath (Hecht, 1998). I contend that persisting on the footpath as public space is more of an embodied and emotional immersion rather than “abstract contemplation” (McFarlane, 2011, p. 35) with its “dispersed logics, practices, meanings and experiences that perform ‘home’ as an ‘assemblage of dwelling’” (*ibid.*). In a context where the footpath (and not just in the current milieu but historically) is used for purposes other than its “intended objectives”, i.e. circulation of bodies (Blomley, 2010; Bandyopadhyay, 2017), what does it mean when it is inhabited or dwelt in? How do emotional attachments of the dwellers make the footpath a contested place? Then in a context where this inherently “public” utility is inhabited, how does it redefine the understanding of the public and the private? And finally, what do these practices reflect about the (in)formality of the state institutions (Björkman and Harris, 2018; Harris, 2018) and about how these spaces are managed?

Literature on ‘footpaths’ in India, particularly within the field of geography are relatively recent (Bandyopadhyay, 2010; Anjaria, 2016). As indicated earlier, studies about groups that were located on pavements have focussed on the housing question rather than seeing the pavement with its own norms and practices. In other words, these works have studied pavement living as precarious forms of housing which people

undertake as coping mechanisms to their conditions of poverty (Patel, 1990; Burra, 2000). The more recent works that look at the footpath, although they engage with the political economy of hawking, raise critical questions about what I see as the place of the footpath in the city. My research associates these disconnected strands of scholarship, i.e. the housing on pavements and the political economy of pavements in contemporary Indian cities, to understand intimate practices in a public place. In this sense footpath-homes reflect the tension between the intended objectives of the footpath and the “counter” pedestrianised practices. These practices highlight that while people attach meanings of home to a space that is meant to be public, this is made possible by the presence of a state that engages in contradictory practices. Footpath dwelling, as an associational form of urban life, highlights how people are navigating through the intended objective of the pavement to seek their place in the city.

As Blomley (2010) articulates in his conceptualisation of “pedestrianism” in North American cities, which views the sidewalk “...as a form of unitary municipal property, held in trust for an abstract public” (p .6), in official terms (in the instance of North American cities) a sidewalk “is not a space in which one finds a Habermasian public sphere. Rather, it is owned by the state, which is required to regulate it in the name of its exclusive public function: circulation.” (p. 82). In the Indian context many of the municipal laws which are still being implemented in the current times were framed during the colonial period. As a result, while the intent of these regulations has been maintained, the actual practices on the ground are different. Bandyopadhyay (2017) in his work on hawkers in the city of Kolkata, makes a case for “obstruction”, as opposed to “unobstructed motion” (Blomley, 2010) to argue that in the Indian context it is these practices that enable “collective living” or, the way I frame it, dwelling. In coining the

term “infrastructure publics”, he examines the “takenforgrantedness” of “public” and “infrastructure” in contextualising the contested nature of sidewalks/pavements/footpaths in urban India. Laying out a historical analysis of the footpath, Bandyopadhyay (2017), states that in contemporary times, the “pedestrian” emerged as the “new kind of liberal, right-bearing (male) urban individual...” (p. 123) and it created an identity of a public place that was premised on exclusions. Drawing from Blomley’s work on “pedestrianism”, a logic that “structures the ways in which state agents think about and act upon the spaces of the city”, Bandyopadhyay (2017, p. 125) forwards the notion of “counter-pedestrianism” to challenge the preordained role of the footpath. Citing the use of sidewalks by a group of hawkers in Kolkata, he states that these obstructions are instances of everyday negotiations that “reconfigure and refunction the materialities of infrastructures” (p. 129). This way the hawkers then engage with the negotiations with the pedestrians, shop keepers, property owners, elite groups, member of the bureaucracy and other actors to reconfigure power relations on the footpath:

In doing so, they periodically sidestep the bourgeois law of property, and appropriate infrastructures, and make infrastructures the focus of a collective existence ... it serves a significant role in bringing into being an infrastructure public. Certainly, the infrastructure public of counter-pedestrianism brings the sidewalk back to the lifeworld of the city, justifies its multifunctionality and includes a host of sidewalk users in the frame of the public... counter-pedestrianism creates a new imaginary of alliance at a time when we are undergoing a neoliberal reordering of the self, characterized by a strong insistence on self-sufficiency—an extreme version of individualism (p. 129).

Obstruction, arguably, has been part of the city life, not just in the Indian context but also in the West (Loukaitou-Sideris, A Ehrenfeucht, 2009; Blomley, 2010). In the Indian urban context this figure of the pedestrian is symptomatic of the new political shift wherein in keeping bodies in circulation this actor potentially “embodies the

normative subject of the public sphere as well as public space” (Anjaria, 2018, p. 28).

Unlike the dweller or the hawker, who are seen as obstructions, this pedestrian, then, is a symbolic representative of the “right-bearing”, modern urban resident.

As Anjaria argues, understanding the role of the state in the regulation of space requires an examination of the role the judiciary has played and also an analysis of the extent to which the “state” has been negotiated. In this respect, Hansen and Stepputat (2001) call for the discerning of the state and its practices in light of their:

...localized meanings, genealogies, and trajectories as they appear couched in mythologies of power, as practical, often non-political routines or as violent impositions. This requires that one study how the state tries to make itself real and tangible through symbols, texts, and iconography, but also that one move beyond the state’s own prose, categories, and perspective and study how the state appears in everyday and localised forms. (p.5).

This conceptualisation therefore reinforces my earlier assertions in the chapter on the fuzziness that reconfigures everyday power through “...less dramatic multiple, mundane, domains of bureaucratic practice by which states reproduce spatial orders and scalar hierarchies” (*ibid*, p. 5). In this light I contend that in terms of regulation of the streets and pavements, the state has only notionally heeded the “public” concern of disorder or rights, and in practice has either tacitly tolerated vernacular practices or entered into a terrain of negotiations (Anjaria, 2016).

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter began with a conceptual discussion of dwelling by persistence. I posited that while dwelling is a way of engaging and interacting with the urban form, persistence is a way to endure the vulnerabilities that specific forms of dwelling entail. In this process home can be seen as a set of lived relationships and attachments, the

experiences of which are not necessarily pleasant and are often imbued with violence. I engaged with a literature on ‘home’ to allude to the notion of home as a form of place-making, as well as to understand how cultural differences and geographic contexts have attached different meanings to home. This is a useful analysis in trying to understand how concepts and practices, such as those of street dwellers in Mumbai, that defy a dominant understanding of the term, are often categorised in languages that do not capture the ground realities.

I then turned to a body of scholarship that engages with staying in place. While these works, which move away from the “right to the city” or “accumulation by dispossession” framework, urge us to recognise the urban as a more diffuse terrain of contestations and negotiations that reconfigure power, they also draw attention towards another fundamental aspect, i.e. just as squatting was a part of the formative history of the city, so too have been accounts of demolitions and dispossession. I used the framework of urban navigation to highlight that, as debated by scholars, staying in place is not achieved by exercising rights, but by navigating the forces of the city. Within this framework, agency forms a key means of circumvention. It is also reflective of a state which is fluid and engages in contradictory practices. The site of the footpath further complicates notions of domesticities as being inherently private. Scholarship that engages with the footpath is forwarded through my study, examining how the appropriation of the ‘public utility’ complicates questions of public space and citizenship.

3 Methodology

And the task of social science, ethnography included, is not to exonerate the character of dishonored social figures and dispossessed groups by “documenting” their everyday world in an effort to attract sympathy for their plight. It is to dissect the social mechanisms and meanings that govern their practices, ground their morality (if such be the question), and explain their strategies and trajectories, as one would do for any social category, high or low, noble or ignoble. (Wacquant, 2002, p. 1470)

3.1 Introduction

This research has been conducted among a group of footpath dwellers in a neighbourhood of Mumbai, in order to explore their everyday practices, how they navigate obstacles in their lives, and their status within larger urban contestations. To undertake a study of this scope, I conducted an ethnography in order to “get inside and understand small-scale communities, to comprehend local loyalties and systems of knowledge” (Graeber, 2002, p. 1222). Ethnography was thus a fitting research method to study how footpath dwellers “make sense of the actions and intentions...[and act] as knowledgeable agents; indeed, more properly it attempt[ed] to make sense of their making sense of the events and opportunities confronting them in everyday life” (Ley, 1988, p. 121). The intention was that ethnography would enable me to understand how the “fragments” of social life on the footpath uncover “the processes and meanings that undergird socio-spatial life” and illuminate the linkages between structure, agency and geographic context (Herbert, 2000, p. 550; Tsing, 2011).

In this chapter I begin with a discussion on my entry and access to, and continuity in the field. The chapter then goes on to discuss the key methods, participant observation, interaction with ‘other actors’ and the conduct of semi-structured interviews that facilitated the data collection. I spend a substantial part of this chapter discussing the use of photographs and issues around ethics and the politics of the self. I engage with the positionality of my class and gender in depth, particularly with respect to data collection, access, and insider-outsider status, analysed in the section on street ethnography and performance of purpose. The latter sections of the chapter engage with ethical issues that arise with respect to the promise of the social change and my exit from the field. The final section elaborates on the sources of the data³¹ and the dilemmas encountered during the writing stage of the fieldwork.

3.2 “This time I am on my own”: accessing the field, insider/outsider debate and initial dilemmas

“Classic” ethnography as a study of small communities entails “a research process in which the anthropologist closely observes, records and engages in the daily life of another culture – an experience labelled as the fieldwork method – and then writes accounts of this culture, emphasising descriptive detail” (Marcus and Fischer, 1986, p. 18). These accounts are the primary forms in which “the fieldwork procedures, the other culture, and the ethnographer’s theoretical reflections are accessible to professionals and other readerships” (*ibid.*). A key dilemma that I faced during the initial phases of my fieldwork was defining the nature of my ethnography within the disciplinary realm of

³¹ In section 3.9 I have described the maintenance of a field diary from which field notes were written and comprised the major source of data.

Geography³². Some of the questions that framed the direction of my ethnography are: How should I decide on which group of footpath dwellers to study? What would be the nature of my participant observation? Would I stay with the group on the footpath? If not staying with them, what would constitute “considerable time” spent with the group (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007)? Where should I locate myself? Would I take the help of an NGO in facilitating my access to the field site? In other words, I was confronted with questions that concerned ‘authentic’ data collection while simultaneously mindful of the risks that the place of the ethnography entailed. Having considered these questions carefully I decided to study a group of footpath dwellers who were in a relatively accessible location in Mumbai. Moreover, I was briefly familiar with one of the footpath dwelling families through an earlier NGO intervention and thought it would be easy to familiarise myself with the rest of the group more quickly as compared to beginning fieldwork in a place where no one was known to me. This also seemed essential because I wanted to enter the field without any institutional help, such as through an NGO.

A preliminary scoping exercise³³ in the year preceding my fieldwork helped me to familiarise myself with the group(s), and map the various field sites within the Greater

³² Acknowledging that ethnography has been historically rooted within the discipline of Anthropology and then popularised within Sociology and Psychology, Herbert (2000) makes a case for the adoption of ethnography, albeit relatively recently within Geography. He states that ethnography’s potential to provide insights into social life is crucial within Geography, as “[t]hese processes and meanings vary across space, and are central to the construction and transformation of landscapes; they are both place-bound and place-making” (p. 550). For more see the SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography.

³³ I had visited this neighbourhood the previous year for a scoping exercise to frame my PhD proposal. I visited this group in Mahim along with a couple of footpath dwelling groups situated in different geographies in Mumbai to understand how people cope with situations of “homelessness”. It was during this visit that some of my key assumptions regarding their connections to the city were challenged, signalling the initiation of the “grounded theory” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) that would further frame research. I realised that although they did not live in a physical structure of a house, these groups have had sustained temporal linkages with their respective neighbourhoods, and their practices of habitation revealed that they regarded these spaces as ‘home’. The centrality of their living space, i.e. the space of

Mumbai areas where footpath dwelling groups live, in order to brainstorm further on which site/sites to pick for fieldwork, and decide my terms of engagement with the respondents, i.e. access the field without the help of gate keepers. Having visited four sites in the city, all of which I had engaged with before, in the capacity of an NGO representative, I decided to choose the field where I felt safe, or as Sen (2004) puts it “emotionally and physically equipped” (p. 4). The other potential sites were relatively difficult to access and hidden from the view of the street. Thus the fact that my main field site was in an open street where the exit route was relatively easy and had “eyes” (Jacobs, 1961) on it, was one of the key deciding factors in choosing this field site. Moreover, it was this aspect of being located on an extremely important route in the city, which also made this field site most interesting with respect to the group’s ability to persist over time and resist the obstacles that constantly tried to remove them from these spaces.

As Hammersley contends, all research projects involve negotiations with the “settings, groups or people they study” (Hammersley, 1995, p. 109), and for me the ability to access and negotiate the field without the help of an external actor was crucial for my field engagement. In this case, the external actors comprised representatives of NGOs who first introduced me to the field and groups. Although an ongoing association with NGOs working in this area could have been beneficial in terms of directly impacting change through my feedback from the field, I decided to stay away from these organisations in order to avoid possible engagement with gate-keepers. As Corra and

the footpath or the roadside and the material and social practices that enable this living appeared as “voluntary” (Wacquant, 2002, p. 1474) and rational choices of dwelling. This is how I allowed the “order” of my ethnography to emerge from the field, rather than entering the field with “fixed categories” (Silverman, 1985).

Willer state, “the gatekeeper exercises power by controlling access” which may have a significant impact on the research (Corra and Willer, 2002). Although I did not foresee any explicit form of power that the gate-keepers could exercise, I was aware that if I had to engage through them, I might have to carry out their agenda in the field. A brief interaction with one of the NGOs that I had previously engaged with in my previous study of this group further confirmed my decision not to enter the field via an institutional gate-keeper. During my fieldwork I had contacted this organisation to interview some of its outreach workers in the hope of understanding interventions that impacted the lives of the footpath dwellers. However, during the discussion I realised that the NGO was using me to gather people from the group to join their programmes without actually making any direct changes to the group. For instance, when I contacted the NGO seeking urgent help after some of the tarpaulin had been taken away in a municipal raid, I did not get any response. It was essential that the respondents understood that my engagement with them (this time) was different, as it would not lead to any immediate material benefits for them, which was always an outcome of previous engagements as a development professional.

I began my fieldwork amidst heavy rains on August 1, 2016, and remained in the field until mid-August 2017. I decided to limit myself to one site, instead of doing a multi-sited ethnography, for two reasons. One, I considered that the spatial dynamics of footpath dwelling that I would encounter here would be representative of “other locales” (Herbert, 2000, p. 560) and two, given that I had twelve months for the fieldwork, I decided to focus closely on each footpath dwelling unit (usually a family) and their interactions with other actors. I decided not to spend the night at the field site, but spend the rest of the day with the group, from morning until it got dark. Although I was well

looked after by respondents, I felt spending the night in the street would be unsafe and unfeasible on many accounts. While I feared for my sexual safety, I was also anxious about physical harm from moving traffic, getting attacked by stray dogs and rats and going to the toilet in open spaces, encounters that were routine for the respondents.

On my first day in the field I approached Ramu's family, who lived on the footpath adjoining the railway tracks outside Mahim station. The access to the field and initial contacts with these respondents was relatively smooth, considering the nature of their living conditions. What was more difficult was preventing an over-reliance on one respondent, and sustaining and intensifying my presence in the field. While the family welcomed me and answered my incessant questions for the first few days, I realised that over time they were less inclined to respond to my questions and it came to a point where they began to show frustration at my presence. This reaction eventually led them to abandon the footpath without informing me or introducing me to other families, making me feel "anchorless" in the field.³⁴ For me it was the first instance of moving beyond my comfort zone by initiating linkages with the other families and also recognising my taken-for-grantedness with one respondent.

3.2.1 Negotiating the insider versus outsider status

Considering that I conducted my ethnography in my home country and in a setting I was already familiar with, it is important to address the insider/outsider debate to re-examine the taken-for-granted assumptions about what constitutes "indigenous" knowledge (Naples, 1996). As a former employee of an NGO which works on homelessness, I was familiar with the key debates, institutions, and geographical areas where these groups

³⁴ Ramu, a key respondent, during my fieldwork, left Mumbai with his wife following an accident. He went to stay with some relatives in Nashik, another city in Maharashtra. However during the time that he was gone, his place was well guarded and no one took over his space on the footpath. I mention this to highlight persistence.

congregated. However, as stated above, I was not aware of the micro-practices through which these groups negotiated the city (Anjaria and McFarlane, 2011). Therefore I was aware of the various ways these groups were marginalised, but this framing did not incorporate ways in which they addressed this marginalisation in their lives. Most importantly I was not aware of how central the space, which is contested given its “public” nature, was in their efforts of place-making in the city. Thus, while I was in many ways an insider, in most ways I was an outsider to the ways of life of the respondents and the research setting. Is this distinction truly tenable or even desirable while conducting research on social groups with varied subjectivities? If so, what are the parameters that define this insider/outsider-ness? Reflections from my fieldwork reveal that this distinction is not only blurred, but imagining this distinction is erroneous (Watson and Till, 2010). Introducing a feminist perspective to this debate, Naples (1996) calls this distinction “false” and states that rather than focussing on the insider/outsider debate it is more essential to focus on the power differentials between the researcher and the researched. She stresses that this distinction is not “fixed” or static, and that these are continually evolving and porous “social locations” that are subjectively experienced by group members. She forwards three methodological points for ethnographers to acknowledge with respect to the fluidity of the insider-outsider status:

...as ethnographers we are never fully outside or inside the "community"; our relationship to the community is never expressed in general terms but is constantly being negotiated and renegotiated in particular, everyday interactions; and these interactions are themselves located in shifting relationships among community residents. These negotiations simultaneously are embedded in local processes that reposition gender, class, and racial-ethnic relations among other socially constructed distinctions (Naples, 1996, p. 84).

Resonating with her assertions on the power dynamics within research, I forward another point that is significant in shaping the insider/outsider construction, namely the significance of a researcher's values. Research is never a value free process (Wacquant, 2002; Watson and Till, 2010) and the other impacts the research from the point of conceptualisation, to data collection, to the writing of the research, analysis and dissemination of results. A researcher's class, gender, social affiliations and "moral appeal" (Wright, 1997) tend to influence the ways ideas will be constructed, but can be mediated by a "more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices" (Watson and Till, 2010, p. 131).

My process of research involved a significant reconfiguration of my perception of these groups. Observation of the respondents and attention to accounts of how they used the space, navigated their housing needs, accessed essential needs of the everyday, forged social ties with other actors, dodged evictions, and engaged in practices that are generally outlawed, showed them in a very different light from the way I had initially perceived them, i.e. as people without any ties in the city and "hapless victims" brutalised in the neoliberal city (Mander, 2007; Banerjee-Guha, 2013). Therefore, to add to the debate of insider versus outsider, the issue of the researcher's value is crucial, i.e. that even a so-called "insider" could reflect on the field in a way that is in alignment with the person's value systems. In other words, the insider/outsider status dichotomy is a false one considering the multiple subjectivities that the researcher encounters in the field. Instead, a researcher's relationship with the group is impacted more by the negotiations and renegotiations that take place through the ongoing interactions, which are also significantly altered by internal dynamics within the group. Here I recall Sen's words that an ethnographer is never a total insider or outsider, but an occasional

outsider and occasional insider whose task should be to be “always an observer” (Sen, 2004, p. 3).

3.3 Participant observation and informal interactions

Considering that the group of footpath dwellers under study is located along a busy road in Mumbai, they were easily accessible and often subjected to media coverage and attention from non-profit organisations. I came across at least 20 newspaper articles that focused on this group of footpath dwellers and two academic references that mentioned a very similar group in Mahim (Jha and Kumar, 2016; Neuwirth, 2016). Thus, although the group received attention from the press and NGOs, they have been under-researched in academia. Moreover, even the press and NGOs describe them in ways that explain little about their agency and relationship with space. During the fieldwork, I realised that their exposure to media attention and non-profit organisations had conditioned them to respond in very specific ways to certain questions. During the earlier phases of my fieldwork I got rehearsed answers to questions on housing, their arrival in the city, practices in public spaces and entitlements. When asked about their housing status, they would call themselves “beghar” (in Hindi, homeless), talk about lack of adequate access to shelters and hold the state responsible for their marginalised condition. These narratives aligned closely with the discourses on homelessness popularised by housing rights activists in the city.

Given writings on urban marginalisation (homelessness) and advocacy by homeless activists, which have repeatedly pointed to the ideal solution for homelessness in the form of “secured shelter”, the practices of the footpath dwellers whom I interviewed and

studied challenged these assumptions. The “casual, matter-of-fact tone” (Desai, McFarlane and Graham, 2015, p. 111) in which respondents mentioned how the footpath is their ‘home’, suggested that they did not consider themselves homeless and were reluctant to move to shelters or even the government provided housing, as these options would not cater to their spatial and economic needs. Moreover, in their everyday lives, they interacted with actors of the state and often received various kinds of support from them that unsettled assumptions about these groups existing in stark opposition to the state. In other words, their relationship with the state did not appear to be antagonistic. Thus, being attentive to and learning to distance myself from these established framings of Mumbai enabled me to focus on the practices of the respondents that were beyond the narratives of marginalisation. In other words, while I set out to understand how street dwelling made them vulnerable, my fieldwork paid attention to how they appropriated spaces on the footpath and personalised them in accordance with their needs, their social networks, emotional attachments with their places, everyday domestic practices, principles of organising their everyday work, collaborating with state actors, countering elite residents of the area, using urban materials to circumvent municipal raids and so forth.

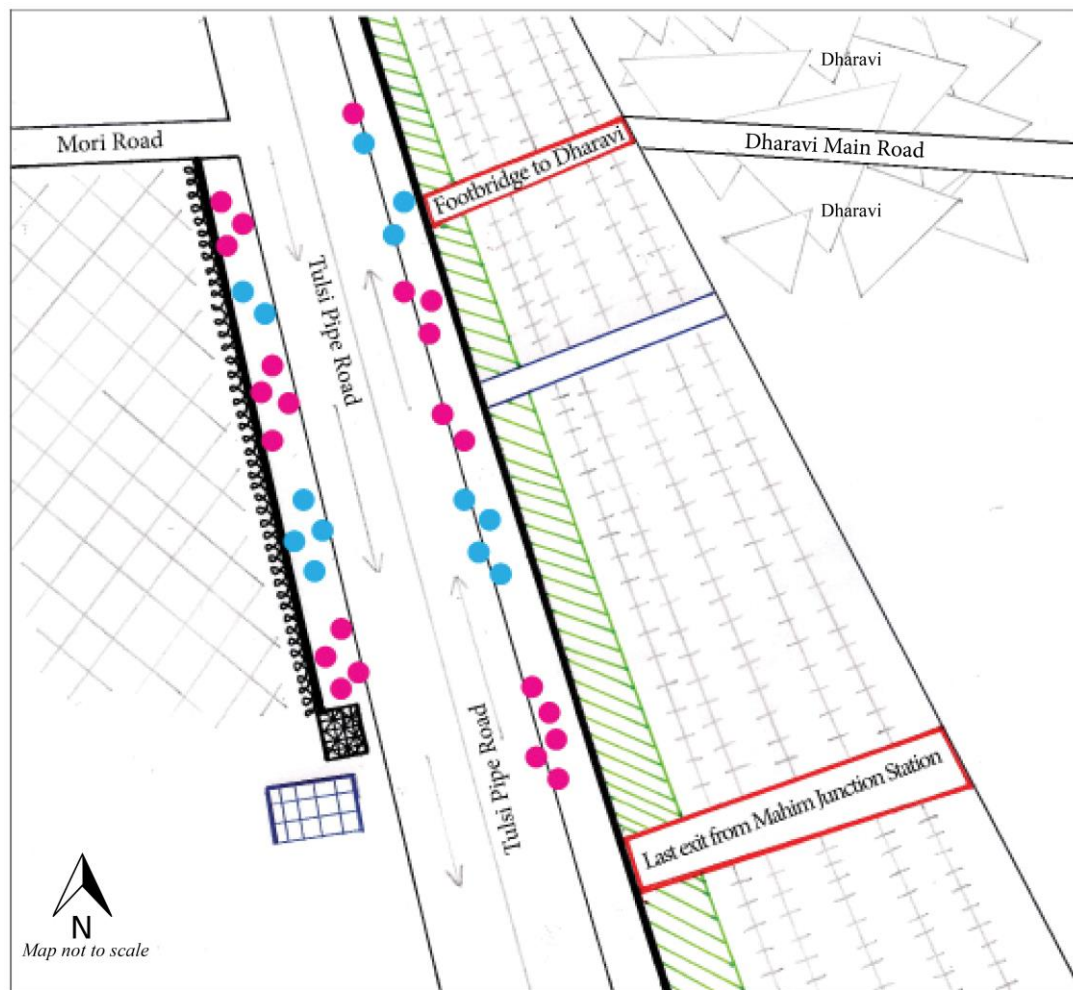
My ethnography entailed conducting participant observation, gathering life histories and open ended interviews among 130 footpath dwellers in Mahim³⁵. Out of these, ten people³⁶ became key respondents who I also interviewed at various points throughout my fieldwork. In addition, I conducted seven semi-structured interviews with other actors who had direct impact on the lives of respondents, as well as academics and

³⁵ The exact number of the footpath dwellers keeps shifting, as people keep moving in and out. I came to this estimate based on the 30 dwellings on the footpath, most of which had approximately ten members.

³⁶ See Chapter 1 for an introduction to the footpath dwellers and Annexure 1 for the profile of key respondents.

professionals who work on related topics. I followed a pattern which proved to be useful in situations where respondents are pressed for time. Instead of demanding exclusive time from the individual for an interview, I attempted to record the biography of individuals by following them around and asking questions. Over time I realised that focussed observation and questioning based on a theme developed into a narrative. This also proved to be beneficial as often what the respondents said in an interview seemed to differ from the empirical observation of their practices.

I would spend the day in the field (see Figure 3.1) 'hanging out' with the footpath dwellers and asking questions about their work, which I realised intersected with the ways they practiced home. I would also spend time socialising with these groups: accompanying them to run errands such as fetching water, buying groceries, going to sell their wares in other parts of the city; participating in group festivals and other forms of entertainment; hanging out in the local tea shop where they would usually congregate during and after work. This tea shop was an interesting location, as it gave me access to the group gossip and this was also where the inter-group dynamics were most palpable. Moreover, this was the place where dispute resolution would take place. The teashop was away from the main street, providing relative invisibility while enabling them to congregate as a larger group without obstructing traffic.



Key













	Space dominated by basket weavers: comprising part of the road and footpath		Solid wall, respondents use to navigate raids		Active footbridges across the railway tracks, with details of use
	Space used by non-basket weavers: comprising part of the road and footpath		Solid wall with barbed wire, no-go zone for respondents		Dilapidated bridge, no staircase to street level, also used for storage by respondents
	Carriageway, including direction of travel		Mint Quarters Colony, private housing estate		Contested toilet block
	Space of refuge		Private residential building		Western railway tracks

Figure 3.1 The field site representing respondents' use of space

Map prepared by Laura Antona in consultation with author.

I ended up spending most of the time with the women and children of the group. I sensed a discomfort (and to an extent dismissal) from the men each time I tried to speak to them in private. To give an example, Ramu, a key respondent, would frequently ask me to leave the spot whenever he was left alone with me. In another instance I learnt (after a few days) that there had been a major domestic dispute in a family because I accompanied Naran, a 23 year old married man, to the local darga (sufi shrine). By the time I learnt about this dispute I got to know that the group had imposed sanctions on him whereby he was forbidden from being around me, let alone having any kind of interactions with me.

Thus I sensed from the very beginning that my gender was not only shaping my interactions in the field in a significant way (Naples, 1996; DeLyser et al., 2009) but was also impacting the dynamics within the group. Although this distance had waned over time, I concluded that the initial hesitation of the men of the group to freely interact with me was due to the fact that they operated within very strict gender codes. Thus through my interactions with these men taking place along a street, I learnt about the “embodied social relationships” that the group had internalised (Watson and Till, 2003, p. 123). While both men and women are affected by the codes of being in the street, it is these (lower class) men who are framed as “predators” and the women as “easily accessible” (Phadke, 2013). Moreover, any transgression in interactions beyond the gender boundaries also meant a violation of the home. While these gender dynamics were obvious and impacted women more, I was also surprised to learn that they impacted the men of the group in a significant way as well, particularly when this meant preserving their places on the street.

My initial plan, of participant observation in which I would practice their vocation, had to be altered. To undertake the ethnography, the original plan was to learn and participate in the dominant income generating activities of this group, i.e. basket weaving. I had imagined that this would help me to 'integrate' with the group. Basket weaving not only proved to be a difficult job to learn, but people, particularly the men, were hesitant to let me enter this domain. The labour entails risks such as working with sharp objects and sharp-edged bamboo at a swift pace. While they were happy to teach me to weave a basket leisurely, they were hesitant to let me be a part of their working unit because every piece of bamboo that they purchased was accounted for and they could not let it be "wasted" on me. I considered paying for my share of bamboo, but some of the respondents who I was more familiar with discouraged me, saying that it might lead to unpleasant dynamics within the group. In hindsight this proved to be beneficial also because I could spend my time doing activities that did not tie me down to a place, as basket making requires working over long periods of time (often up to a day) sitting in one place.

Rather, hanging out and following them around helped me to integrate in other ways. As my presence became normalised, I felt more useful to the group by running errands for them. These errands ranged from helping them fill out official documents (during my fieldwork I helped 20 people with their Aadhaar card³⁷ application and four people open bank accounts), watching over toddlers while the parents left for work, going to clinics and hospitals with them and facilitating conversations with doctors, accompanying them to court during the hearing of ongoing cases, request for school visits, etc.

³⁷ More on Aadhaar cards in Chapters 1 and 5.

As a strategy, I would spend time playing with the children and hanging out with the women. It was through these everyday interactions over the months that I made sense of the group dynamics, at the heart of which is the contestation over the space they occupy. Invariably, it was through interactions with the children that I learnt of some of the practices that the elders were too careful to speak about. Here's an excerpt from the fieldwork notes that reveals some of the "forbidden" practices of the group:

When we reached the cross section on the main road near the church she pointed out towards the signal and said "yahan pe hum log mangne aate they. Abhi mai nahi aati hun, lekin Moti aur Kiran aate hain" (We used to come here to beg earlier. I don't come anymore but Moti and Kiran³⁸ continue to come here). I was extremely surprised to hear this from her, especially because I was under the impression that they were not soliciting. It was even harder for me to imagine that their parents had been lying to me so far. I don't have a moral issue with respect to begging but I am surprised that this was concealed from me all this while. Even more because they are currently being tried under a legal case in the court where they are having to prove their innocence for being "falsely implicated" by the police under the Begging Act. (Date: 25.08.2016)

The so-called "forbidden" practice is that of engaging in begging either voluntarily (out of habit) or solicited by parents. While attempting to distance myself from the labels that these groups are often subjected to, I was nevertheless beginning to consider them in my own normative framework. That explains my "extreme" surprise when one of the children shared with me that begging was a practice that members from this group still engaged in. In trying to disassociate from the negative labels that the city imposes on them, I had begun to construct this group in a manner that would morally absolve them from so-called "illegal practices". Legal acts such as the Prevention of Begging Act (1959) and the Juvenile Justice Act (1937), consider begging to be illegal and anyone tried under this act could be detained in a "certified institution" for up to three years.

³⁸ Names changed.

Scholars and activists writing on the issue argue that “certified institutions” are in reality breeding grounds for violence and crime and although they are meant to rehabilitate the “beggars” these institutions function like prisons and are notorious for their harsh conditions (Ramanathan, 2008; Tripathi, 2016).

The incarceration of young members from this group (a practice that is common in Mumbai) has been resisted by activists in the city under claims that these groups are not beggars but “city-makers” (Mumbai Social Action, 2012). By framing them within the moral category of productive individuals, i.e. as workers, the dismissal of activists towards begging often castigates the same tropes that the legal apparatus of the city penalises. In other words, by not acknowledging the begging practices of these groups, these framings often elude deeper questions of inequality, i.e. why do these groups have to beg in the first place? What alternatives can be devised for those who engage in begging, instead of incarcerating them in harsh ways? Thus while methodologically hanging out with children was beneficial to understanding some of the covert practices of the group, theoretically this was revealing of the so called “illegal” practices (McFarlane, 2012) that they entered into in order to survive or achieve small gains, such as begging for money to buy addictive substances such as gutkha (a sweetened mixture of chewing tobacco). This aspect was something that I was never able to discuss with older people in the group, because they were aware of the consequences that divulging this information might have on them.

Everyday interactions with the pavement dwellers and all those who formed a part of their lives meant witnessing certain actions which were deeply private and disturbing. Accounts of regular violence, which I witnessed or which were narrated to me, seemed to have been normalised by the respondents. These moments were particularly

disturbing for me as I not only felt helpless in being unable to prevent these incidences but also questioned the “objective” and “non-interventionist” role of ethnography (Sen, 2004). What could I have done in a situation where a woman told me that she was brutally beaten up by her husband the night before? Should I have simply heard her out and quietly made this note in my fieldwork diary?³⁹ Should I have consoled her? Or should I have prompted her to make a complaint at the police station? When I heard first-hand accounts of violence my initial reaction was to console the person and then seek options for their remedies (such as taking someone to a doctor to treat wounds from a physical attack). In some cases, where the perpetrator was a respondent (someone with whom I was already familiar and had built up a rapport) I confronted them directly, sometimes explaining nicely and other times threatening to report them to the local police. This is also how I used my position of power to address situations in the field.

Close attention to these accounts revealed that this endurance to violence was rooted in preserving the ‘home’. In a situation where the wider city had already rendered them ‘illegal’, this endurance, and what I see as normalisation, is then a way through which this preservation of home is a way to remain in place (Datta, 2012; Datta, 2015). This ethical dilemma encountered during fieldwork was dealt with by Das in her seminal essay ‘Our Work is to Cry, Your Work is to Listen!’ (Das, 1990). Addressing the ethical and methodological dilemmas of collecting data in difficult circumstances, in her case among victims of communal violence, Das argues that as ethnographers the primary task is to “listen” to not just the victims but also to the perpetrators, in order to get behind the larger structures that underscore this inequality. As an upper-class

³⁹ A fuller account of the use of the field diary has been made in the latter section of the chapter.

empowered individual and feminist, I consider gender-based violence as a heinous crime. If it happened to me or someone within my circles, the law would be the obvious recourse. However, in this situation, what would a diary entry in the police station mean in terms of attracting visibility to the group? What would happen when I would exit the field and leave the city to resume my work in London? Sen registers similar feelings of being a “frightened bystander” when studying urban conflict in Mumbai (Sen, 2004). These moments of ethnographic encounter sometimes blurred the boundaries between victims and perpetrators. The same woman who told me that she was brutalised by her husband regularly also told me how she employed physical measures to “discipline” her adolescent daughter who often tended to defy the boundaries of the spatial norms. She told me that it had been very difficult to “control” her daughter who often strayed from their neighbourhood, and justified beating her severely in order to penalise this transgression, which could have had an impact on her family’s “respectability” and their liveability in the area.

3.4 Interactions with other actors

As the lives of street dwellers are intricately linked to the networks they have established and developed in the city, it was imperative that I extended my ethnography to these actors as well. While I observed many of these interactions from the street, some interactions also took place in spaces in which these actors operated, for instance in a school, the local municipal office, the court, markets, offices of NGOs, and so forth. Semi-structured interviews and formal conversations often formed the basis of these interactions. Through these interactions, my aim was to understand how these actors perceived respondents, how respondents were treated, and the kinds of relationships it fostered between them. Unlike my interactions with the group of footpath dwellers, I

also felt that in my interactions with these actors, particularly those who represented the state, power relations were always inverted. For instance, while photographing and taking notes was relatively easy (always with consent) with respondents on the footpath, state officials, politicians and school teacher(s) always declined to be photographed or recorded.

I came across three types of police who directly interacted with this group and these engagements ranged from friendly exchanges, to surveillance, to direct confrontation. Traffic constables comprised one such key actor who would operate from the street adjacent to the footpath, along a very busy transport route. They controlled the junctions that connect the suburbs to the main city and at every interval constables were deployed to check vehicular traffic. It was a common sight to find these traffic constables stopping vehicles, almost next to where the group under study dwells, for traffic violations and surveillance. In light brown (and sometimes white) uniform these men, just like this group of footpath dwellers, were constant fixtures on these streets. I observed a fascinating practice taking place regularly, in which the constables engaged in practices in contravention to their duty, in order to help the footpath dwellers. For example, they would stop private water tankers that plied this stretch of the city to deliver water and which obstructed the traffic from time to time (for more see Chapter 5), so that the footpath dwellers could partake of the water. This quick act of what I understand as ordinary patronage is telling of micro-instances of kindness. Administered within a matter of minutes, the drawing of water from tankers speaks of pilferage as an instance of cooperation in the urban space. When I asked the constables why they did this regularly, they told me that these footpath dwellers were “poor but honest people” living lives of immense hardship, and that this gave them a chance to do

something “good” for these people. I tried to enquire several times whether there was an exchange value to this, i.e. if the group provides any service in exchange, but I was unable to trace a material exchange. There is something to reflect on in my consistent, yet futile inquiries to the motive behind this act of kindness. As someone who has always understood the city as a ruthless environment, this act of benevolence was hard to grasp. What I inferred from this interaction is that the constables, who are in the very low ranks of the institution, exercise their power of regulating vehicles on the streets to gain a sense of importance and reverence from the group. Often I noticed people would offer very loud praise in a manner that would register with the police constables.



Figure 3.2 Footpath dwellers fetching water from a tanker stopped by the traffic constable.

Photograph credit: Author. Date: 24.11.2016 and 01.05.2017

The area was also under the regular surveillance of police personnel, the second type of police that interacted with respondents, as a measure of crime prevention. While on

patrol, the vans would slow down near specific spots on the pavement, a few men from the group would go stand near the window of the vehicle, there would be few interrogations about changes in the neighbourhood, and the vans would leave. It was evident that these police personnel were not only from a different unit but also higher in rank than the constables, and maintained a good distance from the group. I was told by respondents that people from this group act as informers alerting the police of potential delinquencies in the neighbourhood.

The third type of police who had encounters with this group were officers from the Mahim police outpost. Although the police station is geographically distant from the group's location, the relationship between the police at the station and the footpath dwellers was tense. For instance, during my fieldwork I accompanied respondents to the court hearings on cases that were ongoing between some footpath dwelling families and the Mahim police station. Occasionally, senior officers would visit to inform these families about the upcoming court dates. However, the relationship is more strained compared to relations with the traffic police or surveillance units, as these forces also assist the BMC in occasional raids. As per legal regulations, BMC representatives cannot touch these people during raids. Therefore it is the police who execute the brutality of confiscating belongings, facing resistance and arresting people when the situation gets out of hand.

Local municipal representatives comprised another set of 'state' actors that frequently interacted with respondents. During the initial months of my fieldwork I had noticed two huge garbage bins placed at specific spots along the footpaths that were removed by the BMC around January 2017. This emerged as a major reason for anxiety among the footpath dwellers as now they had nowhere to dispose of their waste products. They

were worried that the local residents would find a valid reason to draw the attention of the eviction squad of the BMC, by accusing them of littering the place. This issue was eventually solved when all the families decided to commission a cleaner from within the BMC for the upkeep of the area. I was told that these cleaners would carry out the work of cleaning twice a day in their official uniform, so it would “appear” as if the BMC was doing its work in the normal course. A conversation with one of these sweepers revealed that beyond his official duty he visited this place “twice” for “unofficial” duty to keep the footpaths clean. I asked him why the garbage bins were removed, to which he responded that a group of residents lodged an official complaint about the “nuisance” that these bins were causing. The BMC, he told me, responded by removing the bins as a symbolic gesture, by showing that they were not “accepting the presence” of the footpath dwellers. On the other hand, they set forth a process by which the cleaners were sent more frequently and the further informal arrangement of the cleaners with the group meant that the place was cleaner than before. Considering that this is an area through which many important dignitaries travel, maintaining the aesthetics of this place was crucial for the ability of the group to live there. These sweepers knew each member of the group and were often the ones that informed them of an impending “routine” municipal action.

Young men and women in their late teens volunteering through a private contractor were another category of BMC representatives that this group encountered regularly. Observations of these interactions revealed that the exchanges were tense rather than friendly or cooperative. These Clean Up marshals were involved in street campaigns around clean neighbourhood as ‘responsible citizenship’ and would often present these groups as violators. An interview with two young marshals highlighted the tensions

between them and the footpath dwellers. They reported their frustration at having no power over the footpath dwellers, especially their children, who often teased them on the street. While they felt they had the “power” to levy fines on the public, they had to remain mere onlookers when someone from this group littered. The tension would be heightened when the marshals targeted the customers of the basket makers. Speaking to the clean-up marshals helped me understand the nature of the contestations that the footpath dwellers entered into, the key to which is the control over spatial power.

Although not very regular, the altercations with ward officials (a third category) was always intense. The BMC officials (mostly civil engineers), would often visit this site with orders to remove “encroachments” as a part of their regular duties. During my fieldwork I witnessed two such intense confrontations, one in January, when the entire pavement was cleared off within a matter of hours, and another time in March. These engineers mostly came with orders of removal but sometimes they brought the police along. Each time they came they confiscated the belongings found on the streets. Resistance from the footpath dwellers was usually achieved through physical confrontation or sometimes by using young children as shields. Use of the body in resisting state action is not a new strategy, and is often used by groups at the forefront of police brutality. These groups possess the knowledge that while the police can confiscate belongings and everyday household materials, they cannot use physical force on the body, particularly towards children. However, these occurrences are regular and the ebbing of the footpaths seem as normal as the flow when the people return to their spots after the municipal vans have left. An interview with the Head Commissioner of the G/North ward made things very clear to me. When I asked him why in his opinion these people came back every time after each municipal drive, his answer was simple.

He told me that in Mumbai, where there are other pressing issues to deal with, deployment of municipal resources in removing people from the streets was the lowest in his agenda. Thus these eviction drives were more of a formality than a concerted effort to remove these people, a fact that the footpath dwellers had internalised and accepted as a part of their everyday living.

Now I turn to my interaction with representatives from NGOs and charity organisations. My introduction to this group, as mentioned in Chapter 1 was through an activist, Abhishek, while he was advocating for the rights of the homeless in the city. With support from an international donor agency, he had done some crucial work and gained the goodwill of the members of the group. During the fieldwork, especially when I had to introduce myself to a person, I made reference to Abhishek as a way of gaining a quick response. In most cases it broke the ice. In other instances it elicited a negative response because he was seen as having favoured only a few families. Abhishek was aware of my presence in the field but visited the field only once in the year that I was there, primarily because his project had ended and he had shifted to another city.

Another NGO that regularly engaged with the group under study was Global Aid.⁴⁰ All of their engagements seemed to have ended before I began my fieldwork, but their presence in this group was still visible through the remnants of the “resource materials” that were given out during the project. A Global Aid school bag hanging on the wall (Figure 3.3), books, and workshop documents on “good health” were recycled as household items. The field outreach worker from the organisation had reported my presence to his superior who had later contacted me to “collaborate” on initiating new projects. I accepted this arrangement as I thought that it would help me understand the

⁴⁰ Name changed.

historical development of the group, as they had been working here for over a decade. I did manage to interview the Programme Director, but as I realised that they would contact me only to gather people from the group to attend their programmes (which respondents were often not keen to participate in), I felt discouraged to continue this arrangement. During an interview with the programme director, I was told proudly how they “work with the police” in controlling begging and that their organisation had sent six children to the beggar home in Dongri within a span of one year. These interactions highlighted how institutions which intend to work for the welfare of marginalised groups not only reinforce negative stereotypes but also work with the law enforcement agencies in criminalising them.



Figure 3.3 Arrow in the left image points towards the bag with the NGO name, image on the right shows representatives from the NGO with donors visiting from abroad.

Photograph credit: Author. Date: 02.08.17 and 26.05.17

In addition to the international NGOs, I met members from local religious organisations which distributed food items. Social workers from the nearby Canossa, a Christian missionary school, would make frequent visits to this area and often teach the children hymns from the bible and good etiquette. Had I not witnessed the social workers in the field site, I would have never understood how some of the children and young girls, despite not speaking a word of English, were able to hum Christian hymns. Besides these charity organisations, I occasionally witnessed cars slowing down and throwing packets of food in the direction of respondents. Some would maintain a distance while stopping to distribute alms, while others would simply hurl packets at them. On inspecting one packet, I saw that the food was almost rotten. The respondent who opened the packet with me had immediately flung it back at the car. It illustrated how the exposed nature of their dwelling makes these people vulnerable to almost cruel acts of charity. These acts then present the street as a visible sphere that can be simultaneously subjected to disciplining and benevolence.

Customers, i.e. people who regularly purchase the cane products from the basket makers comprised another set of actors. My conversations with the customers of respondents revealed that the footpath dwellers have inhabited these spaces for a long period of time. Some of these customers owned small food businesses in the city and they told me that they saw their business and the group grow simultaneously over the years. The relationship with customers is not just economic, but takes the form of social exchanges where news on local politics, private family matters and crucial information required to “get-by” (McFarlane, 2011) in the city are shared.

The relationship between the residents from neighbouring housing societies, the fifth set of actors, and the footpath dwellers was marked with tension. To represent the civic

needs of “citizens” (mostly house owners) in the locality, these residents have organised themselves into institutional bodies called the Area Locality Management (ALM). I elaborate on this tension in Chapter 6, but for now I want to draw attention to how interacting with the members of the ALM methodologically made sense in understanding the spatial contestations in the footpath.

Local ‘dadas’ or as Hansen, (2001) describes them “...not always simply criminals, however but often persons from the plebeian world who are physically strong, run small businesses, and have ties with a multitude of networks reputed for their personal integrity, courage, and honor” (Hansen, 2001, p. 72), comprised a distinct set of actors that impacted the lives of respondents. My brushes with these men were often in the form of a gentle reminder (possibly warnings) that these footpath dwellers were able to live there because of the mercy of these strongmen. I remember the encounter one evening when the leader of the dadas approached me directly saying that they had been noticing me with the “tokriwalas” and a woman from a respectable family should not be loitering on the streets. This man, Milind Ranade⁴¹, who approached me with an appearance of authority reeking of misogynistic body language, is now an elected representative of the area, representing the Shiv Sena party. I told them of my affiliations and tried explaining to them about my research to which the response was that they were the only people who had “authentic” knowledge about the area and I should approach only them. When he left, Alam, a key respondent I introduced in Chapter 1 (also see Annexure 1), who had witnessed our interactions, expressed displeasure at the person and his men. During the time that Mr Ranade and I were having the conversation, Alam did not express any view, and instead he seemed to be

⁴¹ Name changed

nodding in agreement with everything Ranade said. Knowing that these men often provide “social power and protection” to “self-made networks of loyalty rather than in institutionalised action and discourse” (*ibid.*, p. 72), I wondered if these *dadas* protect these groups from evictions. But what I learnt was to the contrary. Because the group was not important enough for the party as they did not form a “vote” bank, the *dadas* did not care much for them. Then why did the footpath dwellers revere them? And what form did this reverence take? I learned from several accounts that by sparing the group from *hafta*⁴² collection and unnecessary harassment, these *dadas* permitted the persistence of these groups. In exchange, the young men from the group provided their services by going to other areas to either create ruckus for the party or in show of numbers during political processions.

Pedestrians, mostly commuters to and from Mahim station, formed another set of actors. Owing to the fact that the footpath is occupied by the dwellers, the pedestrians are seen walking in the space between the footpath and the carriageway (see Figure 3.1). Observing this space illuminated enormously the tensions between the pedestrians and the dwellers as well as the character of this space. It is common to see the sudden eruption and subsidence of brawls between the two groups, as much as it is usual to witness the forging of friendship and camaraderie. Some of these commuters are residents of neighbouring areas and over the years have established a bond with the pavement dwellers. However, there seems to be a class dimension to the nature of these interactions. Some of these pedestrians who have become “friends” of the pavement dwellers live in the neighbouring slums of Naya Nagar and Dharavi. The interactions I observed between them were around common interests, such as discussions about how

⁴² A Hindi word that means loan, in local usage is associated with extortion.

much grain one got in the previous ration, or if their Aadhaar cards had come yet, discussions around illness and the ordeal of clinic visits, chats on how the long queues in the water line had taken time off from another crucial errand they could have run. The exchanges were primarily around shared experiences of poverty and hardship. Some commuters who walk along this area are residents of high rises in the area and would have very limited interactions with the pavement dwellers, and to me they would give curious glances.

I came across innumerable tourists making their way to Dharavi to experience “real poverty”, occasionally stopping by to photograph the street dwellers (Figure 3.4). As mentioned previously, this is also indicative of the way marginality is represented and curated (Jones and Sanyal, 2015) as “objects of Western knowledge” (Hutnyk, 1996, p. 12). Observing and reflecting on tourists proved to be an important methodological consideration. It not only helped me understand how poverty and suffering becomes a spectacle for individuals to reflect on their individual life choices, but also how mainstream framings of poverty shadow other forms of marginalisation. Hutnyk’s (1996) writing about the city of Calcutta views tourism, particularly from the West as a form of oppression (Hutnyk, 1996). Describing a slum tour experience in Mumbai, Jones and Sanyal write:

The experience provoked participants to reflect on their good luck, but also justified a sense that they had taken the right life choices and of cultural superiority. Encounters with suffering, therefore, need to appreciate the importance of irony that emphasises the politics of the self rather than the politics of injustice, thereby dehumanising the vulnerable and imposing a moral distance between our actions and lives of others...” (Jones and Sanyal, 2015, p. 433).

In their analysis, the corporeal witnessing of poverty is actually a form of self-validation.



Figure 3.4 Respondents displaying their artefacts collected over the years from the passing tourists, Sri Lankan Rupees, Nigerian Naira and Saudi Riyal.

Photograph credit: Author. Date: 27.12.16

3.5 Use of camera and dictaphone

Throughout the course of my fieldwork, I have taken photographs of people, materials, scenes and situations which helped me build the narrative of my research. Although I possessed a digital camera, just a few days into my fieldwork I discarded it and used my phone camera instead. It was becoming tedious for me to carry the larger camera to the field, as I had to constantly go to places where it was cumbersome to carry. The phone was light and easily manageable, but it brought with it its own set of politics. Before I elaborate on that further, I would like to make it explicit that I obtained verbal consent when taking photographs of respondents. Immediately after taking a photograph I

would show them what I had captured. While most people agreed to and even participated in the photography, on many occasions I was asked to delete the photograph because of the discomfort faced by the subject. “Didi accha nahi hai, isko ura do” (Sister I am not looking nice, delete this), was a request I always abided by.

Earlier I mentioned that the group under study live along a route which is traversed by many foreign tourists. These tourists, led by tour operators, sometimes stop to photograph women and children from this group. In other words, the exposed nature of their dwelling has periodically subjected them to being photographed as subjects of interest to the “tourist gaze” (Hutnyk, 1996; Urry, 2002; van de Ven, 2008) who are interested in focussing on the ‘poor’. As Hutnyk puts it:

There are a number of set conventional images which collate some rather narrow stereotypes for the city – the rickshaw-wallah pulling his cart, the destitutes queuing at the street clinic, the overcrowded double decker bus; but over and over, the poor. Every photo is seen from some perspective; there is always an angle. And while all photographs can be said to be ‘constructed’, this, of course, does not mean they are without political effects (for good and bad?). Nothing is ever seen just as it is; all angles especially camera angles, are positioned and determined by factors of context and contingency. Even positioning the camera without thinking involves a complex set of figuring preconditions (Hutnyk, 1996, p. 148).

The following image (Figure 3.5) resonates with Hutnyk’s assertions on photography being imbued in not just the politics of the other, but also of the self. The photograph is representative of how images captured by tourists shape their travel experiences through a mechanism of othering. Hutnyk is also reflexive of the “open nature of the street as abode” that makes both the tourists, and as he self critically reflects, as an anthropologist, that further the “transparently imperialist appropriations” (p. 149).



Figure 3.5 Tourists stop and curate a frame to photograph two girls with toddlers on their lap, while other children of the group look on

Photograph credit: Author. Date: 21.11.16

Just a few moments before this scene something had happened that led to this moment. The two girls, completely oblivious to the presence of these tourists, were playing with their friends, until they saw two cameras being aimed at them. On noticing the photographers, they quickly got up to pose. One of the tourists asked them to pick up the toddler who was on the road, and asked the other one to place a stuffed toy in her lap. Then they asked the other children to move from the frame. And after the photograph was clicked something else happened. The girls approached them to ask for money and left the tourists completely bewildered at this request. One of the men took out a Rs 50 (equivalent to 0.52 GBP) note with much reluctance, and shaking their heads in disapproval of this act, they left as soon as they could, and as opportunistic

ethnographer I captured the whole moment. To me this instance not only echoed what Hutnyk said about the poor often being the subject of photography particularly among foreigners, but also that the expression of displeasure when the girls asked for money is symptomatic of the morality of self (Hutnyk, 1996; van de Ven, 2008).

Rejecting the use of the camera, van de Ven (2008) in her essay 'Photographing People is Wrong: With a Camera in Kolkata', states that photography was historically used as a tool of justifying colonialism. Through her photographs she is advocating for the "Western eyes" to look past the stereotypes and rediscover India in a new light. The title of her essay evidently is oxymoronic as she herself ("because I am white") moves around Kolkata with a camera. However if one is able to look beyond her essentialising of the "Western eyes", she makes an important point about the issue of ethnographic ethics, i.e. that sometimes people themselves ask to be photographed. I have been asked by women, children and sometimes even men from the group to photograph them. The camera and the dictaphone proved to be very useful in integrating within the group. It helped me to strike up conversations and sometimes the photographs themselves would be the subject of conversations. But even in this context photography was not immune to power dynamics and inequality.

First, photographing people on my phone and sharing the results with them also brought with it a disclosure of my personal life. Some of the people who saw my photographs reacted to my life 'beyond the field', the way I dress, the fact that I smoke and drink alcohol, snapshots with my male and other friends, suggestive selfies, my holidays, my family and a kind of affluence which set me in stark contrast to the group. I tried hard to conceal these photographs, to maintain the sanitised image of a 'respectable' middle class woman in the field, which I thought was necessary to divert attention away from

me as well as for my personal safety. It was only towards the end that I would share these photographs with a very close group of women, who would be really eager to see them. The sharing of these photographs would raise inevitable questions about my marital status and my family: why are you still unmarried at 30? You must be married, you are just not telling us? How come you have four parents? This boy you are posing with so closely, is he your boyfriend? I had also lied to respondents about my housing conditions, in the anticipation of receiving requests to invite them over to my house. I told them I was living with my brother and his wife in a distant suburb of Mumbai, whereas in fact I was living by myself in a neighbourhood very close to where they lived. I created a fictitious brother as a way to suggest that I was not alone in the city and that I had constant male protection safeguarding “my chastity” (Phadke, 2005, p. 47). I lied, in order to strategically negotiate risk” (*ibid.*), as I was house-sitting for someone else, who lived in a gated community in an affluent neighbourhood in Bandra. Inviting the footpath dwellers over would raise unwanted attention and I worried that I would jeopardise my free housing situation. Thus the terms of photography were highly unequal because while I had unrestricted access to their private lives, they had very controlled or no access to mine.

Second, it is the material condition that creates this condition of inequality, i.e. the possession of a camera. None of the respondents during the time I did my fieldwork had either a camera or a phone with camera. Thus I was not only in possession of highly sensitive and private images of people’s lives and living space, but their economic and social position limited them from having a similar access to mine. In this way ethnography not only maintains but also perpetuates unequal power relations. Third,

while I was able to photograph the group on the footpath, I was not able to take photographs of the other actors with whom I interacted, particularly those who were in a position of authority. I received straightforward rejections when I sought consent for photography in institutional settings, such as the BMC office or even in the BMC affiliated school that I visited. Thus it is the imbalance in power that makes ethnography unequal, however without these photographs it would be difficult for me to substantiate the narrative of my research in order to draw attention to the specific nature of vulnerabilities involved in their everyday dwelling, as well as how they navigated the obstacles to persist in the city.

Another technological device that I used frequently was the dictaphone. I used it to supplement the field diary, as it was sometimes easier to speak into a device describing something rather than writing it in the diary. Like the camera, this dictaphone mediated my interactions with the group. Children in the group would love to record their voices and songs, and replay the clips to hear themselves. The majority of them were younger boys singing popular Bollywood songs of male heroes, while the girls would sing vernacular folk songs from Rajasthan on devotion, home, love and belonging. Through the dictaphone I would sometimes pose questions such as: What did you do today? Where did you sleep last night? This fostered conversations that would fill me in about important group gossip, disputes, developments or even the mundane routines of the everyday. As a device this proved to be less intrusive and more interactive. I used this device to record most of my semi-structured interviews with other actors for which I gained consent. Apart from the voice and interview recordings, I would use the dictaphone to record sounds to gain an auditory sense of the road along which they lived. Some of the sounds are: cars whizzing past, trains halting and announcements at

Mahim junction, vehicles moving over the drain placed in the middle of the road, horns from vehicles, street vendors ferrying their wares, footsteps, gushing of rain water and so on.

3.6 Street ethnography: calibrating risk and performing purpose

In this section, I focus on the reflections that were specific to my fieldwork in Mumbai. I consider this arising from a kind of situatedness in which certain attributes of being an “insider”, i.e. biological and linguistic features, framed my fieldwork experiences (DeLyser, 2010). Gender was key and it frequently intersected with my class position in negotiating the spatial dimensions of the fieldwork. Participant observation in the forms mentioned above entailed spending long hours on the street. It meant performing a “respectability” (Phadke, Ranade and Khan, 2009) that would create a “safe space” (Phadke, 2005) for me while undertaking my fieldwork. Mumbai, despite being the “safest” Indian city (Phadke, Ranade and Khan, 2009) is not excluded from this discourse. With respect to the usage of public space, “class is relevant to women’s negotiation of risk as well as their perception of what constitutes this ‘risk’” (Phadke, 2005, p. 45). In other words, class affiliations determine to a large extent permissible behaviour in public spaces. I should mention here that the group played a big role in providing me with a sense of security, yet at times I had to devise my own strategies to manage the perceived risks of being on the street. In terms of risks, the possibility of a road accident was the most likely, yet I focused more on managing anticipated sexual risks rather than ensuring road safety. In my ethnographic encounters I felt safer interacting and spending time with the group members rather than speaking with an official or the local dada or even the passers-by.

I was constantly aware and often reminded of my conduct on the street in order to avoid negative (male) attention. Within the first few days of the fieldwork a key respondent politely warned me that I should carry a dupatta (scarf) to cover my chest with me whenever I visit them. She hinted that the scarf would not only make me appear modest, but it would also make the men of the group less awkward in their interactions with me. Fieldwork therefore meant embodying the respectability codes of the street, where upper class women are expected to use the street or even public spaces “in rational, goal oriented, purposeful ways, and not for irrational pleasure seeking” (Phadke 2005, p. 42). I elaborate this further with an excerpt from my field notes:

As I carried on my conversation with Rekha, I noticed a group of women walk by passing glances at me. They looked like they were returning from their 9-5 office job. It had begun to get dark and by the fast walking pace of the women, it seemed that they were in a hurry to get home. One of them walked ahead and stopped to return. She came back to me and without uttering a word pointed towards my waist. A portion of my skin on the waist was exposed. She smiled and left after saying “theek se baitho” (sit properly). I thanked her. Afterwards Rekha and I exchanged knowing glances. (Field notes: 21.11.16)

The excerpt resonates with the gendered discourses imbued in the usage of public spaces in Indian cities. In this context my apparent middle classness (determined by dress, appearance, etc.) justified the polite admonishment by the women walking past, reminding me to sit in a respectable manner, that would not only draw less attention from the lustful eyes of men, but also in a way that would distinguish me from the ways of conduct of the street dwelling women.

Ethnographically, this calibration of risk and production of safety meant either being accompanied by respondents when in the field or when alone in performing a ‘purpose’. This performance often entailed being visible with a pen and a paper and appearing

‘busy’ as I sat near the street side, sometimes doing nothing. This helped me avoid unwanted eye contact with people on the street, particularly men who seemed eager to strike up a conversation with me. My own body politics featured greatly in the mediation of risk and safety. For instance, for a very long time, I found it difficult to sit on the section of the road between the carriageway and the footpath (see Figure 3.1), a space of dwelling that spilled over beyond the footpath. While I would sit on the footpath, I hesitated sitting on this section in the anticipation of ‘obstructing’ the pedestrian flow and from concern of being touched inappropriately by men passing by. I was warned of this by a well-meaning commuter who once told me to keep a “safe distance” while working on the street. This distance was produced by my gender and shaped by my class position, in which the space of the ‘respectable woman’ was not on the street but within more secluded confines that were institutionally secured. This way the street appeared not as a democratic sphere of participation, but as a means of circulation that enabled the body to move from one place to another. For women this movement had an added condition, it had to be with purpose. Obviously this was in stark contrast with the footpath dwelling women whose everyday lives took place in those spaces. These women too had devised their own mechanism of putting their bodies out on the street.

Closely linked to the aspect of performing purpose, was the aspect of experiencing time when there was nothing to do during fieldwork. There were times when the field appeared rather repetitive and mundane and did not appear to me as an extraordinary moment worth being attentive to. There were instances when all possible respondents were occupied and did not appear to welcome my presence. In other words, I was thoroughly bored and left on my own. These occasions emerged as significant instances

of observing the street life, but also as moments of ethnographic performance, as pointed out above. While there is writing on boredom as either an affliction of the wealthy or vulnerability of the poor (O'Neill, 2014), I have not come across works that address the issue of 'boredom' as a methodological circumstance. Is the field always meant to appear interesting? Does boredom mean a lack of engagement on the part of the ethnographer? How can this boredom be managed? Does it involve walking away from the field? Does boredom then bring with it the pleasures of free time or does it mean time being spent unproductively? And finally how is spending this free time different from the way the group spends free time if at all?

As mentioned previously, at those times when I felt that nothing in the field was presenting a surprise, I would reflect on the field notes. Invariably I would realise that there were observations that needed clarification, tasks that needed to be followed up, or sometimes I would just walk away to a friend's place nearby. This temporary walking away always helped me to reflect on and unpack some of the key findings of the day. However, being bored during fieldwork felt very frustrating as I felt that I was not doing my job properly. I could not use this time to smoke or watch television. In hindsight I now do not see this free time as having been spent unproductively, as these were the instances that made me realise the expectations of an upper class woman on the streets. It also made me realise that the way the respondents used free time, such as by sitting by the road side watching cars pass by, also reflected class based ideas on productivity and the ability to consume. Constrained by economic, social and spatial factors, respondents spent their lifetime on the street.

3.7 Research ethics

The key consideration of ethical research, particularly that which involves people who are in relatively powerless positions, requires that the researchers act ‘honourably’ and respectfully. Prior to leaving for my fieldwork I had signed up to a Code of Ethical Practice around aspects of consent, confidentiality, safeguarding, cultural awareness and dissemination of results. While these guidelines provided me with issues for “moral contemplation” the field presented me with dilemmas which were not addressed in the institutional “moral imagination”. In other words, the ethical significance of the researcher’s actions are context specific “within which they have meaning” and thus one should be prepared to take responsibility for their actions (Hay, 2010). Ethical dilemmas featured in my research at several junctures, and while I was not able to resolve all of them, the application of a reflexive method meant that acknowledgement of the issues illuminated the complex combination of ethics and context. Some of those dilemmas with regard to seeking consent, representation, use of photography, and recognition of power positions have been discussed earlier in the chapter. In this section I want to draw attention to two specific dilemmas that I was not able to address before.

3.7.1 Promise of change

During the course of my fieldwork, I was often asked by respondents and others, “What are you changing through your research?” Among the respondents this question was always preceded by “what are you doing here”? I remember struggling to convey what ‘research’ means to the group of footpath dwellers who had not benefited from previous projects. I finally settled on use of the word ‘padhai’ (study) of their everyday lives for which I had been sent from my university. When they began to understand that my presence would fulfil my academic requirements of the PhD, I was confronted with the

larger question, of how does it improve their vulnerable conditions. I arrived at an answer (more to satisfy my conscience), that in drawing attention to the vulnerabilities of the lives of the footpath, the study would also highlight how people are affectively tied to the city. Therefore although various institutional forces try to eliminate their ties, these groups call the city their own and attempt to hold on to their places within it. Promise of the 'book' (that is what I told respondents would be the outcome of the fieldwork) which was eventually meant to draw wider attention to their problems had convinced the group at a discursive level. Respondents were not only happy to tell me their stories, but they also insisted that their photographs and names not be anonymised or changed while writing this 'book'. Therefore in this research I use original names of respondents, unless discussing a potentially sensitive topic about their lives. Names of state actors and their official designations have been changed upon their request. Names of research participants who appear in the public domain have not been changed.

I have mentioned previously that participant observation meant that in order to normalise my presence in the group, I tried to make myself useful in their day to day activities. Whether it was filling official documents, gathering benefactors to back them up, accompanying children to school to speak to their teachers about an absence, buying medicines, organising small treats during festivals and visiting the local municipal office, and accompanying patients to the hospital and facilitating conversations with their doctors, I tried to help people in distress while I was doing my fieldwork. Undoubtedly this helped me integrate into the group, but in material terms it extended my role beyond that of an observer taking notes. In their article on the impact of "over-research", Sukarieh and Tannock (2013) raise this issue of the disjuncture between research and the promise of social change. Focussing on the Palestinian refugee camp of

Shatila, they present a vignette of a broken-door, which despite featuring in innumerable research projects, especially in the ones of international donor agencies, was never actually fixed. In other words these authors highlight a key ethical practice in the gap between the promise of ‘social change’ and what actually transpires. In the context of my research the earlier question of “what are you changing through your research?” has been addressed by identifying a few ‘broken doors’ that could be fixed while I was there.

3.7.2 Exiting but not really leaving

The process of exiting the field had begun a few months before I physically left it, although I had mentioned my departure from the very beginning of the research. My presence amongst the group as being a temporary feature had registered with my key respondents, as it would periodically feature in conversations. “Didi aap toh chali jayengi, phir uske baad kya hoga” (sister, you will leave one day, what will happen after that), “London se photo bhej na” (Send photographs from London), were not only reminders of my departure, but also cues to suggest that I could not really solve their problems. In other instances it was also an expression of gratitude for helping them in their everyday work. Preparation for an exit meant I was mentioning my departure months before my actual departure, as well as wrapping up some of the work that I had undertaken for the group. For instance, I had to constantly remind a respondent of the dates of court case hearings and another person of his medical appointments. A few months before my departure we agreed to the set reminders. These dates were recorded in their language on the walls next to their dwelling units. “Daswa mahine ke dus tarikh” (the 10th day of the 10th month), “Bhabha haspital ke teesri manzil mein dain wala kamra” (the room on the left on the third floor of Bhaba Hospital) were some of

the inscriptions that were done on the walls. Communication of my key findings to the group formed a crucial part of this exit. In a focus group discussion arranged with the women in the group, I fed back my findings on: home, arrival and settling in the city, contestations over the footpath, ties with the village, their friendships and associations, experience of violence, returning after municipal raids and so forth. Dominated by an influential male member of the group (also a key respondent, but not belonging to the basket weaving families), the focus group discussion was an opportunity for me to witness how participants who wielded more spatial power, had differed from the views of those who had less of a spatial hold in the area.

I marked the conclusion of my fieldwork by organising a feast. The feast that took place among heavy rain gave me a chance to thank everyone for accepting me. I also took this opportunity to print out and share photographs with each family. Often in research projects the exit from the field ends the interaction between the researcher and the respondents (Letherby, 2017). However, in my situation, although I did think that exit would create an absolute distance, my relationship with the respondents has not ended. First, a group of students that I had assisted from Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) went to the Mahim footpath and arranged a Whatsapp video call a few months after I came back to London. Being able to see this familiar geography and the faces of the people of the group made me emotional. I could see the crowd swell as people struggled with the phone amongst themselves to get some face-time with me. Through this conversation I learnt that Ramu's knee had still not improved and the doctor had finally advised him to go for a second operation, Rekha had delivered her third child on the footpath and that 'dahar' (the vernacular term for municipal raids) had intensified. More recently a key respondent, Sangeeta, contacted me on WhatsApp saying that she

had bought an advanced phone which came with unlimited data. She remarked with excitement that this meant that they could keep in touch with me regularly. Since then I have been receiving texts, photographs, videos and calls very frequently.

3.8 Writing the fieldwork and data analysis

I maintained a small pocket diary in the field, where I would scribble important information, such as people's names, locations, reminders, directions and highlights of incidences. On returning home, I would write down the day's field notes. Writing of the notes post fieldwork provided an opportunity to reflect on everything that had transpired that day. It lead to more questions and some interesting discoveries (see Chapter 5). Although often tedious, writing up the notes was also emotionally demanding as it meant revisiting some of the less pleasant encounters in the field. While the field diary helped to anchor me to the field by helping me remember crucial information, the digital notes gave me deeper insights. Thus as much as the fieldwork, writing of the field notes proved to be an "embodied mindful process" (DeLyser, 2010, p. 343) that shaped the research further. I tried to write down every aspect of the field, yet it is the aspects that caught my interest and surprised me the most that I was writing. In this, therefore the issue of representation not only emerged through what I studied, photographed and recorded but also in what I chose to write. And what I wrote was in line with my academic orientation. As John Hutnyk succinctly expresses:

An anthropologist might claim that 'participant-observation', the casual interview, and other less structured 'dialogic' aspects of ethnography might offer an alternative to these technocratic cartographies, but this is also an illusion which forgets that anthropologists look, listen and participate with books in mind – they are always on the verge of perpetrating some sort of literature, they carry

the university and its attendant constraints with them always. There is no perspective that will not be constrained in some way. (Hutnyk, 1996, p. 165)

The data comprised detailed field notes, photographs and voice notes, narrative interviews with footpath dwellers, semi-structured interviews with state officials, journalists, activists, academics, members of ALMs, news articles on the footpath dwellers in Mahim, official documents on city bye-laws, regulation of begging, court papers on ongoing cases between the Mahim Police Station and respondents, and official documents from city activists advocating for the rights of ‘homeless’ in the city. These documents helped me understand the trajectory of activism on homelessness in the city as well as gain a broad picture of the degree of vulnerability of footpath dwelling and houseless populations in the city.

Writing up the field notes also meant an initial level of analysis of the data. Each day’s notes would be arranged in sub-themes which in turn would be linked to the larger themes of the project. An issue that I struggled with during the writing stage was addressing the respondents and the space that they dwell on. Earlier phases of my fieldwork writing, records the group as “homeless dwellers”, “these people” (for the lack of a better term) and so forth. Over time I resolved to call the respondents by their names, and in situations when that would not be possible, to address them according to their vocation, which is the way they usually preferred. Similarly, I felt discomfort at describing their living spaces in their terms, which they called ‘home’. Thus while the group referred to these spaces as home, for a long time I labelled them as ‘tents’ or ‘structures’, far less humanising terms.

The first level of my data analysis emerged during the documentation of detailed field notes, which included organising them into several sub-themes which were later tied to the final themes of this thesis: dwelling, home, navigation and contestations. Although guided by broad theoretical paradigms, my fieldwork highlighted the gaps between practice and theory. As elaborated, the data emerging from my fieldwork not only changed the original conceptual underpinning of my thesis, from homelessness to a study of home, it also illuminated that the footpath dwellers are not just vulnerable subjects, but affective and active agents, navigating the city. Therefore my data was analysed not by using “logically deduced theory” but instead the data itself was coded and thematically organised to build the theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The process of organising the data into themes helped me to identify compelling vignettes which were relevant to the broad themes which were finally used to organise the empirical chapters in the thesis.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an account of the methods through which I pursued my research question: Despite tenuous spatialities, how do urban poor groups – namely footpath dwellers in Mumbai – persist through dwelling? My fieldwork comprised participant observation with the footpath dwellers in Mahim, interactions with actors who impacted their lives and interviews with bureaucrats, politicians, academics, representatives of NGOs and journalists. Interactions with other actors widened the scope of my fieldwork to unravel how these people respond to institutional power and manage spatial contestations. I also included visual methods and voice recordings as a part of the data collection strategies. In addition, I relied on news archives to understand

what has been written about this group and the key issues that they confront in their everyday lives. A discussion on positionality revealed the street as a terrain in which my gender and class played a role in the performance of purpose. I also discussed how the use of the phone camera highlighted the unequal power relations between respondents and myself. Trying to understand how these groups remain in place entailed the observation of how the footpath dwellers produced “actual material life” (Ingold, 2005) in resisting displacement as well as in attaching emotional ties to their spatial of habitation. It involved departing from my earlier assumptions about these people and paying attention to how they regarded and spoke of their spaces.

4 Home in the Street

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I elaborate upon the ways people feel at ‘home’ in the city. I use the concept of home to describe a set of relationships, feelings and practices that are lived over time (Grewal, 1996; Meth, 2003; Mallett, 2004; Blunt, 2005). ‘Home’ is therefore a key concept in the larger framework that structures the thesis, that of dwelling by persistence. This chapter answers the first research question: what constitutes ‘home’ for the footpath dwellers? As I will show through the chapter, during my interactions with respondents, the footpath was often referred to as ‘ghar’ (home), and many of their everyday practices of domesticity are widely associated with ‘home’. In describing the everyday practices of domesticity of the people living on Shanti Nagar pavements, I highlight how people personalised the footpaths and infused these spaces with meaning. These practices are not merely what Friedman calls an “opportunity creating tendency of the poor” (in Bayat, 2000, p. 539), but also constitute ways in which people control, shape and develop emotional attachments to places. In illustrating the domestic practices that have been consistently taking place, I highlight the material, everyday practices of what I call dwelling by persistence.

In this chapter I present those aspects of the footpath dwellers’ everyday lives which I was able to observe during my fieldwork and around which I had lengthy discussions with people. These observations will help elaborate certain aspects of dwelling by persistence: one, its interiority or lack thereof, historical association with the place, material and symbolic practices, and the underlying logic of endurance. In the first section I unsettle a key assertion about the space of the domestic being interior (Grewal, 1996; Blunt and Sheringham, 2018). An ordinary scene of everyday

domesticity, as we will see, takes place along a busy street in Mumbai. I will lay out an ordinary scene of everyday domesticity to examine how respondents understand domesticities, family, power and gender relations – concepts fundamental to the configuration of the home. The photograph (Figure 4.1) used subsequently is meant to provide a sense of how respondents go about fulfilling everyday activities of life in their spaces of dwelling.

Two, after the discussion on the interiority of the concept of home, the chapter then proceeds to a personal biography of a key respondent. While some aspects of the housing history of footpath dwellers have been discussed in Chapter 1, this biography recalls some of those accounts, to establish in more detail the duration of the footpath dwellers' association with the neighbourhood. In setting up this historical association I show that people have held on to their places despite major changes in the neighbourhood's built form. This 'holding on', or persistence, has not been uncontested and people have undertaken protracted struggles to retain their places on the footpath.

Third, I will highlight some of the footpath dwellers' material and symbolic practices on the pavement, in order to show how these groups develop a sense of home on the street. In the section home in the street 'culture', I will examine the ways people maintain boundaries, practice food preparation, decorate their homes and rear pets, in order to elaborate on the footpath dwellers' everyday domesticities. These practices highlight how control and care are deeply ingrained in the practice of home-making. Although violence does not explicitly feature here, I include a discussion on violence as a form of maintaining the boundaries of the home. I learnt about horrific accounts of domestic violence (Meth, 2003) suffered by female respondents who justified

these acts as necessary to maintain the home and as expressions of love by family members.

This chapter will therefore demonstrate how the footpath dwellers make the pavement their home, not in an ideal sense (Meth, 2003), but through the extreme geographies (Brickell, 2012) documented here. I argue that in conditions of precarity and when the wider city attempts to remove them from these spaces, the notion of home becomes a logic of endurance.

4.2 An ordinary scene of the everyday



Figure 4.1 Deepika completing her everyday household tasks.

Photograph Credit: Author. Date: 21.11.2016

The shadow of the leaves on the railway wall indicates the setting sun. Deepika, a 15 year old footpath dweller, is sitting on the road adjacent to the pavement, under the shade provided by a line of drying clothes, washing utensils with water collected in a blue jerry can next to her. The bamboo poles hold the washing line, on which is also hung a black plastic bag containing the food that will be used to prepare her family's meal. Behind her, a stack of unused bamboo sticks are placed against the wall. The photograph also captures pieces of cut bamboo strips, suggestive of the unfinished business of the day. At a little distance from where Deepika is sitting, one can see two colourful bed-sheets hanging from the bamboo frames. The bed-sheets have been drawn closer to each other to mark a private enclosure, a space in which those inside are attempting to create a fleeting private moment, away from the prying eyes of the people walking by. This is also where I am told couples spend exclusive time at night at regular intervals while the rest of the family sleeps on the road. A closer look through the bamboo poles will reveal that the wall behind is full of inscriptions. These are paintings made by Deepika and her friends of scenes from their imagination. Although not captured in the photograph, this space also has other artefacts which suggest their emotional attachments with the place.

My intention in describing this scene is to highlight the mundane activities of everyday dwelling that animate life on the footpath. The time of day that I describe is a period of transition from a place of work to a space of leisure and rest. Although these activities cannot be separated too literally, as some of them take place simultaneously, there are certain tasks that need to be completed while there is natural light. Cooking meals and weaving baskets for instance (for those who make a living out of it) are two such tasks that must be completed before it gets dark. An

observer would interpret this as a place where people not only dwell, but also one where they generate their livelihood. This is not just an appropriated space, but one that has been domesticated with particular meanings (Tuan, 1978; Somerville, 1997). A viewer attuned to power inequalities would question the structural conditions (Banerjee-Guha, 2011) that make life on the streets a form of brutality that involves surviving in a “challenging environment, with denial of even elementary public services and assured healthy food; and illegalisation and even criminalisation by the hostile State of all self-help efforts for shelter and livelihood...” (Mander, 2007, p. 6). Although the space has been domesticated they have no ‘legitimate right’ to stay on a footpath, which is a public space.

First, they are staying in what the local government considers to be a “public place” and are directly contravening various laws. Second, this leaves them under the constant threat of eviction as pointed out by Mander et al. (2009). And finally, a viewer interested in the agency of the poor (Bayat, 1997; Simone, 2004) within this unequal power dynamic might see something else: these people are marginalised but not abject. Writing about street vendors in Mumbai, Anjaria (2016) argues that these groups establish “de facto rights to ... [the] ... spot on the road by cultivating relationships with state functionaries, shopkeepers, and nearby residents. To them,... [their] family’s four decade presence on this same street legitimates ... [their] ... personal claims to the space” (Anjaria, 2016, p. 67). I see this as evocative of the emotional ties that marginal groups living in precarious conditions in the city nurture in spaces that prohibit them. In a condition when institutional forces are consistently trying to erase poor people from the public sphere, there are nevertheless continuing quotidian practices of claiming home in unhomely spaces (Blunt and Dowling,

2006). Dwelling by persistence is symbolic of inhabiting a place by personalising it and attaching emotional value to establish de facto claims over it.

4.3 From railway ‘basti’ to footpath ‘ghar’

In this section I provide a historical narrative, as gathered from the accounts of the footpath dwellers, of their association with their dwelling places. I present this account through the biography of a key respondent, who is said to be one of the earliest ‘settlers’ in the area. As I draw out their temporal association with the place in which they currently live and work, I also establish a history of how the neighbourhood has changed over the span of 30-40 years.⁴³ My aim in providing this account is twofold. First, to highlight the changes in the built form of the neighbourhood that have altered the everyday living practices of the footpath dwellers; and second, to argue that the changes in the built form of the city that has been brought about by what scholars call ‘neoliberal’ city development (Banerjee-Guha, 2013) does not necessarily eliminate marginal groups from central areas in the city. Instead, through the example of footpath dwellers in Mahim, I argue that these groups, whose survival tactics are intrinsically linked to the locational networks in the city, adapt to different spatial practices to hold on to their place in the city (the spatial practices of holding on to a location will be elaborated upon in Chapter 5).

The title of this subsection alludes to this transformed spatiality, in the transition from ‘basti’ to ‘ghar’. Earlier, these people were living in ‘slum-like’ settlements (in the same locality) but with the changes in infrastructure in the city, particularly the construction of Tulsi Pipe Road and the widening of the roads, these groups now

43 I am referring to a span of 10 years based on the accounts of key respondents. The thirty different families that I have interviewed have referred to a varying timeline of their arrival in the city. However, most of these accounts roughly corroborate the accounts of key respondents.

dwell on footpaths that run along the Senapati Bapat Marg (a major transport route in Mumbai). Thus from living in secluded wooded areas (as described by respondents), which were notorious for criminal activities, they now live on elevated platforms (Bandyopadhyay, 2017) popularly known as footpaths, sidewalks or pavements. Footpath ‘ghar’ literally denotes those who have their homes on a footpath and railway ‘bastis’ refers to the “slums” along Mumbai’s railway lines.

Studying the footpath dwellers’ memories of historical association with their neighbourhood results in two points that merit consideration: first, it reveals that people are not automatically fixed in location but over time attach meanings connected to home in the space they dwell and tend to their day to day activities. Second, prolonged association with place challenges the dominant assumptions (by political leaders, bodies of the state and middle class and elite residents) that such “floating social cluster” groups are “migrants” who encroach on “public” land and resources (Bayat, 2000, p. 546). This does not mean that those who have been in the city longer have more “legitimate” claims to the city than those groups which arrived more recently. Doing so would align with those who frame lower class migrants as “outsiders”. In a city like Mumbai where the politics of populism is centred on exclusionary, ethno-nationalist sentiments, the length of domicile becomes a contentious terrain on which to establish legitimacy (Hansen, 2001; Chandavarkar, 2003; Kidambi, 2016). This contention is most obviously expressed in terms of the popular discourse promoted by the Shiv Sena party, founded in 1966 around the sons of the soil movement. As noted by Björkman, the Shiv Sena “decried the fact that the city, despite becoming Maharashtra’s capital in the 1960s, continued to be economically and politically dominated by non-Maharashtrians...[and they] found

enemies among the successive waves of migrants to the city” (Björkman, 2015a, p. 48).

The Shiv Sena became very popular among the “lower echelons of white-collar Maharashtrians” (Bedi, 2007, p. 1534) who were promised the reservation of jobs and economic opportunities by the party. Housing was at the heart of the Shiv Sena’s political agenda and their victory in the 1995 Maharashtra Assembly elections was attributed to the party’s promise of “free housing” to four million “slum dwellers” in the city. This provision of free housing, administered around the cut-off date of 1995, was in accordance with the already existing housing policy shift following the national level neo-liberal reforms, and was something that the successive governments in Maharashtra also routinely raised in their election promises. Björkman sees these housing policies as fitting into the image of the world-class city, in which the removal of poverty is central to the aesthetic vitality of cities. She writes, “[D]isplaced families who can prove that they [and their houses] meet a 1995 ‘cut-off date’ eligibility find themselves rehoused in densely packed clusters of tenement style apartment blocks that are sprouting up in the marshlands on the city’s periphery; those unable to meet the criteria find themselves homeless” (Björkman, 2015a, p. 37). Thus the cut-off date which is meant to determine eligibility for free housing is administered through a tenuous process of identification and the production of supporting documentation, which many people may not possess. The community of footpath dwellers that I study is one such group who were left out of the resettlement processes which were carried out between 1996 and 2002, as they were unable to establish their domicile status. They told me “dhyan nahi diya” (did not pay attention) and “aur kahin nahi jana thaa” (did not want to go elsewhere)

whenever I had conversations about why they were not included in the resettlement scheme.

Simpreet Singh, a housing rights activist, told me in an interview that for earlier “settler” communities, remaining in the city legitimately did not have to be established through documents. Therefore, there were many groups in the city who, despite being in Mumbai long before 1995, were not included in the resettlement schemes. He explained, “[t]he cut-off date mechanism is a process by the state to re-establish its power over its subjects. It is highly divisive and has created various community level dynamics. However, there are communities who did not think of acquiring documents to fit into this eligibility criteria as essential” (interview conducted on 21.04.2017). According to Singh, several people, despite living in Mumbai, do not possess the requisite documents to establish this eligibility. “People simply did not think it was necessary,” he added. Singh asserted that informal housing has been part of the history of the city, but that with the increase in land contestations, mechanisms like the cut-off date were introduced with what he calls a “sinister motive”. It is a mechanism by which the state actively avoids its welfare responsibilities. Several scholars writing about the cut-off date frame this as a “developmental problem” (McFarlane, 2012, p. 92) through which the state seeks to intensify the distinction between the formal and informal.

Discussions with Singh and interviews with respondents point to several aspects about the housing strategies and aspirations of urban poor groups in the city. The casual tone in which respondents expressed that they did not pay attention to the call of the government to prepare documents reflects the reluctance of these groups to accept the kind of housing that the state was providing. Chakrabarty (2002) terms

these rejections as silent signs of rebellion. Welfare programmes assume that poor people for whom these schemes are administered are passive recipients. But what about people who refuse welfare measures? Chakrabarty views this refusal in terms of compromise, negotiation and manoeuvre: “People in India, on the whole, have not heeded ... [elites’] call to discipline, public health and public order. Can one read this as a refusal to become citizens of an ideal, bourgeois order?” (2002, p. 77). Alternatively, can these be read as omissions in standardised welfare schemes that do not take account of the needs of their beneficiaries? Respondents confessed that their lack of willingness to secure the papers that would make them eligible for resettlement was because it would dislocate them from their networks and, most importantly, their means of livelihood. Moreover, the tenement style housing would not be able to accommodate their ways of working, which is space intensive. These discussions reinforce the myopic nature of housing schemes that tend to disregard the integrated forms of urban dwelling.

The subsequent sections will elaborate the shifting spatial conditions of the respondents, to indicate that with the changes in the city’s built form, their dwelling patterns have also altered. Based on the accounts that emerged during conversations, I have attempted to construct a timeline of their arrival and persistence in the neighbourhood. These accounts not only show that repeated attempts have been made by the state to remove these footpath dwellers from their places, but also how they returned to these places and built their dwellings through domestication.

4.3.1 We were here before the footpath was built

Ramu Parmar, aged 55, a principal contact in the field and one of the key respondents, associates his time of arrival in Mumbai with the assassination of Mrs

Indira Gandhi in 1984. He told me that at the age of 22 he had run away from his village in Abu Road, Rajasthan, which is about 700 kilometres from Mumbai. He could not remember the exact reason for leaving his village, but I gather that it was a combination of economic compulsion and personal reasons that urged him to come to Mumbai. He and his wife, Basanti, boarded a train that was destined for Mumbai because he had heard a lot about the opportunities that the city offered for “anyone” who came here. Vaktu Babu Chawda, 40, Ramu’s sister who lives in a separate unit told me that it was Ramu who “showed them the way” by migrating to Mumbai. Thus, the first wave of migrations of this basket making community from Rajasthan began with the journey of Ramu in 1984, precisely 15 days before the assassination of Indira Gandhi.

The Government of Rajasthan had introduced regulations on bamboo extraction that impacted people who were dependent on the forest for their livelihood. Initially, basket weavers would get the bamboo supplies from the tribals who had legitimate access to the forests, but the government crackdown impacted heavily on bamboo extraction, making it difficult for them to carry out their livelihood in Rajasthan. It was Mumbai that provided them with the opportunity to continue their family vocation, and after Ramu, the rest of the family members gradually arrived in Mumbai. “It is a re-creation of the entire village in the city. Sitting here on the road it feels like we are sitting in our gaon (village),” Shamu told me one evening while sipping tea by the roadside as the traffic slowly moved along. Shamu, aged 60, is the elder brother of Ramu, who came to Mumbai to look for Ramu and remained in the city. “Tabhi se idhari hai” (have been here since then).

Shamu's experience of city life is provided in relation to the village and family, categories which are closely associated with their idea of home. He explained that the entire stretch of the road has been appropriated by his family members and the kind of social opportunities that this spatial arrangement produces reminds him of his village. Not only are people available for each other in times of crises, but also on an everyday basis the close proximity to each other provides innumerable opportunities for social exchange and cooperation. Shamu's utterance about recreating the village in the heart of the city is also significant for another reason. It points towards a pattern of city formation predicated along the lines of familiar networks and social relationships. In other words, when poor people migrate to cities they often spatially congregate in areas where they already have networks. For poor people these associations are spatial strategies that enable them to cope in the city.

Therefore, the recurrent questions I posed during my fieldwork were around the footpath dwellers' history of arrival and settlement in the city. I asked these questions consistently to get a sense of how and why these groups held on to this neighbourhood. I will therefore go back to Ramu's account, which suggests that he was the key actor who inspired his immediate family and acquaintances from Rajasthan to come and establish a relationship with Mumbai.

Ramu first came to Mumbai and arrived in Dadar, where for the first few months he worked as a vendor selling puffed rice on the local trains of Mumbai. He was living by the roadside near the Dadar railway station with his wife Basanti during those early days. It was purely by chance that he got off at Mahim junction one day and met a family that made products out of cane. Thereafter, he kept visiting this locality frequently so as to intensify his contacts with the family who made cane products.

Finally, after six months of being in ‘Bombay’, now Mumbai, he came with his wife and set up a tent here. By then his elder brother, Shamu, had also moved to Mumbai. Ramu and his family initially worked for the family of cane makers until they finally set up independent contacts with bamboo suppliers in the city and began their own business. It so happened that over the years, Ramu and his extended family began to dominate the trade. The spatial and social dominance of this community from Rajasthan increased, as more people from Ramu’s village began arriving and established their trade. The original groups who were making cane products gradually disappeared from the area.

Through accounts from various people, it appears that the geography of Mahim has changed since the time this community arrived i.e. over a span of 35 years. In the early days, this area was wooded and they lived in structures that were more “pucca” (permanent) made of “patra” (thin iron sheets). Tulsi Pipe Road on the Senapati Bapat Marg, along which they currently live, had not been built, and neither had the Mint Quarter colony (a private estate adjoining one of the footpaths), so this was a largely secluded area (see Figure 3.1). The railway station existed in the form of a platform, but it did not have an enclosure and people could get onto the platforms from any direction. The slum of Naya Nagar, which currently sprawls along Mahim-Sion link road, was non-existent. Once a marshy land, this slum is located less than 500 metres from the Shanti Nagar footpaths. This slum and Dharavi have tremendous significance in the everyday lives of the footpath dwellers. Not only do respondents draw their essential everyday necessities, such as water, groceries, etc. from these places, but also during times of crisis (such as a municipal raid) residents in these slums provide them with refuge (see Chapter 5 for more and Figure 3.1).

I often heard people here say “Naya Nagar aur Dharavi toh hamare samne bani hai” (We saw the birth and sprawl of the slums of Naya Nagar and Dharavi). A question that I posed to the respondents was, why did they not become a part of the slums that they have seen take form over the years? Is habitation a choice that people make based on the economic opportunities that spatial arrangements within the city offer? I was often told that they preferred staying next to the station as it enables them to transport the raw materials from the trains to their settlements easily. Moreover, they always spoke of how they were earlier living in ‘bastis’ or slum-like settlements where they had much more working space than they would manage to find in the congested slums of Naya Nagar or Dharavi. Through these accounts it becomes apparent that economic activity is a dominant reason that people persist in location.

Over the years, along with more family members, many other people arrived in this area, began clearing the wooded parts, and gradually settled along the railway line. Azra, a 60 year old woman, who has a tent at the edge of the footpath adjoining Mint Quarters told me that this area used to be referred to as “Chinal Nagar” or “Randi Nagar”, the literal translation of which is “prostitute’s area”. Other women I interviewed also referred to the changed moral character of the area. These women that I spoke to told me of the “kharap dhanda” (immoral business)⁴⁴ that went on in the past, suggesting an improved contemporary moral geography of the place. In describing their experiences of the place, they ascribe an improved moral geography as being a result of their transformed living conditions, i.e. from more spatially spread, slum-like settlements to temporary tents on a busy street that is constantly under surveillance. Azra, for example, recounted an incident as a child when she was

⁴⁴ In this context “immoral business” suggested sex-trade.

brutally injured by a neighbour. She described her humiliation at the police station when she went to lodge a complaint against the perpetrator. On hearing where she lived, the police station refused to lodge an FIR (First-hand Information Report). She was told that they did not take up cases from this “morally degraded” area. Azra recollected this incident with much agony, but simultaneously she also appreciated that the character of the place had improved. This points to the erstwhile invisibility of the area, which has now completely changed. The area was not only less congested and wooded, but its invisibility also exposed it to activities that could not be possible in more visible parts of the city. The current nature of their living, which is completely exposed to the whole city, makes it less susceptible to “immoral activities”.

In these conversations about the evolving moral geographies of the area, I perceived a difference in gender and age-based framings of risks. While the older women of the community said that their current form of dwelling was better because they felt less stigmatised, the older men said that they were currently living in more physically dangerous conditions. For the older women of this community, the very exposed nature of the street, open to social and moral surveillance, makes it a better place to live. For the men, the current form of their inhabitation has exposed them to threats of accidents and harassment. For young women, these risks are calibrated along the lines of their sexual safety. It is the very open nature of their habitation that exposes their bodies and ways of being in ways that need to be constantly protected. Similarly, for the younger men, the risk is of being perceived as potential threats to the sexual propriety of female pedestrians. This reveals how those who inhabit the street calibrate safety in line with their gender affiliations. However, they are also at

odds with the class tensions (Phadke, 2013) around the presence of poor people on the streets, that pits “lower class men and middle class women” as “oppositional figures around whom the discourse of safety, legitimacy and illegitimacy in public space is structured” (Phadke, Ranade and Khan, 2009, p. 188). It clashes with the concerns of middle class gender normativity, where the presence of poor people is seen as a threat to (upper class) women’s respectability (Phadke, 2007). As articulated by Phadke, Ranade and Khan:

Further globalization and the resultant socio-economic changes have ossified hierarchical divisions in the city to make not just anti-all-marginal citizens, but more importantly, to make their marginalization more acceptable. Slum demolition drives, the removal of street hawkers, and the closure of dance bars are just some examples of this marginalization. This impulse to exclude the poor is also reflected in the spatial geography of the city: ...as Mumbai strives to take its place among the global cities of the world, the presence of women in public space, as professionals and consumers, increasingly signals a desirable modernity ... in a narrative of the global city, women of a particular class and demonstrable respectability have greater legitimacy in public than many men of a lower class ... lower-class men are looked upon as an undesirable presence in public space. Their lack of legitimacy is understood by locating them as a potential source of the threat faced by women, as putative perpetrators of sexual harassment and assault (Phadke, Ranade and Khan, 2009, p. 187).

This section throws light on the earlier conditions of the neighbourhood and the ways in which people dwelt in the area. In doing so, my aim has been to establish that people have been associated with this area for a long period of time. Despite changes in the built form of the city, people have not only held on to their places, but adapted to more vulnerable conditions of living. In other words, people have persisted through altering their arrangements of dwelling. According to some of the female respondents, their changed conditions of living make them feel more secure as compared to the time when this area was stigmatised by various actors, such as the

police, in the city. Male respondents shared that their current living conditions were more dangerous than before. However, despite this gendered experience of the change, accounts from respondents throw light on the fact that they have been living here for an extended period of time.

4.3.2 The transformation of the area

During the late eighties, the area began to change with the construction of Tulsi Pipe Road and settlement by other groups of people. By the early nineties there was a bustling settlement that existed between the Tulsi Pipe Road and the railway tracks. The construction of the Mint Colony (see Figure 3.1) had begun, and the living spaces of the erstwhile settlers had begun to diminish. References to the “slums” along Tulsi Pipe Road in Mumbai have been made in several journalistic and academic writings. One such mention has been by Robert Neuwirth who, writing about what I call “the other urban”, states:

There are people called pavement dwellers, who dominate the streets throughout many older neighbourhoods. In Byculla, and out P.D’Mello and Tulsi Pipe Road, people have invaded the sidewalks and built two-storey wooden huts. These are some of the most amazing dwellings you have ever seen: they are open to the incredible dust and haze of the city, yet are often amazingly clean inside. People have created elaborate custom-built hutches to hold their meagre possessions. Essentially they create tiny built-in wooden shelving systems to organise every possession. Each plate has a separate slot. Each fork. Each pot. Each frying pan. When you are essentially living on the street, exposed to the grime and dirt and bacteria of the city, you have to find an orderly way of upholding basic rules of hygiene. These hutches keep a person’s belongings off the street and out of the way of bacteria (Neuwirth, 2016, p. 110).

While celebrating the improvisational capacities of different categories of urban poor, writings like these essentially view the city as a “calculus of force”, what de Certeau (1984, p. xix) terms as “strategy”, a product of inflexible rules and regulations. The usage of phrases like “invaded the sidewalks” presents the city as a

legitimate ground which has been encroached upon, and reflects a static picture of the urban form. Yet in the example that I provide here, it is not the footpath dwellers who arrive later, it is the city; its built environment and physical form changes the spatial practices of the footpath dwellers. Moreover, in celebrating the meticulous improvisations of the street populations, Neuwirth presented street living as an anomaly. His exalting description of the pavement dwellings, which he claims his readers may have never seen, point towards his inability to conceive that footpaths can be someone's home. Moreover, his attention to how people maintain hygiene despite living along the road, also highlights the distinction between the home and the street in his spatial imagination, in which home is a sanitised space existing in binary opposition to the street which is usually considered dirty and polluting. What if the footpath dwellers are not "amazingly clean inside"? Why does one "have to find" a systematic way of ensuring hygiene?

In another work highlighting "experiences of homelessness of migrants", Jha and Kumar study a very similar group who "live on [the] roadside pavement at Mahim ... from Rajasthan" (p. 72). Stressing the "shocking" and "incomprehensible" experiences of "conducting private life in public", they state: "[B]ut somehow both managed to live on the street where their children were born, brought up and now married. They continue to live on the pavement even after more than 35 years." Scholarship like this and Neuwirth's presents the city as a top down force that is pushing people to a life of "marginalisation, indignity, humiliation, insecurity, and ultimately violence ... that is beyond their control ... and elucidates the fact that they start and, in most situations continue to be homeless and live a life of deprivation and

dislocation and are therefore disentitled and disenfranchised” (Jha and Kumar, 2016, p. 75).

In this presentation of the historical relationship of the footpath dwellers, and through their accounts of the transformation of the neighbourhood, I challenge several of these assumptions. First, I find the number of tags like “homeless migrants” that groups like these in the city are given to be highly troubling. The footpath dwellers are not only framed in the language of the “outsider” by being referred to as migrants, but further labelling them as “homeless” obscures their years of efforts of holding on to place. More importantly, these tags disregard the emotional attachments that people foster with locations and the built form. By continuous construction and cultivation of their living spaces on the pavement, these people have built their homes. Regarding the place as ‘home’, I argue, is one of the key ways through which they claim and sustain their places on the pavement.

Second, I argue that framings like these present the city as a fixed material space. For instance, Jha and Kumar (2016) stress that even after 35 years, the footpath dwellers “continue to live on the pavement”. Accounts from respondents and interactions with municipal staff have revealed that 30-35 ago, the footpath was not even built. These accounts obscure a crucial fact of city formation, that sometimes it is the people who arrive, even before the current built form of the city. These accounts not only take away the agency from people, but also misrepresent the historical trajectory of the urban. Third, these assumptions about footpath dwelling allude to the normative framings that already see these ‘informal’ practices as distinct from the ‘ordered’ practices of the city: “Living on the pavement demands integration with the homeless street culture” (Jha and Kumar, 2016, p. 73). What constitutes street culture? How is

street culture different from those inhabiting the street? Alternatively, is footpath dwelling also not part of street culture? How do these categorisations then inject the city with strict framings? Instead of viewing home-making practices of those living on the street as integral to street culture, it associates the street with homelessness. This relates to my earlier point about the distinct spatial imaginations of the home and the street. While the street is considered to exist in an exterior sphere, the home is relegated to a private space, away from the street. Practices of respondents suggest that this need not be so and home can be experienced even in the street. In the same way practices of domestication and dwelling are intrinsic parts of the street culture.

Chaman, 56, is among the earliest settlers in the area with whom I had lengthy conversations about the “changed” character of Mahim. With the onset of polio disease one of his legs had to be amputated and therefore, incapacitated, he remains fixed on the street outside his home. As one of the elders of the community he prides himself in being the “aankh” or eye on the street from his inconspicuous position. Chaman’s comments resonate with the critical writings of Jane Jacobs, who argued that the safety of cities is rooted in the diversity of the city’s streets and not in “interior enclaves [for them] in the centres of super-blocks” (1961). Both Chaman’s words and the writings of Jacobs suggest a kind of social surveillance that is beyond a top-down institutional realm. It is one that is fostered through social relations, learning the streets and a sense of belonging to the place. Chaman takes pride in his surveillance and claims that it is not the police vehicle that is often stationed less than three metres from his place, but the presence of the community that keeps the pedestrians safe from harm. However, it is not just the pedestrians that they protect. By taking on this role they also morally absolve themselves, by prohibiting women

from soliciting there. Thus, Chaman's recurrent stress on the words "insider/outsider", draws attention to another aspect, his sense of belonging to the place and therefore the moral responsibility he feels to establish control over it.

Scholarly writing about streets in Indian cities as contested spheres that offer possibilities of both "unexpected encounters and interactions" as well as prohibiting "limitless possibilities ... that restricts behaviour as much as it facilitates sociality (Anjaria, 2016, p. 88) resonate with Chaman's view. I asked Chaman why he (and the community) felt responsible for safeguarding the place, to which I got two responses. First, by taking on this role, the community was not only aiding the police but also maintaining a low profile in a realm of what I call precarious visibility. The ubiquitous visibility of groups inhabiting the footpath and streets of Mumbai is stark, yet their existence is not legitimate. Although they have domesticated the streets, these groups have to be prepared to remove their entire presence when faced with municipal action. Living on the streets involves not enraging the authorities, lest they be evicted. In the next chapter I pick up the discussion on negotiation as a key strategy of urban navigation.

This also speaks to practices on community-led surveillance in the developing world, and in Mumbai in particular, where "urban form in its physical, political and historical characterisations not only influences how vigilante protection operates, but also interacts in a non-benign manner with the mechanics by which the state endeavours to control violence" (Gupte, 2017, p. 203). Most importantly, these "eyes on the streets" are mechanisms to preserve the honour of the home, by ensuring that their women and children are kept from harm. While men like Chaman keep a close eye on outsiders transgressing their domestic boundaries, they are also vigilant about

how their women behave, who they talk to, how they sit, what kind of attention they draw and so on. Thus, they not only carry out an urban vigilantism of sorts but also ensure that the mobility and conduct of their own women are under control. By keeping a sharp eye on the activities on the streets, people like Chaman quietly carry out the work of maintaining boundaries. For Chaman and other men in the community, home was maintained by protecting their day's earnings, valuables, and women from harm. In a condition of exposed spatiality where their women are "literally visible to the whole city" (pura sehar humko dekh sakte hai), this concern revolved around controlling the sexuality and bodies of women. Read together, these claims by Chaman of being the guardian of the streets reveal the place-making attempts by groups to constantly counter this out-of-placeness. Chaman's work is not in vain, and periodically the patrolling officers in the area came to him to ask about the health of the neighbourhood, thereby validating his role as the watchdog of the street.

4.4 Home in the street 'culture'

In this section I examine the everyday domesticities of respondents that forms an integral part of the 'street culture'.⁴⁵ As pointed out earlier in the chapter, literature on street and footpath dwelling populations in the city has consistently framed these groups as either homeless or existing as anomalies on the street. This section examines the everyday domesticities of footpath dwellers to challenge these assumptions. I assert that these groups are neither homeless as they attach a sense of home to their dwelling places, nor do they exhibit practices that are separate from a

⁴⁵ I have put street culture in quotes following the discussion in the preceding section where I argue that street and home are not necessarily distinct spheres. In this thesis I do not include an explicit discussion on street culture, although Chapter 2 includes a discussion on the vibrant nature of streets in Indian cities.

street. I contend that these everyday domesticities equally form a part of the street culture in the city (Blunt and Sheringham, 2018).

Integrally linked to the idea of home, domesticity includes all aspects of paid and unpaid work (such as cooking, cleaning and caring), the everyday life in a household, and in a wider sense it comprises “what is familiar and homely rather than ‘foreign’ and unhomely” (Anon, 2010, p. 171). Within geography, scholarship by feminist geographers has been crucial in analyzing the gender dynamics that frame home and domesticity (Hooks, 1991; Grewal, 1996; Young, 2005; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Brickell, 2012). Scholars have argued that the ‘home’ has been a crucial site for patriarchal domination as well as capitalist expansion. However, in all these works, the home has been imagined as an interior space. Moreover, as Young (2005) argues in her critiques of feminist scholars who totally reject the idea of ‘home’, it is through domestic work that women attach “world making meaning” (p. 141). Here she takes Heidegger’s notion of dwelling but is highly critical of it at the same time. Young argues that the Heideggerian notion of dwelling that comprises both building and preserving, ultimately privileges the former. Resonating with other feminist scholars, she too critiques the male-centric conceptualisation of dwelling and it is in response to this that she upholds the importance of preservation through domestic work. In the context of my study then, it is this preservation, or continuous home-making, that enables the persistence of the groups on the footpath. In this section I look at everyday domesticities that take place on the street. I examine domesticity through four key aspects: maintenance of physical limits, preparation of food, decorating the home and rearing of pets. I stress that in all these practices, control and care take place simultaneously in order to maintain the home.

4.4.1 Maintenance of physical limits

Having grown up imbibing cultural practices in India, I was familiar with the association of the polluting character of shoes with transgressing certain spaces within the domestic interior. As a child, I remember internalising the habit that within the interior of the house there is a place for shoes. They are to be kept either outside the house or very close to the main exit. By no means were we allowed to wear shoes inside the house, and wearing footwear near the prayer room was considered blasphemy. I witnessed very similar practices with the footpath dwellers I interviewed. One of my earliest learning experiences in the field was understanding these spatial boundaries. In most households on the pavement, the edge of the elevated platform formed the boundary where shoes had to be left. While the respondents' dwelling spaces had extended to the street, the elevated platform formed the intimate and sacred space. The inhabitants of the units usually put their footwear on the street during the day and at night would put them away in bags inside their tents. Shoes therefore play an important role in terms of delineating the physical boundaries of living spaces. It goes beyond a logic of hygiene and reveals a set of socio-spatial distinctions which are cloaked in normative imaginations of pollution and purity. The shoe is representative of the outside, a sphere that is potentially polluting compared to the sacred sanctuaries of inside, or of home. The concept of home here is then juxtaposed to the idea of the street, which are considered to be two distinct spatial spheres. But what about instances such as these where domestic life is taking place in the same place as the street? The symbolic practice of keeping shoes outside reveals that people nurture sacred attachments with their living spaces, which is significant in establishing the idea of home.

I observed several fights between the footpath dwellers and pedestrians over this issue. On many occasions I observed pedestrians walking on the footpath, sometimes trampling objects that belonged to those who lived there. On one occasion, a big fight broke out between one family and a pedestrian who walked over the home space of a household. This incident ultimately led to the brief arrest of one of the footpath dwellers. A commuter on his way to the railway station had walked on the home space of Monki, as there was an obstruction on the road. Seeing this person take this detour (as in not walk on the road), Monki rushed towards him and verbally abused him. Monki was extremely annoyed that someone entered her home wearing shoes, after she had spent a considerable amount of time cleaning and tidying it up. Monki later expressed to me that it had been a particularly hard day for her, and she would have probably ignored the person on another day. Feeling insulted at her behaviour, the commuter had called the police station. The immediate action that the police took was to arrest Monki under a public nuisance act. She was, however, released on bail after two days. I mention this incident to establish the intensity of emotional attachment that people, particularly women, have with their places, and to demonstrate how they invest considerable energy in preserving their home spaces in a realm that is easily destroyed. Therefore, Monki's reaction to the commuter was not just about him walking with his shoes in a space she considered home. It was about feeling a loss over the space she had nurtured as home over the years. It was about the lack of sensibility that the pedestrian had exhibited (perhaps unknowingly) by transgressing the sacred boundaries of someone's home. This lack of sensibility was not a deliberate show of disrespect, and is in my contention symbolic of the wider city's imagination of a right to public spaces. This imagination is completely ignorant of the fact that the street can also be someone's home.

If physical boundaries in the group were expressed through material objects, moral boundaries were maintained through control over women's bodies. While adolescent girls and young women had strict impositions on their codes of behaviour and spatial geography, the men in the community had no such restrictions. For instance, women were permitted to visit only certain places around their neighbourhood. The only exception was visiting their vendors in far-off suburbs, and these travels were strictly timed. Viri, a 50-year-old woman and mother of an adolescent girl justified these sanctions based on the fact that these women are easily visible and put their 'izzat' (female honour and shame) at stake. Not just Viri, but through conversation with various other women and men in the group, it was confirmed that 'izzat' was often associated with women's sexuality. I was informed that by protecting the 'izzat' that was inscribed on women's bodies, was of utmost importance to maintain the home⁴⁶. She told me that because they live on a street, they often fall prey to men, who harass the girls, and that it was therefore essential to delineate boundaries for women, within which they could be watched. I asked Viri, what if one of these girls willingly goes with a man? She replied that within her community there is an established practice of marriage and intimacy, and any violation of that is an attack on the home.

For women, the transgressions of these spatio-moral boundaries were dealt with by violence. Violence was a recurring theme that surfaced throughout the course of my fieldwork. Normalised in their everyday conversations, people spoke of violence in a manner that I have categorised into the violence of the 'home' and violence of the 'street', also labelled as crime by "outsiders" (as claimed by Chaman). This

⁴⁶ Importance of 'izzat', often administered through the control of women's bodies, is intrinsic to many cultures in South Asia (Gilbert, Gilbert and Sanghera, 2004). References to loss of 'izzat' through sexual violence are often made in popular culture and it is a familiar frame of recognition.

categorisation helped me understand not just the imaginative geographies of home and street, but also the gendered ways of inhabiting the pavements. The violence of home, in other words the instances of physical violence that took place between family members, was legitimised, whereas the violence committed by “outsiders” was seen as a violation of home and one that was often collectively challenged.

Speaking to the women of the community at several instances I learned that the endurance of violence is deeply entrenched in their imaginations of home. Almost on a daily basis, women would share with me their accounts of being beaten up by a male member of their family or even the community. Hearing women share these normalised instances of experiencing violence, and unable to resist the expression of my deep discomfort in witnessing these transgressions, I asked a respondent:

Author: Why did you take it all in without resisting?

Rekha: What do you mean by resisting?

Author: Well, at least complain to the police. Isn't there a van standing just opposite your place? And why don't your relatives resist?

Rekha: (Nodding her head very slowly and with a smile) This is a matter of the home, why should others interfere. And besides it was my fault, I should not have spent so much time watching the show in Dharavi. That too after it was dark.

(Interview conducted on 20.10.2016)

There are two important aspects to note in Rekha's justification of violence. First, what emerges from Rekha's account is a toleration of this brutality around the logic of preserving the home. Moreover, what I perceive as violence is very different from the way Rekha views it. In a condition where institutional safeguarding is absent, and communities initiate their own ways of protecting themselves, this normalisation of violence is seen as a strategy to remain in place, in a situation of “illegality” (Datta, 2016).

Second, what also emerges from Rekha's account is that she felt, as someone who transgressed the spatial boundary of home that she was deserving of the physical violence that was meted out to her. She presented herself as inhabiting a space that is easily liable to be "contaminated", distancing herself from the "bad women" (kharab aurat) on the street. Therefore, control over women's bodies, through monitoring their movements, fixing spatial boundaries, and ascribing how they can sit, lie down or display their bodies, are all mechanisms that go beyond disciplining them, but are still techniques through which the sanctity of home is preserved. Among other things this involves a heightened level of performance by these women to appear modest, which involves demonstrating linkages to family at the heart of which is masculine protection (Phadke, Ranade and Khan, 2009).

Feminist scholars, writing and advocating for the unrestricted access of "all women" to public spaces in Mumbai, state that there are two types of women who are visible out on the streets: the "good" consumer and the "bad" street loiterer (Phadke, Ranade and Khan, 2009; Phadke, 2013). The good woman consumer is out in the public space with a purpose, either to study, work or shop. The bad street loitering woman is the one who transgresses moral boundaries and is "open to conjecture and the assumption that she is soliciting" (Phadke, Ranade and Khan, 2009, p. 26). While these scholars very convincingly argue for "dismantling the discourse of respectability" (p. 191) in opening up the public spaces "for all women", their categorisation only highlights women who are in two distinct yet opposing spheres. What about women who are already in a space where (in Chaman's words) "the whole city can see them?" Are these acts of self-imposed and community-led disciplining then instances of manufacturing respectability in a space that is in the

public sphere? To answer this, I refer to the conversation that I mentioned earlier with Azra, who thinks that her community's transformed spatiality of inhabitation is much "better" than before when they were living in a stigmatised neighbourhood. Although their living spaces are much smaller, their everyday is more uncertain, and precarities are much more heightened, this condition of living at least makes them much more respectable. Her negative experiences at the police station, where she was dismissed for not being worthy of protection, explains why and how groups manufacture respectability in spaces of potential contamination.

4.4.2 Home food

Slightly after the sun sets, as it is about to get dark, a very common sight on the pavements of Mahim are women and girls preparing meals. This daily ritual that can be seen on the footpaths across the city offers a useful frame for understanding the ways in which space and place intersect to create a set of material conditions that footpath dwellers navigate. Food preparation and consumption plays an important role in "constituting senses of belonging and connections" (Blunt and Varley, 2004, p. 234) and attaching a form of identity with a place. As an everyday activity, food is at the centre of domesticities. As Valentine (1999) articulates, "food is one way of acting out a fiction of community and of struggling against imagined forces of disintegration ... it is also a linking process, a way of expressing cultural unity, of not just composing but also recomposing boundaries" (p. 58).

On a daily basis, the preparation of meals involves a series of steps, such as procuring ingredients from the local store, gathering materials to prepare the fire and

finally cooking a meal that everyone eats together. These everyday processes of eating go beyond a mere act of sating hunger (Anon, 2010). They encompass a set of material practices that reveal the imaginations of personal space, generating a sense of community and also maintaining imaginative boundaries of home. As Valentine argues, food constitutes an important means by which people imagine and preserve their 'home'. In the context of my study, the entire process from food procurement to consumption reveals the familiarity of neighbourhood and social networks that take part in these processes. The vegetable vendor who knows the precise quantity of eatables that is to be packed for each family; the grocer who sets into an automated motion of stuffing ingredients into small plastic bags, like cooking oil, flour and spices, when one of them arrives at the porch of the shop, without even asking what is required; and the rag-picker who comes and delivers the day's garbage to light the fire for the makeshift stove; all are quotidian practices of "getting by" enabled by consistent "urban worldliness" (McFarlane, 2011). While occasional municipal raids disrupt their everyday living conditions, it is other logistical impediments, such as the attack on food grains by giant rats and other animals on the street, that prohibit storage. During my fieldwork, the issue of rats featured consistently in everyday conversations. As one of the respondents, Basanti, explained while peeling potatoes next to the moving traffic, and as I listened while two rats made their way in and out of the holes on the footpath, "to survive the streets in Mumbai, one must fight three forces: police, the waters during monsoon, and the rats". The inability to store any form of eatables necessitates incurring daily costs on everyday items, which constitutes about sixty percent of their monthly expenditure.

In the early phases of my fieldwork, on one such evening, as I chatted with Basanti, the symbolic attachments of home to the space on the footpath first dawned on me. Basanti had been gripped by a terrible headache since that morning, which incapacitated her from doing any “ghar ka kaam” (domestic work). Pointing towards a street food vendor merely five metres from her place, she expressed that she felt troubled by the fact that her family, particularly her son Krishna, would have to eat “bahar ka khana” (outside food). In this context the use of the term “bahar” (outside) drew my close attention. The use of the term “bahar”, struck me as a kind of spatial distinction that Basanti was alluding to by suggesting a separation of the home and the outside through the practices of eating. While cooking on the footpath is a regular feature and an economic strategy, the notion of eating is deeply tied to how they understand and practice home. In other words, cooked food that is bought is not of home, unlike the food that is cooked by a family member in the spaces that they dwell. As I reflected on it, I realised that she was not just suggesting a physical boundary, but alluding towards an entire terrain of symbolic practices of home-making being realised in place, at the heart of which is the notion of family. In another instance, I learnt that eating meals cooked from the “same pot” is an indication of an “unbroken” family or a “united home”. So, when Sanjay told me that he had separated from his family, it did not transpire in the form of physical separation, but the fact that he and his wife started arranging for their meals separately, despite continuing to live adjacent to his parents.

For Basanti and many other women in the community, feeding the family is a crucial means of preserving home, a practice that is deeply gendered. Basanti told me that it is through the act of cooking that she is able to care for her children. Even though

living on the street, where food can be easily contaminated and the ingredients that she gets are the lowest in quality in the market, she is able to control the taste and quality of the food that her family eats. It is also about economising the daily expenses of the family and saving as much of their daily earnings as possible, so that no one in her family would have to sleep hungry. Therefore, home-food is not just about eating food within physical domestic confines, it is about economic rationality, care, establishing womanhood, and cumulatively is associated with the idea of home.

4.4.3 Home décor

On Diwali⁴⁷, each unit is thoroughly washed up, a fresh coat of paint is applied to the walls adjoining the footpaths⁴⁸, floors are patterned with Rangoli (designs that are made with coloured powder) and every little object in the tents is meticulously arranged. The evening before Diwali, as I listened to Sangeeta describe their community specific rituals to me, a car sped by, splashing mud on her freshly painted Rangoli. She screamed at the car but, without worrying too much about it, she cleared up her space again. As she lit the diyas (oil lamps) and installed the idol, pointing towards the edge of the footpath, she warned me not to step into her “ghar” (home) with my shoes on. Sangeeta was not just hinting at the physical act of staying away from her home if I were to keep my shoes on. She was suggesting that by taking my shoes off, I respect her home space that had acquired a sacred character with the installation of the idol. Not just on special occasions, but on an everyday basis, the dwellers of the footpath beautify their homes by carefully placing objects.

⁴⁷ Diwali, known by different names, is a major religious festival celebrated by Hindus. In India, Diwali is observed in the northern parts before the beginning of the winter months, around late October-November and for some cultures it heralds the start of new vernacular year. It is a festival of lights in which households are illuminated with traditional decorations. Around the same time different regions in India celebrate major festivals similar to Diwali but have different names and practices associated with them.

⁴⁸ See Chapter 5 to understand how walls form a central feature in their dwellings, as well as acts as an infrastructure that enables them to navigate municipal raids.



Figure 4.2 Objects used to decorate and order domestic spaces on the street

Photograph credit: Author. Date: 18.12.16

A poster of a woman from a magazine, a fading flower vase, dilapidated furniture that had been discarded by its primary user and now passed on as charity, a wooden plank on which the women put their makeup, mirrors, ladies purses and many other objects make their way into the domestic spaces of respondents. The photograph (Figure 4.2) depicts a portion of the domestic space of a respondent that has been decorated with objects. A closer look at the lady's poster in the photograph will reveal that the vermillion and ornaments were not originally in the picture, but have been superimposed by the footpath dwellers. When I asked one of them to explain this, I was told that they simply liked the "beautiful" face on the magazine cover and wanted to put something pleasant on their wall. They appropriated the photograph,

however, to symbolise the ideal woman, married and adhering to certain standards of beauty. For me this appropriation of the magazine cover was particularly symbolic in understanding the efforts of domestication. These objects are not just material artefacts, put in abstract space, but have “become layered with meaning and personal value” (Young, 2005, p. 140).

Children in the community often competed among themselves to show me a painting that they made on the walls. Deepika, the girl mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, had a reputation for having a knack for décor. One of her paintings on the wall (Figure 4.3) depicts a landscape with a temple, specks of clouds in the sky, birds, a tree, mountain ranges on the horizon and a girl playing with a skipping rope. Caressing her new-born pet chickens, she explained that her painting depicted a scene from her village, which she occasionally visited. She attached a special significance to her village, as a place that provided her respite from the din of the city. However she did not use the term for ‘home’ to refer to her village.



Figure 4.3 Deepika and Varsha posing in front of Deepika’s painting of an 'ideal' life in the village.

Photograph credit: Author. Date: 05.09.16

What do these artefacts tell us about the footpath dwellers’ aspirations of home? Deepika’s reference to this place as “gaon” (village) and not as “ghar” (home) points towards a crucial detail that further disproves the popular understandings of home as a place of comfort. First, we are presented with a distinction where she sees the city as a place of chaos as opposed to the village which is a place of contentment. Second, although the paintings on the wall project her aspirations of living in an ideal environment, it is the footpath that she considers as her home. It is the familiarity with the place where she has grown up, which although not ideal, is the place she considers her home. However, it is not the extremes or the critical geographies that I aim to point out here. Through these accounts, I want to establish that people can

attach meanings of home even to spaces that are disruptive. Home is therefore as much a material dwelling as it is an expressive space that shapes emotions and feelings of belonging. As illustrated by Easthope, “while homes may be located, it is not the location that is ‘home’. Home is the fusion of a feeling home, sense of comfort, belonging, with a particular place.” (2004, p. 136)

4.4.4 Dwelling with animals

Rearing and caring for animals forms an important part of domestic life for the respondents. Almost every household has an animal, and family members spend considerable time and energy in ensuring that they are in a secure place. The very nature of their habitation, along an open street with speeding traffic, caused anxiety among the respondents for the safety of their pet animals. I observed great displays of affection and care in keeping the animals safe, preventing them from running into traffic and generally ensuring that they were well fed. The respondents would feed animals the left-overs of the same food that they would cook for themselves, a fundamental point of difference from the pets reared within confines of elite homes and those reared on the streets. To mark a difference between the animals on the streets and their pets, respondents would use several kinds of identity tags, such as painting the chickens in various colours (see Figure 4.4). One day Deepika came to consult me about finding a suitable place for her new-born pet chickens. With a recycled plastic container in her hand that had formerly contained paint, but which she repurposed to house the new-born chickens, she consulted me about the best strategies for keeping them safe. She made several calculations in her head to place her chickens in a place so that they would not be crushed under someone’s feet or run over by a car. In another instance, I observed Alam placing his pet chickens

within the safe confines of his own bed surrounded by a mosquito net, while his entire family slept outside (Figure 4.4).



Figure 4.4 Alam protects his pet chickens within the confines of a mosquito net

Photograph credit: Author. Date: 06.07.17

Now consider this scene: it is a hot afternoon, basket weaving work is on in full swing. Some children are playing next to their families while other mundane work tasks of home are taking place simultaneously. I was sitting where Vikram and his wife Tati had been working. From time to time, Tati would get up to run errands, such as washing clothes with water that was stored in small containers, taking off clothes that were drying on a bamboo pole on the wall behind her, hanging more clothes she just washed, and so on. Their pet dog, Sheeru (from whom I always kept a safe distance), was resting next to Vikram. From time to time, Vikram gave him a piece of dry roti (bread) which he kept chewing lazily. Suddenly, I observed a commotion. Varsha, a seven year old girl, came running towards us announcing that the “van” is approaching. I assumed that it must be another unannounced municipal

raid and was preparing to help the respondents plan their escapes. But this time it was the dog squad. Sheeru, who had been lazily gorging on a piece of roti, sprang up and began to bark restlessly. Everyone else stopped working and came towards us, pleading with the officials to leave Sheeru. They were going to take Sheeru away for sterilisation and would return him back in a day or two, they promised. Unconvinced by their words and reluctant, Vikram volunteered to trick Sheeru into the van as he did not want to invite further “official” attention. Sheeru was put inside a gunny bag and thrust inside a van where there were many others like him. As the van drove away, I saw Sheeru appear at the window that was covered with corrugated metal sheets. Vikram, in tears, took a short moment to look at the van and then went back to his work, commanding Varsha, who was inconsolable, to leave. As the crowd dispersed they spoke of how Sheeru might never return and even if he did, he could be absolutely wrecked, not so much from the effect of sterilisation, but from the ferocity of other dogs. Later that evening Vikram told me that Sheeru was the reason he could get peaceful sleep at night.

Not just in the footpaths of Mahim, but all over Mumbai, people inhabiting the street rear various kinds of animals. While some of them are later used for consumption, other pets become the companions and protectors of street inhabitants. Thus, keeping animals is a fundamental strategy of street inhabitation. These practices however go beyond strategies of protection. They are also about affection and dominance (Tuan, 1984), key aspects of establishing the home. Displays of affection towards pets could be genuine, yet they are also symbolic of power relations (Ingold, 2005). As Tuan puts it, these acts are instances of control of the weak by those who are stronger. I find this analysis particularly useful where these groups feel powerless in the context

of the larger city. Therefore, apart from the strategy of protection, these quotidian expressions of affection and emotional attachment to animals is symptomatic of the ability to dominate and control life forms and spaces. As mentioned earlier, the animals that these groups rear are carefully distinguished through physical markers. Making these distinctions is crucial as they set their personal pets apart from the street pets. These markings are therefore not just mere acts of colouring their pets, but they set symbolic territories of the home and the street.

4.5 Blurring of home and work space

On International Women's Day, a group of women attached to a local missionary school that runs a programme for "destitutes" in the area, took me along with them to an event. This event, organised in partnership with another international donor, was meant to address women participants in building awareness on gender equality. The keynote address delivered by the director of the donor organisation, a man, began with (what I consider) a highly rhetorical question. Speaking of enabling women's empowerment through access to paid work, he asked "Kitne aurtein yahan kaam karte hain?" (How many of the women present here work?), in response to which all the women from the basket weaving community under study raised their hands. Monki, to whom the microphone was handed, said, "sirf hum nahi, hamare maa aur nani bhi kaam kartein hain" (not just us, but our mothers and grandmothers also work). She shared that for generations they have been weaving baskets from home. A little taken aback by Monki's terse reply, the man asked again "Mera waisa kaam ka matlab nahi tha, woh kaam toh hum sab karte hai. Tum bahar jati ho kya?" (I don't mean that type of work. We all do that kind of work in our houses. Do you go out to

work?) Intimidated by the man's dismissive response, Monki shook her head and said that they stayed at home. The man gave her a patronising smile and asked her to take her seat. He then went on to lecture the audience that one of the key reasons for gender disparity was the under-representation of women in the workplace. While he went on to speak about the history of women's labour movements, he omitted a crucial detail. He did not define workplace. Or perhaps, in his imagination, the workplace could only be outside the home. Monki's answer had not only left him a little bewildered, but his dismissal of unpaid domestic work also signalled his attitude towards it.

What is a workplace, after all? What does the dismissal of Monki's claims of working from home suggest about the way home and work are viewed? Echoing assertions of feminist scholars, I argue that despite striving towards gender equality, these expositions mainly speak for upper class women. Advancing these claims, I further problematise such a view of gender equality, as they disregard the fact that employment for lower class women is not an option, but constitutes their survival strategy. Moreover, in seeing the home and work as two distinct spheres, they not only overlook spaces where work is taking place within the sphere of home, but they also undermine the value of unpaid housework (Young, 2005). This also speaks directly to the various housing interventions by institutions of the state and development agencies. In their imaginations, home operates in a realm that privileges a structure, and which is often palpable when urban problems are linked to housing shortages, which they claim can be addressed by resettling "eligible" urban poor into concrete structures that are totally dislocated from social and cultural factors that embed them in the city. Moreover, these kinds of housing solutions totally disregard

the fact that these spaces are not just where people live, but also spaces where they work.

The space on the footpath is therefore not just a site of the domestic but also one where economic activities take place. My assertion is that together, these constitute 'home'. Moreover, these spaces go beyond either domesticity or the production of income-generating activities. These are also thriving markets that not only foster further economic networking, but also act as spaces of sociality and cultural reproduction. To me, the nature of the space, the open street, is intrinsic to these opportunities. These basket makers are known all over Mumbai for the superior quality of their cane products. They have an extremely diverse customer base that reflects not just the innumerable economic activities that exist in Mumbai, but the multitude of ethnic, religious and cultural practices that big cities like Mumbai incubate. A sustained observation of the kinds of wares that are displayed will reveal the upcoming religious or cultural festival in the city. During Eid they make dome-shaped cane structures placing a crescent moon on the top, during Chatt and Ganpati puja (predominantly Hindu festivals) baskets are woven in a specific way for vegetables and fruits that are integral to the occasion, on Diwali one can see specialised baskets that can hold diyas (oil lamps), and then during Christmas one will see the place filled with star-shaped lamps and cots for baby Jesus. Apart from these, every single family specialises in weaving baskets for specific businesses in the city: hotels that make biriyani (mixed rice dish), vendors of fish, flowers, vegetables and fruits, and other kinds of retailers. In mentioning all these, I want to draw attention to the nature of their work, work which is located in the same place as the one which they consider to be home. All these activities take place

simultaneously, although the majority of the work takes place during the day and is completed before dusk.

The families who are not basket makers have a different economy. While Alam runs a shop from his dwelling unit, his sister and her daughters are employed as maids in the lower middle class households in the neighbourhood. Similarly, another woman dweller, Tajunbee, 67, sells boiled eggs from the space outside her tent. For a single woman surviving on the streets of Mumbai, her idea of home is one where she experiences both freedom and protection. Being a part of the neighbourhood and the community of footpath dwellers in the area, she is integrated into the social fabric that protects her from harm from the outsiders. For her, living on the streets is the best among the bad choices that her social and economic position offers her. Unable to bear the stigma of being single, she left the shelter that her distant family members were providing for her. These streets therefore emancipate her, since she was not only able to find a place of her own, but has also established an independence of her being.

For those people who work in a different location, their home is a space where they rest. This distinction is accentuated among the newer generation, particularly young males, who disassociate from the family vocation of basket weaving, as they see this as an entrapment that does not enable one to escape from the clutches of poverty. Chaman's son Naran, 23, born and raised on these pavements, speaking of his concept of home, requests me to, "Modi ko bolo aisa ghar bana ke de, jisme kundi laga kar so sake" (Tell [Prime Minister] Modi, to provide us with a home where we are able to lock it from inside and one that enables us to sleep well at night). What resonates in Naran's talk is not just his legitimate claim over the welfare entitlements

by the state, but also an idea of a home that is tied to protection from physical safety, which if attained would enable him to rest peacefully. He is one of those youth whose idea of integrating into the city is not by following the vocation of his family, but one that would take him away from the poverty of the pavements, the route to which is formal housing. To the older generation this dissociation is alarming and is one where they see the disintegration of home. Perhaps that is what Chaman implied when he told me that, if the government puts them in buildings, “makan toh milega, lekin ghar ujaar jayega” (they will get a house but not home).

SR. No.	Name	Area	CDF	D.O.B.	Age	Phone	Mail ID	Training Looking for	Signature
1								Computer	
2								Computer	
3								Computer	
4								Computer	
5								Computer	
6		Makunga						Electronics	
7		Makunga						Darning	
10		Makim						Darning	
11		Makim						Darning	
		Makim						Electronics	
		Makim						Tailoring	
		Makim						Darning	
		Makim						Darning & D.J.	
		Makim						D.J/Dress	
		Makim						Darning	
		Makim						D.J	
		Makim						D.J	

Figure 4.5 Respondents express their interest to learn ‘employable’ training at a skill development workshop⁴⁹

Photo credit: Author. Date: 16.03.17

⁴⁹ Key information in the photograph has been made deliberately illegible to protect identity of respondents.

Like Naran, young men of the community expressed deep frustration over their living conditions. It was not the hardships of street living that they complained about, it was what they regarded as the ‘stigma’ attached to street living that upset them more. For them, street living was symbolic of remaining within the ‘traps’ of their family vocation, which in turn was intrinsically tied to their place on the street. These young men felt that only by doing other kinds of jobs that made them ‘employable’ in the city, would they be able to move away from a life on the street. The aspirations of these young men were starkly demonstrated in a skill development workshop organised by an NGO in the city (Figure 4.5). The participant information sheet reflected the career aspirations of these young men from the footpath where each of them expressed an interest to acquire a ‘skill’ that would make them employable. To these young men, these career trajectories and not their work on the footpath would pave the way towards a more respectable life, away from the streets, in buildings that would protect the ‘izzat’ of their women, safeguard their belongings and give them a life of more permanence and safety. The aspirations of the men from basket making families, not very differentiated from those of the non-basket making families, potentially undermine the ability of the group to persist on the footpath. This is an important point to consider when thinking of the ‘future’ of such groups who fight hard to retain their places in specific locations within the city. Evidently the aspirations of respondents regarding their future in Mumbai, shaped by gender and age, are varied. Therefore it is important to acknowledge these differentiated aspirations of respondents as they unsettle the idea of persistence on the street.

In Chapter 1, I pointed out how the respondents, and many footpath dwelling groups, are subjected to various forms of labelling. These tags establish the disjuncture in the

way work and home are understood as two different domains. While work is considered to be taking place in the public sphere, i.e. outside of the house, home is considered to be a private domain. In this discussion of home in which their work forms a part of their identity, I interrogate the question that if these groups undertake the same kind of tasks as vendors, why are they not formally acknowledged as such? If the people living on these pavements are also working and selling their products, why are they not booked under the BMC laws that prohibit hawking?⁵⁰

Every Wednesday, a church very close to Shanti Nagar in Mahim holds a special mass which draws thousands of followers. This area turns into a bustling centre on which street vendors from all over the city descend with their wares, selling a multitude of products. The street, Mori Road, is where the Budhwar Mela (Wednesday Festival) takes place, adjacent to the street where the basket makers dwell. And like the weekly ceremony of the church, every Wednesday the encroachment removal van ritualistically crosses Shanti Nagar and reaches Mori road to clear off the streets. The hawkers disperse momentarily and when the van leaves they come back again, exactly to the spots that they were in previously. I have always wondered why the community of basket weavers under study was left “untouched” (in the words of one of the respondents). Does it say something about the way ‘work’ is conceptualised? Alternatively, does their dwelling status take primacy over their work status in the official recognition of these groups? Can it then imply that these are tacit acknowledgements of footpath dwelling by the state?

⁵⁰ Section 313A and 313B of the BMC Act guidelines state: “Except under and in conformity with the terms and provisions of a license granted by the Commissioner in this behalf, no person shall hawk or expose for sale in any public place or in any public street any article whatsoever, whether it be for human consumption or not.” And “Except under and in conformity with the terms and provisions of a license granted by the Commissioner in this behalf, no person shall for purposes of gain, use his skill in any handicraft or in rendering services to and for the convenience of the public in any public place or public street.”

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined how people persist in their dwelling-places through home-making practices. The vignettes used in the chapter not only illuminate how people live on the streets, but also how these dwellings are adapted to retain their place on the street, neighbourhood, and essentially the city. The chapter began with a description of a mundane scene wherein, in describing its materiality, I highlighted the functional uses of a space which the footpath dwellers call their home (Somerville, 1997; Mallett, 2004; Blunt and Dowling, 2006). In the first part of the chapter, I provided a historical geography of the neighbourhood to stress the transformed living conditions that resulted from the changes in the built form. Challenging some of the dominant narratives that prevail in the city, I stressed that people have always been there, and that it is the city that changes in form.

As Ghertner (2015), in his example of Delhi, and Simone (2004), through his readings on the African city, point out, the notion of the world-class city remains unrealised. Instead, cities like Mumbai remain perpetually caught in the process of what I exemplified in the delayed arrival of ‘modernity’ as expressed in the photograph used in Chapter 1 of the thesis, “Mumbai is upgrading” (Figure 1.1). In Mumbai one such expression of attempting to be world-class is by removing visible markers of the poor and packing them neatly into distant suburbs under various housing schemes. These schemes are administered through mechanisms that exclude more people than they include. By dislocating people from their social, economic and cultural environments, these programmes assume that all those eligible would be passive recipients of the benefits. More fundamentally, these welfare programmes disregard the years of associations of people with location and the meanings they

attach to the spaces in which they dwell. But what about those who reject these programmes? In the case of these footpath dwellers, is staying on in this particular location an expression of choice? What form does this place-making take? My chapter answers some of these questions by looking at this place-making through the lens of how people practice home.

I stress the fact that with the changes in the city's built form, people have made improvisations in their living conditions. These improvisations have not necessarily improved their quality of living; instead they have made their lives more precarious. From living in a wooded area, that was much more cut off from the rest of the city where they had more place to live and work, over the years they have been pushed to the side of the Tulsi Pipe Road. Now, with the construction and widening of Tulsi Pipe Road (Varughese, 2018), the increasing value of Mahim's real estate and the connection of this place to the central business district in south Mumbai, they have been confined to less than one hundred square metres of living and working space, which is shared by approximately thirty families, with an average of five members each.

Persistence is demonstrated by people clinging on to their dwelling places, by coping with the changing city that either attempts to discipline them through welfare measures or criminalise them for rejecting official directives. Dwelling by persistence is about domesticating spaces, and evoking a sense of home in order to endure the vulnerabilities of footpath living. It is about resisting attempts to remove people who do not fall into the neat and easy category of residents of a world-class city.

This chapter is a statement not just on holding on to a certain location in the city, but it is also about how, over the years, people have adapted to the transformation in the city's built form. It shows how people are not passive dwellers in places but actively carve out spaces to make them useful. I have depicted how association with a place frames ideas of the insider/outsider among people. In this chapter I mention the various ways the footpath dwellers maintain physical limits, a key aspect of home-making. These physical delineations are key to their survival in situations where their living conditions are exposed to the wider city and physical protection (in the form of a door or barriers) is lacking.

The various instances of everyday domesticities reveal that within the city, street culture also involves practices of inhabitation by groups. These domesticities around the preparation of food, the decoration of living spaces, and rearing pets, also reveal how people attach their identities to these spaces. Here, persistence is carried out through the symbolic markers of control and care. I also include a discussion on how street living is highly gendered, and how women are controlled through their bodies and by the use of physical violence. Within the community physical violence is rampant and is often legitimised as preserving the home, a logic that seems key to endure on the street. Thus home is not experienced in the way it is dominantly understood in the wider literature. Here home is neither experienced within the confines of a secure physical shelter, nor is it an entirely positive experience. It is a feeling that emerges with people's emotional and functional attachments to places. It is this attachment expressed through forms of dwelling that is symbolic of persistence. In this chapter I include a discussion of work to show that for respondents, home and work are taking place in the same location, and sometimes it

is difficult to delineate activities into respective spheres. The nature of their work is a fundamental reason for them to rationalise dwelling in this location, as it is also close to their sources of raw materials, and the open nature of the street makes it easy for them to sell their products. Persistence therefore results from being enmeshed in the web of social and economic relations that the footpath dwellers have established over the years.

5 Navigating the City

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I study how groups circumvent evictions and acquire official documents in order to make substantive citizenship claims, and to navigate their ways through the city. In the previous chapter I argued that people attach meanings to their dwelling places through the notion of home. In this chapter I examine how people navigate through state actions and legalities, to hold on to these places. This chapter addresses my second research question: how do footpath dwellers in Mahim navigate spatial and official barriers to respond to everyday challenges?

While home embeds these groups in place through various material and symbolic practices, navigation enables them to escape municipal raids when faced with threats of eviction, return to their places, and intensify their claims to the footpath. As outlined in Chapter 2, I borrow the concept of navigation from a strand of scholarship that views the urban as the product of multiple mediations and negotiations (de Certeau, 1984; Benjamin, 2008; Anand, 2011; Anjaria and McFarlane, 2011; Rao, 2013).

Figure 5.1 is one example of an everyday practice that is symbolic of how people challenge obstructions in their lives. These obstructions vary from formal municipal laws that prohibit their presence on the footpath, objections raised by local residents, complaints from pedestrians, extreme weather conditions that destroy their living spaces, or even hurdles faced in obtaining documents that would enable these groups to access essential services. In Figure 5.1, respondents are seen appropriating a police barricade. Meant to regulate and control traffic, the barricade is being used to dry clothes, i.e. it has been re-appropriated to suit their everyday domestic practices.



Figure 5.1 Footpath dwellers appropriate a traffic police barricade to dry their clothes.

Photograph credit: Author. Date: 05.06.17

The constable who controls traffic from this spot does not object to this practice. The acceptance by the constable of the footpath dwellers' usage of this barrier is a combination of various aspects that underline persistence. Respondents informed me that the traffic constable is their "friend" and often offers favours like stopping water tankers to fetch water, not objecting to their personal use of the police barricade, or even ignoring transgressions that disrupt the traffic. This lack of objection to the use of the barricade is the traffic constable's implicit acknowledgment that the footpath is the respondents' home. As I develop this chapter, I consider such practices significant in fleshing out an understanding of persistence.

I see these practices as quotidian acts where marginal groups address the challenges in their lives, not necessarily through outright rebellion, but by means of protracted appropriations of urban material (such as the police barricade) and space, and by nurturing friendly relations with actors who wield relative power. I use the term relative because the authority of the constables is limited to the surveillance of vehicles and observing traffic rules.⁵¹ Occupying the lower echelons of the police force, they are entitled to only penalise those violating traffic rules. This photograph and the vignettes that I mention in the chapter reveal that the state is experienced “less as an extension of disciplinary power than as a locus for the negotiation and legitimation of spatial claims” (Anjaria, 2016, p. 110). Ironically, within the formal institutional realms, these claims are often ignored.

I use two vignettes to highlight the material navigation and circumvention of official processes. In the first, I show how people make use of a wall⁵² to evade municipal actions, and in the second vignette I highlight the networks that people form to acquire official documents, as a means to make formal claims to the state. In the context of my study, I read the wall as an important material anchoring the everyday activities of the footpath dwellers. Both metaphorically and materially, these obstacles are sorts of ‘walls’ that people must overcome when they have been rendered largely illegitimate by the wider city. This vignette unsettles many of the assertions around contemporary city

⁵¹ I learnt about this from a semi-structured interview conducted with the police constable on 05.06.17 who was positioned in the field site, while he was carrying out his duty of controlling traffic.

⁵² In the field site there were two walls that respondents dwelt along. In this chapter I focus on the one that separated the railway track from the main road. The other wall formed a part of a housing society (Mint Colony) and people only used the portion of the wall that faced the street. In other words, it was impossible for me to conduct ethnography on the other side of the wall adjoining the housing society because respondents were strictly prohibited from stepping on to the other side. This wall was much higher and well-guarded (through barbed wires and surveillance by security guards), making it impossible for respondents to make use of the space on the other side of it. Therefore my ethnographic observations are only limited to the wall adjoining the railway track. However, when discussing their social uses, I refer to both the “walls”. See Figure 3.1 for a map of respondents’ use of space.

development where the urban is said to be neatly segregated through, for example, gentrification (Harvey, 1978; Lees, Shin and López Morales, 2016), enclosure (Jeffrey, McFarlane and Vasudevan, 2012), world-class aesthetics (Ghertner, 2010), infrastructure planning (Björkman, 2015b; Harris, 2018) and urban crime (Caldeira, 2000). Rather, the chosen vignettes show that these obstacles create new possibilities of cooperation between actors possessing varying degrees of agency, and of the appropriation of physical space.

In the second vignette I explore what it means to have the footpath registered as an official residential address. Many respondents showed me official documents that mentioned the footpath as their address. The documents ranged from voting identification cards, pass books of state-owned banks, cards that entitle them to the public distribution system and more recently the unique identification document, Aadhaar cards. These documents relate to different bodies of the state positioned at varying levels of hierarchy. For instance, the documents like the voting card and Aadhaar card are issued by units in the Central Government, the pass books of government-run banks are given out by the local bank branch and ration cards are administered through agents in the local government. While all these documents serve different purposes and were acquired at various points in time, they are a direct recognition of citizenship. These documents not only establish their connection with Mumbai, but in recognising the footpath as their address, they are in direct contravention with the municipal laws that prohibit inhabitation in a “public place” (MCGM, 2006). Thus the key thrust of this chapter is an examination of how everyday official hindrances set in motion navigational practices by which people accept, manage, mediate and side-step these official procedures. This chapter shows that while

respondents try to improve their chances of living, it is also through gray-spacing that this navigation is made possible. I draw from Yiftachel's (2009a, 2009b) concept of gray-spacing in order to point out how urban marginals often rendered illegal by urban laws, are tolerated.

Through an analysis of these two vignettes, I develop the key argument of the chapter: that urban persistence is made possible through the avoidance of displacement and the navigation of prohibitive environments, often in contexts of "deep political, economic and social inequality" (Anjaria and McFarlane, 2011, p. 6). The first vignette highlights the processes through which respondents clear out spaces to avoid being affected by raids, only to return a few hours later. The second vignette shows how people acquire legal documents to access services (such as banking) in the hope of making small improvements in their lives. Importantly, these documents raise a crucial question about a contradiction in official practices, i.e. how is it possible for people to have the footpath – a public place – registered as a residential address? Although these efforts of gathering documents do not take away their illegal status, they partially recognise and legitimate their existence in the city. Dwelling by persistence is about these navigational practices that enable people to make partial claims to the city and hold on to their spaces a little longer.

5.2 The message

In the early weeks of January 2017, I had been observing a tense restlessness amongst the respondents. Fights among people on issues related to space had increased; basket-making activities had receded, customers were being turned back, tempers were on the rise and I frequently heard that "dahar" (municipal raids) would take place soon. Conversations in the local teashop centred around the "message" that one of the lower

members of the BMC, who happened to reside in the slum of Naya Nagar, delivered one evening on his way back home. Alam, a key respondent, and one of the few people from a non-basket-making family, told me while sipping tea “Datta bhau ne bola is bar badi dahar hogi” [Brother Datta (name changed) informed us that this time the eviction drives will be massive]. He added that Datta mentioned that the BMC would see their papers and was hopeful that this time he and his family would be considered for the state-sponsored housing programme. Alam mentioned in a low voice that it is because of the “madakchod” (motherfuckers) that deserving families like his had to stay on the streets.⁵³ Who are you calling madakchods, I asked him, to which he responded that it is the “tokriwalas” (basket makers) and those who “returned” to the footpath. A disgruntled Alam expressed that it is because of these people who either are not interested in a life beyond the streets or those who tricked the state, that people like him are not left in peace. According to Alam, BMC members occasionally harass them not so much with the motive of clearing the footpath but to crack down on those people who came back to the place despite being offered rehabilitation.

A message about an imminent municipal raid that revealed the varied interpretations of footpath dwellers over their housing situation highlights the competing aspirations of urban poor groups to accommodate themselves in the city (Anand and Rademacher, 2011). Prior to this conversation with Alam, I had sensed a tension between those who were considered the ‘original’ inhabitants and those who were ‘intruders’ to the space. An eviction message and the subsequent acts revealed the genesis of the tension to me. This message gave me an opportunity to understand the friction among the group of footpath dwellers at the heart of which was a fight for space. As I reveal the genesis of

⁵³ See Chapter 1 and 4 for politics among the footpath dwellers on their housing situation.

this tension, I also lay out that dwelling by persistence is about managing these everyday frictions in order to remain united when faced with the threat of municipal action.

While Alam's anger was largely directed at those who had returned, he was also frustrated with the basket makers for their lack of interest in mobilising a demand for 'formal' housing. The message delivered by a representative of the state as a warning to prepare for the impending raid establishes one more aspect. It reveals that the city does not necessarily function according to tight codes or "strategies", as enunciated by de Certeau (1984), but operates within "microspheres of negotiation" (Gandy, 2008, in Anand, 2011, p. 191). For some scholars these spaces of negotiation that are often "outside of [the] ordered and [the] regulated" (Harris, 2018, p. 296) constitute realms of "informality" (Roy, 2009b; Harris, 2018) that can be "identified in spontaneous, interstitial, 'kinetic' and ephemeral activities against more permanent, regular and static forms of urban life and urban design" (Harris, 2018, p. 296). Therefore, disrupting the tacit idea of formality as the norm and informality as the deviation, scholars such as Roy (2009), Anjaria (2016) and Harris (2018) urge us to see it as informality also produced by the state, or, as I contend, in the case of the Mahim footpath dwellers, by state actors. Often regarded as beyond the 'political' environment, members of the bureaucracy, particularly those in the lower rungs, often inhabit, if not the same, then similar social, economic and spatial environments as the footpath dwellers. The fact that a member of the municipality lived in a slum in close proximity to the footpath dwellers, becoming familiar with them over the years, forms the basis for crucial knowledge exchanges which enable the group to prepare for the raid.

My conversation with Alam revealed the disjuncture between the aspiration and the actual realities of living in the city (Anand and Rademacher, 2011). In the previous chapters I noted that the basket making families have consistently declined the resettlement attempts by the state. However, there are a few families on the footpath that aspire to live in the tenement style housing that welfare schemes provide. These differentiated aspirations therefore highlight the tensions among the footpath dwellers regarding their future in the city.

From Alam and other respondents, I learned that although minor municipal actions would take place regularly, these big eviction drives were rare and the last one had taken place three years previously, in 2013. In the more regular drives, the municipal vehicles would pass through the street, occasionally stopping to interrogate people about some of their activities. These interrogations might include questioning the footpath dwellers for littering waste products from basket weaving, or calling out people for fighting, or as mentioned in Chapter 3, generally enquiring about the neighbourhood. Sometimes the BMC would confiscate the blue tarpaulin sheets used to cover the ‘home spaces’. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this tarpaulin sheet has a special significance in terms of municipal action (I learned about this during my interview with Datta). For the municipality the removal or confiscation of the sheet signals an “action against encroachment” (interview with Datta on 05.05.17).⁵⁴ The tarpaulin sheet establishes a ‘roof’, and its subsequent removal is considered the disintegration of a structure in official terms. For the footpath dwellers this confiscation takes a massive

⁵⁴ Discussion with officials revealed the nature of the municipal action. In the official language the footpath dwellers were labelled as “vagrants”. As per the municipal laws these vagrants, by inhabiting the street, encroach on public property. Therefore action against them includes confiscation of the key foundations of their erected structures, i.e. the blue tarpaulin sheets that covers the tents of the footpath dwellers.

This was also validated to me during an interview with the Assistant Commissioner of the G/North Ward on 05.05.17.

financial toll. If the BMC does not return the sheets, then people have to purchase them from Dharavi at the price of Rs 400 (equivalent to 4.42 GBP) per square metre. Depending on the size of the family the tarpaulin sheets range from three to four square metres to cover areas where they undertake cooking, rest, eating, storage of essential items, socialising and during the monsoon, escape from the rain. Thus, the tarpaulin roof has a meaningful significance in terms of delineating a private space, as well as protecting people from harsh weather conditions. These confiscations usually take place during small unannounced raids, but if they inform the people in advance, the municipal van just drives along the footpath, as people would have already removed their roofs.

Larger raids, like the one predicted by Alam, often take place over several days and have long-term impacts. During the 2013 raid the BMC came with the police, confiscated many essential belongings and important documents, physically assaulted people who resisted, and arrested two basket makers and kept them in custody for two weeks. 'Badi dahars' or prolonged municipal raids cause major tensions in the group. While clearing out the entire establishment of the footpath is a major nuisance for the people, the bigger issue is the creation of an atmosphere of distrust among the community. For instance, Alam informs me that sometimes the municipality deliberately cracks down on one family in order to extract sensitive information. This way, the person or the family under the municipality's radar feels intimidated and exposes other members in the community. In an otherwise cohesive community, uncertain times like these disintegrate the bonds between people.

In 1996, SPARC had undertaken a survey in Mumbai, under the Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP) scheme to identify eligible beneficiaries among the footpath and slum dwelling populations in order to remove them from the streets and rehabilitate

them in flats in distant suburbs of the city (McFarlane, 2004). Alam's family was one of the few willing candidates, but they were rendered ineligible by SPARC,⁵⁵ despite having lived in the city long before the 1995 cut-off date. Therefore a few other families living on the footpaths of Mahim feel that they received unjust treatment and bore a grudge towards both the pavement dwelling families as well as the families who returned.

Around 2012-2013, a few of those families who had got flats in Vashi Naka, "sold them off" and came back to live on the footpaths of Mahim. I sensed that the "selling" of flats was controversial and therefore always approached it sensitively during these discussions. Alam and some of the other respondents strongly asserted that people who returned have not only gained financially, but have reduced the already limited space on the footpath. Contradicting these allegations, the people who returned gave me other reasons (to be elaborated later) for coming back to the footpath, and in their turn alleged that others (Alam and group) were jealous of them. Social tensions arising out of possibilities for housing entitlements often take spatial forms. Not only is every inch of the footpath territorialised by families, but there are constant skirmishes if someone takes over another person's space.

On the footpaths of Mahim, I could identify three such groups who, despite living in the same space, have different aspirations with regard to their housing situation. The first and largest group were the basket makers who, despite having lived in this location for over 30 years (and long before the cut-off date), expressed no inclination to move to "flat" or tenement style housing provided by the government. They have strong linkages with their villages in Rajasthan and often move between the city and the village, and

⁵⁵ See Chapter 4 for the implications of the SPARC survey

consider both these places as their ‘home’. The second group i.e. those families who returned to the footpath, reveals not just the failure of the housing welfare schemes but also highlights that the mere provision of formal housing does not necessarily ensure social security and, in situations of economic and social insecurity, people possibly revert to precarious forms of living (Anand and Rademacher, 2011; Charlton and Meth, 2017), a point disregarded in policy.⁵⁶ Contesting the claim that housing welfare schemes create significant economic opportunities that enable people to move out of the cycle of poverty, Rao’s analysis of the experiences of resettlement schemes in Delhi suggests otherwise (Rao, 2013).⁵⁷ In the context of my study, I explain this with an excerpt from my interview with Azra, a 60-year old inhabitant, who returned to the footpath.

Author: Have you ever lived anywhere else in Mumbai?

Azra: Yes. I have been in this area from my childhood. My son was born here. However in 2006 we left for Vashi Naka and lived there for 2-3 years in a building.

Author: Why did you come back here?

Azra: My husband abandoned me and my children for another woman soon after we moved to Vashi. After he left the main source of income from the family was gone and my children were too young to work. Being removed far away from my familiar places, where I could have sought jobs, I was left with no financial support. I turned to my neighbour for financial support. He gave me Rs 50,000 (equivalent to 552.52 GBP) in three instalments and took my thumb impressions on some piece of paper. He also made my children sign some documents, even though they were not 18. After a few months, they came to us and asked us to leave. I learnt that my flat was sold off to another Mohamedan (Muslim) household for 8 lakh rupees (equivalent to 8,842.40 GBP). My neighbour kept 6.5 lakhs (equivalent to 7,184.45 GBP). Not only that, but all other documents such

⁵⁶ Often promoted through powerful global aid agencies, the provision of formal housing is a dominant position in policies that seek to prevent the formation of informal settlements (UN-HABITAT, 2003, 2015).

⁵⁷ Rao’s ethnographic study of a resettled colony, Ghevra-Savda, located 40 kilometres from Delhi, suggests that while these schemes create hope for poor people to be formally (legally) integrated within the city, they actually create “spaces for vigorous and ongoing renegotiations of what can count as permitted ways of living in the city” (Rao, 2013, p. 2). Presenting resettlement as a “crisis” (p. 10), Rao argues that these welfare provisions, meant to improve the lives of the poor, actually push people further into precarious living conditions.

as survey slips, voter identification cards i.e. documents through which I could prove the eligibility for the rehabilitation, were taken away by them.

Author: So you are saying that you were not aware that you sold your flat to your neighbour?

Azra: No, of course not. Under the scheme we are not allowed to sell the flats.

Author: Do you miss staying there?

Azra: People think that because we moved from the street to the flat, it would change our fortunes. Even we thought so. But the opposite happened, our conditions deteriorated. With my husband abandoning us, we had no money to survive. My children could not join school. And there was no scope for me to work. Plus we had to pay a maintenance cost of living in a flat. Electricity, water connection, lift, etc. I had no means to pay that. What would I do with a flat when I have nothing to eat?

(Interview conducted on 10.02.17)

Azra's narration of the loss of her formal housing and eventual return to the street unsettles assertions of urban inclusion (Roy, 2009; Charlton and Meth, 2017) predicated on the politics of accommodation in the city (Anand and Rademacher, 2011). As Azra pointed out, disproving her hopes for an improved future, moving to a flat in a distant location exacerbated her poverty. The move not only meant that she had to meet the increased cost of the maintenance expenditure, but upon being abandoned by her husband she became the sole member of the family who had to arrange for these costs. Moreover, being removed from her familiar networks where she could have sought financial and social support, she became victim of an 'apparent' fraud.

I stress the term apparent because I came across contested versions of Azra's story through other respondents. I was told by many others that Azra actually sold off her flat willingly and she was not deceived in returning to the footpath. Disputed accounts made it hard for me to ascertain why or how Azra or people like her returned to the street. But what is more striking to me is that: one, people gave up their more 'secure' forms of housing to come back to the street and, two, there is considerable tension around these accounts of return. My contention is that for people like Alam, who aspire to be

beneficiaries of these housing schemes, there is a simmering discontent towards those who were “fortunate” enough to be eligible for formal housing schemes but who gave that housing up, while benefitting from it. Thus their anger is intensified by the fact that these people “gained both ways” by benefitting financially as well as coming back to the footpath to live for free. To Alam, these people are not the “rightful” (Alam uses the term ‘hak’ which denotes rights in Hindi) or deserving residents of the footpath as they further limit the already scarce space of their habitation (interview with Alam conducted on 14.02.17). For Azra, maintaining the story of her neighbour’s deceit in rendering her ‘homeless’ is crucial to fight for her space on the street. In other words maintaining this account of deceit is essential for Azra to persist in the competition for space on the footpath.

Narratives of negative or impoverishing experiences of formal or state-sponsored housing resonate with several scholars writing about such welfare policies in the global south. Writing about the lived experiences of state housing beneficiaries in Johannesburg and Durban, Meth and Charlton show through their study of empirical cases that for some residents new public housing provided a sense of security and safety, while for others it had adverse “impacts on livelihoods and the costs of formal living” (Meth and Charlton, 2017, p. 96). The significance of their work lies in the empirical accounts that challenge the generalising or opposing interpretations of beneficiary experiences as either totally positive or negative. They write:

...some residents expressed deep concerns about poverty and rising costs of living associated with their new housing. Several pointed to the loss of income generation incurred through formalisation, arguing that it was no longer possible, for example, to sell fruit in front of one’s house as one did in the informal settlement as ‘no one will come and buy it’ (Bongani, ♂ CC, 2011). Bongani’s concerns reflect wider government and/or community efforts to minimise informal selling from home in line with expectations about what a ‘proper’

settlement should look like, alongside the impact of losing established customers through relocation within the settlement (Meth and Charlton, 2017, p. 99).

The experiences of Bongani resonate with those of the respondents who felt that living in state-sponsored housing had displaced them from their social and economic environments and had also limited their everyday household space. Similarly, analysing the “settler politics” within Mumbai, Anand and Rademacher (2011) challenged the popularly held assumptions about the Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) scheme being inclusive. They stated that although this housing policy could be viewed as an outcome of years of grassroots mobilisations, the “unexpectedly popular” (p. 1760) SRA scheme is rife with problems. The buildings are usually inferior in quality and design, and the process of construction is contentious, involving entitled residents, developers, NGOs, and politicians seeking to “consolidate their financial power and moral legitimacy” (p. 1760). The scheme’s regulations and builders’ provisions often elide the forms of sociality and economic opportunities that horizontal slums enabled.

The two groups that I mentioned justify their place on the street as an economic and social rationale to survive the city. However, there are people like Alam who consider themselves victims of the divisive housing politics in the city. This constitutes the third group on the footpath who consider apartment style living as a secure form of housing and a route out of poverty. Alam feels stuck among a community of people who are not interested in improving their housing conditions (his emphasis). I learnt that for years he had been gathering the documents that are required for establishing eligibility for these programmes, but had not yet been successful at the time that I conducted the interview.

As mentioned earlier, this message is symbolic of the informal interactions that take place between the members of the bureaucracy and the urban poor groups. Embroiled in power relations, these exchanges highlight the networks these people form to steer around the hindrances to their everyday living. In this context, the actual or impending municipal action is a hindrance that would disrupt their regular flows. In the next section I will highlight how these preparations for such exigencies are also part of their everyday lives.

5.3 One must know how to climb a wall

In this vignette we meet Urmila (Figure 5.2), a 15 year old girl inhabiting the footpaths of Mahim separated by a wall from the tracks of the Western Railway in Mumbai. Urmila is patiently waiting for members of her family to pass on their belongings to her, so she can move them to the other side of the wall, i.e. to put the items on the space between the wall and the railway track. As she waits for someone to hand her a ‘potla’ (a sack made out of cloth) she mockingly invites me to join her. I thank her for the invitation but decline explaining that I have neither the courage nor the skill to climb a six foot wall. She seems very amused by my hesitation and, sitting on the wall, tells me in a mix of Hindi and Marathi “diwar chadna paije” (one must know how to climb a wall).

From the photograph one can infer that part of her task of transporting materials from one side of the wall to the other has already been accomplished. Essential materials for daily use, such as a green mat used for resting, utensils and a cooking stove needed for making food, jerry cans required for storing water, finished baskets ready for sale,

clothes, etc., have already been neatly stacked in the nooks and crannies of the dilapidated structure (see Figure 3.1), which once used to be a commuter bridge. I had never paid attention to this abandoned bridge before this day. Earlier it appeared as a disused remnant of an urban infrastructure, but now it suddenly seemed to me a practical foundation for people to navigate the city. This act of clearing off the footpaths, i.e. the putting away of work and household materials across the walls, or with acquaintances in slums and in various other discreet corners of the neighbourhood, and the eventual return and recommencement of usual activities, was mentioned to me frequently during fieldwork. These movements are not about being transported from one place to another, but are routine embodied practices that were undertaken to ensure that people maintained their places in the city, or following Blunt and Sheringham, these mobilities are “a key part of making and sustaining home” (Blunt and Sheringham, 2018, p. 2). These arrangements of reducing the impact of the raid reveal a certain practice of persistence. Also they are integral material practices that reveal the extent of their dwelling. For instance, it is not just the space of the footpath that is central to their spatial activities, but the space across the wall and the commuter bridge that are also central to preserving their forms of dwelling.



Figure 5.2 Urmila, a young footpath dweller waits to transfer materials from one side of the wall to the other.

Photograph credit: Author. Date: 03.01.17

For these footpath dwellers, learning to climb the railway wall is like being able to walk in the city (de Certeau, 1984), as is highlighted from Urmila’s advice that one must know how to climb a wall. It is a crucial part of their dwelling experience that requires “bodies, subjects and built environments [to be] interlinked and enmeshed” (Morris, 2004, p. 675). In order to remain in these places it is essential that they know how to use the wall, a crucial infrastructure in their everyday lives, to swiftly clear off these spaces before a municipal raid. Just as walking becomes an embodied experience of manoeuvring the city, similarly for these groups climbing the wall is an essential part of their everyday urban navigations, while the practice appears completely alien and to an extent daunting to me, also a city dweller. The wall then becomes a part of their “spatial order [that] organises an ensemble of possibilities (e.g. by a place in which one can

move)” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 98). However while de Certeau sees “a wall” as an “interdiction” that “prevents one from going further” (*ibid.*), here the wall becomes an enabler of these possibilities.

As mentioned above, the wall is a critical infrastructure that supports the footpath dwellers’ everyday domesticities and work, but in times of crisis, it also becomes an essential means of escape. The wall separates the jurisdiction area of the municipality from that of the railways. This means that while the BMC is entitled to carry out actions of eviction within their geographic jurisdiction (MCGM, no date), they cannot enter the railway land to take an official action (interview conducted with the Assistant Engineer of G/North Ward on 05.05.17). A key navigation ‘tactic’ therefore has been to jump over to the other side of the wall whenever the municipality comes to track down an individual. For instance, during regular raids, when the municipality comes to remove the tarpaulin sheets, the footpath dwellers untie the sheets and hurl them over to the other side of the wall. This is made explicit in the following excerpt from a discussion with one of the respondents:

Author: What do you do when the municipality arrives?

Nariya: They usually come during the day. The van arrives and is usually parked near Mori Road or next to the station. They then take a walk along the footpath and by then people know what to do. People take off the tarpaulin sheets, fold them and hurl them on the other side of the wall. Those living on this side (opposite the station) do the same. Each dwelling unit (family) has a portion of the wall marked, beyond which they throw their belongings.

...sometimes they (the BMC) take away things. Last time they took away my brother’s tool with which he weaves the baskets. From Alam’s home they took away all the water vessels. It’s random and depends on the whims of the Sahab (Official, in Hindi).

We try not to get into an altercation with any of them and they leave us alone.

Author: What kind of vessels are these?

Nariya: The usual ones you know. Recycled jerry cans of paint, oil or dalda⁵⁸, plastic containers etc. We get them from Dharavi from a seller.

Author: How much water do they store?

Nariya: One jar usually stores about three litres of water. These are small ones. The seller has drums that can store as much as 20 litres of water. But we don't buy them, they are for the slum people. The big drums take a lot of space and it is very hard to remove them easily.

Author: How much do you pay for the small jerry cans?

Nariya: Rs 100 (equivalent to 1.11 GBP) for the three litre cans. These cans are the first few things we put away when clearing the footpath as they are very expensive (see Figure 5.5).

Author: What else do you do?

Nariya: Last time the big dahar happened in 2013, we did not get any time to prepare. They came with the police in big trucks and took away all our belongings, including childrens' school books and our clothes. My sister was in the final months of her pregnancy. They took away all her medical records. When we went to the BMC office and the police station to retrieve it, we were told everything has been incinerated in the dumping ground. They came with full information and knew exactly what to take away to make our lives miserable.

(Interview conducted on 11.01.17)

The conversation with Nariya was an opportunity for me to understand the extent to which their lives are disrupted when a big municipal raid takes place. Memories from the previous big raid still haunted members of the group and they wanted to be fully prepared to face it this time. Bulky items such as foldable bed planks, furniture, stools, bamboo, bedding, etc. were the first things to be put away. While some were stowed on the dilapidated commuter bridge (Figure 5.2), the rest were put in between the bushes along the railway track (Figure 5.5). As pointed out by Nariya, just as on the footpath itself, each family has their areas marked in the space behind the wall. More important items like cash, official documents, ration and Aadhaar cards, medical slips, bank passbooks and other items that served as proof of address and identity were kept with acquaintances living in Naya Nagar or with shopkeepers in the area. Some members of

⁵⁸ A brand of hydrogenated vegetable oil, mostly used in South Asia.

the basket making families decided to go back to their villages in Rajasthan and return after a week or two when the tension had subsided. The village as a point of refuge at moments of crisis serves as the ultimate counter movement⁵⁹ when other means to navigate the city are unavailable or insurmountable in the short term.



Figure 5.3 Left, a regular social gathering on the footpath; Right, the same space cleared out in preparation for the raid.

Photograph credit: Author: Date: 12.03.17 and 02.01.17

Figure 5.3 shows two photographs of the same spot on the footpath, one taken during a routine fieldwork day in March 2017 and the other taken during the week of the municipality raid in January 2017. The photograph on the left is a snapshot of a regular day with people socialising near a stall run by Alam, a key figure on the footpath. The photograph on the right captures the moments when people are clearing out their dwelling spaces with the intention of returning to these places afterwards. A closer look at both the photographs reveals the details of the changed character of the footpath. The photograph on the left depicts a ‘settled’ condition where two women are seen sitting on

⁵⁹ These counter movements then not only challenge classical rural-urban migration theories (Haan, 1997) but reveal that many poor groups live in circulation between the city and the village (Haan, 1997; Bhide and Spies, 2013).

a foldable bed. The bed and the items stored under it establishes not only how sections of the footpath have been appropriated to fulfill practices of domesticity, but these relatively immovable objects also signify a form of home and the people in the picture signify community. A close examination also shows how the spaces of each family are marked on the wall adjoining the footpath. The number 786, inscribed on the wall, signifies a holy number in Islam and is where Alam and his family reside. The photograph on the right captures the stark contrast in the same portion of the footpath, completely bare and devoid of people. People visible in the photograph are seen removing belongings in order to eliminate signs of their presence from the footpath.



Figure 5.4 Space on the footpath before (left) and during (right) the clearance of the footpath.

Photograph credit: Author. Date: 29.12.17 and 03.01.17

The photographs in Figure 5.4 capture how the same section of the footpath is transformed from an established household to a space of departure. The images encapsulate the essence of what I call the enduring transience of their living conditions. It is made possible by the fact that although the footpath dwellers have established their domesticities and economic spaces on the pavement, in reality they do not have any formal claims to the space. Not only that, as is evident from Figure 5.4, the regularity

with which these dwellers are able to fold (right) their lives from an established set up (left) is symptomatic of the inherently transient nature of their everyday living. A ladder placed against the wall (visible in both photographs) depicts the practical measures taken by people to manage this state of affairs. I was told that older women and men of the group, and perhaps expectant mothers and those who are physically incapacitated in some way, use the ladder to climb the wall, while the others climb it without any such support. Whenever they were speaking about the activities around the wall, I always sensed that people spoke in a matter of fact way about knowing how to get around it. Ethnographically focussing on this piece of concrete, and the various usages of it, which for its users seemed very ordinary, enabled me to understand how the everyday activities of home-making were structured around the wall, and more importantly how people struggled to incorporate themselves into the urban form, albeit only “partially” (Yiftachel, 2009b).

This clearance drive was constantly referred to as the “big raid”, because of its (anticipated) long duration. While there was a lack of precise knowledge about the number of days for which the municipality would come, it was believed that it could range from three days up to several weeks. In conversations regarding the raid, and how people would forestall it, words like “big truck” and “police” were frequently mentioned to establish the severity of such actions. While “big trucks” implied the maximum confiscation of belongings, “police” signified crackdowns on any form of resistance. This uncertainty played its role in deciding where and how far household items would be stowed away. While heavier objects were removed from the vicinity, essential objects of daily use such as water containers, clothes, small work tools and cooking utensils were hidden right behind the wall (Figure 5.5).



Figure 5.5: The photograph shows household items placed on the wall (left), waiting to be transported to the other side (right).

Photograph credit: Author. Date: 02.01.17 and 13.01.17

This zone behind the wall facing the railway tracks and hidden from view represents what Yiftachel (2009a, 2009b) terms as “gray spaces”, which constitute a realm that is:

...usually tolerated quietly, often even encouraged, while being ‘encaged’ within discourses of ‘contamination’, ‘criminality and ‘public danger’ to the desired ‘order of things’. Typically, the concrete emergence of ‘stubborn’ informalities is ‘handled’ not through corrective or equalizing policy, but through a range of delegitimizing and criminalizing discourses. This creates boundaries that divide urban groups according to their status – a process of ‘separating incorporation’. This double-edged move tends to preserve gray spaces, activities and populations in ‘permanent temporariness’ – concurrently tolerated and condemned, perpetually” (Yiftachel, 2009a, pp. 89-90).

Representing voices from the Beer Sheva region, who according to Yiftachel had been pushed into the gray space, this phrase refers to a physical space as well as to the notional marginalisation and “uneven incorporation of groups” (p. 90). According to Yiftachel, gray spacing has emerged as the common feature of the “de facto” metropolitan urban governance that represents the contemporary forms of colonial relations that regulate power to “facilitate the process of seizure and appropriation”

(*ibid.*) The space behind the wall is also embroiled in discourses of criminality, contamination and public danger. As the buffer zone between the railway track and the enclosure (the wall), this space is avoided as a ‘danger zone’⁶⁰ by regular commuters owing to the fear of accidents. Moreover, as is obvious from the heaps of garbage and accumulating materials, it is considered beyond the aesthetic norm of the public eye. It is precisely this neglect by the railway authorities that creates spaces that are avoided by the wider public for fear of “anti-social” activities. Avoided, feared and neglected by the rest of the city, these spaces become the precise refuge points (see Figure 3.1) in which groups such as the footpath dwellers circumvent the ordered landscape, creating a means to “actively move through, practice, cope with, seek to dominate, and learn how to live in the city” (Anjaria and McFarlane, 2011, p. 7).

Building on the concept of gray-spacing, I relate navigation to the physical space behind the wall in Figure 5.5, which is not only materially tangible but also symbolically representative of the navigations that urban poor groups practice to dwell in the city, i.e. through voluntary temporary displacement in order to return to their places at a suitable time. Spaces of temporary refuge such as these are not unknown zones to the city officials or people, but they are tacitly tolerated (see Figure 3.1).

5.4 The raid

The municipal raid took place over three days, and was apparently less severe than the 2013 raid (interview conducted with Alam on 15.01.17). The municipal officers accompanied by the police would come and park their vehicles along one section of the

⁶⁰ Also inferred from the public notices displayed by railway authorities warning commuters to not walk along the tracks.

footpath (see Figure 5.5). Having already cleared out the heavier materials the footpath dwellers had to disperse and come back at a time after the vehicles had gone. They would lurk behind the wall or hang out near the station. While the police and the municipality kept watch to ensure that the footpath was kept encroachment free, the footpath dwellers observed the movements of the officials. On some days the vehicles would be parked all day and the place would be under constant surveillance. Representatives of the BMC supervising this raid comprised two junior engineers of the G/North ward, some field level workers of the municipality and most importantly, Datta. Alam had surreptitiously pointed out Datta to me, the BMC member who had informed the footpath dwellers of the raid a few days earlier. I had noticed them exchanging familiar glances, as Datta, a middle-aged man wearing an off-white shirt and thick glasses, went about supervising the confiscation of the items that were found on the footpath.

I witnessed an altercation, probably not the only one, between a municipal worker and a footpath dweller, as the former snatched an item and loaded it in the truck. On this particular day the municipality had not arrived since early morning and, assuming that they would not come, some people started working on the footpath. When the trucks approached around noon, members of the group were spread all over the footpath and a few customer transactions were in full swing. Stalling all transactions (which included forgoing some payments) the footpath dwellers swiftly hurled their belongings across the wall and cleared the pavement. Sangeeta's cooking utensils along with her baby's cot, Rekha's tarpaulin sheet, work tools such as Bansi's sickle and knife, and Heena's new footwear were some of the things respondents complained were seized in the raid.

I had been requested by some of the respondents to go to speak to the female officer who had ordered these items to be taken away. Chaman, introduced in Chapter 4, warned me to avoid any form of confrontation, “jhagra nahi chahiye” (we don’t want to fight) lest the police and municipality harass them more. When I approached the female officer with the request to return some of the items seized, she seemed uninterested in speaking and went about carrying out her work. She politely warned me of negative consequences if I obstructed a “public official” from carrying out her or his duties. I stepped back and decided to observe the rest of the event from a distance, along with the respondents.



Figure 5.6 Municipality truck and police vehicle carry out clearance drives in early January, 2017.

Photograph credit: Author: Date: 03.01.17

Although not as brutal as described by respondents, the parts of the clearance drive I witnessed were still quite harsh. The police and other officials were demeaning in their interactions with the footpath dwellers. When one of the respondents tried to justify why her son’s cot should be returned, the female officer held her by the hair and threatened to put her inside the jeep if she resisted. I was particularly surprised to

witness Datta's role in the raid, the same person who had warned them to prepare for it few days back, but who was now a part of the force that was carrying out the action. In an interview with him later, this duality of being the protector and the perpetrator became clear to me. Datta resides in one of the slums very close to where the footpath dwellers live. Although economically better off and, owing to his professional affiliations, wielding a certain kind of power, he inhabits much the same geography as the footpath dwellers. The footpath along which they live is also the route that Datta and his family members pass by in their daily lives. This sharing of information is therefore not just about wielding local influence, but also about conviviality and not antagonising people who are as deeply enmeshed in the neighbourhood as he is. He also confirmed that it is not that the officials do not know how and where these people escape to, but that "we simply choose to ignore it". He told me that sometimes it is his seniors who tell him to inform the people about the impending raids, so that "less man power"⁶¹ can be deployed on duty and also the confrontation can be minimised" (interview conducted on 05.05.17).

It is individuals like Datta that blur the boundaries between the state and society (Mitchell, 1991). As mentioned, Datta is not just a member of the bureaucracy, carrying out formal orders. He is also an active agent who shapes the direction of these formal procedures, and therefore significantly shapes the dwelling conditions of the footpath dwellers. The role of Datta, as the informer, is similar to Björkman's notion of the "brokers". Brokers are individuals, often from lower socio-economic backgrounds, who possess significant "translocal knowledge" and often have strong connections with political and administrative contacts (Björkman, 2015b, p. 226). It is on the basis of the

⁶¹ The issue of limited man power was also shared with me by the Head Commissioner of the G/North Ward when I asked him what prevents them from permanently removing these group from the city areas.

micro-knowledge that Datta possesses that he is valued in the municipal office. Conversely, he enjoys a position of privilege among the footpath dwellers for bearing essential information that prepares them for contingencies like the raid.

What then do these informal circuits of knowledge that enable groups to forestall evictions say about the nexus between urban poor groups and the state? Are they to be read as instances of cooperation and co-option (Gupta, 2012; Rao, 2013) in situations where members of the state inhabit similar social geographies? Are these actions to be inferred as mere procedural fulfilments that the municipality undertakes from time to time to tick off duty lists? Is the feigned blindness of the municipality despite the knowledge about the ways people hide to be read as an instance of official “ignorance” (Anand, 2011, p. 206)?

In his study on water politics in Mumbai, Anand uses the term “social leakage” (Anand, 2011, p. 204) that resonates with the way I read these municipal actions. Analysing the governance of the water system, Anand argues that the concealing of certain kinds of knowledge systems by agents of the state is as much a calculated move as is the obtaining or holding of information. Ignorance is not just an absence of knowledge, but creates a kind of uncertainty that produces practices that are otherwise unlawful or beyond the so-called formal realms. And in that way ignorance is “constructed, and is also constructive” (*ibid.*, p. 194). Embedded with municipal rules, the periodic actions in the context of my study are undoubtedly instances of the state exercising its power, but the “wilful ignorance” (*ibid.*) of the way people circumvent these actions also points towards the state’s “marshalling the power of ignorance” (*ibid.*, p. 204). It is this power of “social leakage”, contends Anand, that “requires us to collectively know what not to know” (*ibid.*, p. 206). This wilful ignorance of the tactical management of state action

by groups, I contend, is characteristic of the urban form in cities of the global south (Anand, 2011; Gupta, 2012).

In situations of deep inequalities it is not just poor people who learn to navigate the official procedures that foreclose actions for survival. The official realms can also be quite porous. In other words, if we read the municipal raid as an obstruction to their everyday lives, then it is the wilful ignorance of the fact that people not only hide out, but also return after the raid, that makes the actions of the municipality questionable. State actions such as the raid are not so much about evicting the people from their places, but carrying out the routine duties in line with municipal procedures. The carrying out of duties then becomes a kind of performance by the state (Gupta, 2012) where it executes certain functions as “routine procedures” and these are not so much about reaching its intended outcomes as it is about their performance being noted.

5.5 A wall but not a barrier

A form of material enclosure, a ‘wall’ is metaphorically a reference to an obstacle or a barrier to prevent something (Badiou, 2008). Rather than regarding the wall as a form of enclosure (Jeffrey, McFarlane and Vasudevan, 2012) or barrier, I argue that it creates possibilities for the centring of the daily household and work related practices of the footpath dwellers. And as elaborated throughout this chapter, during times of crisis, such as eviction drives, this wall acts as the shield that protects the footpath dwellers from being arrested, or their items being seized. Further, I argue that the persistence of these groups is significantly enabled by these material infrastructures. As argued in Chapter 2, these material enclosures are not obdurate obstacles, but are “elastic” and

“porous”, creating “gray-spacing” (Yiftachel, 2009a). As I will elaborate subsequently, walls create possibilities for navigating the official actions by opening up spaces that are tolerated by authorities. Persistence is therefore symptomatic of these adaptations to dwelling during times of crises. It works in conjunction with the efforts people make to create a space of refuge as well as the official tolerance of these spaces.

The wall, rather than being exclusionary, plays a crucial role in the lives of the footpath dwellers by not only enabling the circumventions of the municipal raids, but also in providing the infrastructure (Simone, 2004) for carrying out their daily activities. This resonates with what has been viewed as the “counter materialisations of enclosure” (Jeffrey, McFarlane and Vasudevan, 2012, p. 1248). By appropriating the space around the wall, these groups “assemble porous, sociomaterial and distanced forms of enclosure – through relations of stability, flux, fixity and movement” (*ibid.*). What specifically interests me in the analysis of enclosure in the work of Jeffrey, McFarlane and Vasudevan is that they refer to the material establishment of walling as a form of “insistent performativity” (p. 1250). Primarily set in the context of national boundaries by nation states, they argue that walling essentially reveals the insecurities of sovereign state power. Extended to the urban sphere, walling and the construction of enclosures are not only administrative functions but also acts undertaken by the elite to segregate themselves in enclaves (Caldeira, 2000). These assertions are destabilised by the persistent use of these barriers to organise their everyday lives and navigate urban challenges by groups, such as the footpath dwellers, at the heart of which is the “flexible and arbitrary nature of law” (Jeffrey, McFarlane and Vasudevan, 2012, p. 1256). My study shows that walling or enclosures and fragmentation of urban landscapes create new forms of belonging to the city. In other words, “macrogeographies of demolition

and dispossession” (Jeffrey, Mcfarlane and Vasudevan, 2012, pp. 1258–59) produce local topographies of navigation.

Running along Tulsi Pipe Road on Senapati Bapat Marg and separating the train tracks from the carriageway, this “understated” (Varughese, 2018, p. 173) structure separates the control of the municipality from that of the railways⁶² and although formal institutional restrictions are observed in terms of jurisdiction, in reality these two spaces are much more diffuse. In the lives of the footpath dwellers, the wall enables the spilling over of practices from one side (facing the road) to the other (facing the tracks). The wall is used for several purposes (see Figure 5.7) ranging from acting as a support to constructing living spaces, hanging clothes, toys, and travel bags which store personal items and much more. The photographs reveal how these walls range from anchoring household items and work materials to a space of worship and communication. From these pictures one can tell that the wall creates space for the observance of sacred rituals and religious practices, as is obvious from the mini temples mounted at an elevation. I learnt from respondents the importance of putting their gods on a ‘pedestal’, as a mark of showing devotion and respect. The ground here is symbolic of the sphere of pollution and the elevated space on the wall represents the sacred domain. The inscription of mobile numbers on the wall not only establishes one’s ‘territory’, but also acts as a way of sharing contacts with potential customers. These inscriptions were particularly interesting to me, because it signified the ways that people remain attached to a place, despite not being bodily present. Discussions with respondents affirm that very often

⁶² In a recent report published in the Indian Express, Suburban Railways occupy approximately eight lakh square metre of land across the main city of Mumbai and its suburbs including central, western and harbour lines. It is operated jointly by the National and the State Government and its jurisdiction is separate from the areas of the BMC. By reporting that the state government will address the issue of slums in the railway land (and not BMC), it points towards the separation of this jurisdiction. I also learnt about this from conversations with officials in the municipality.

they are not around either because they have gone somewhere else in the city or they have had to clear out the space due to municipal drives. It is during these instances that they ensure that their customers, both old and new ones, can contact them.



Figure 5.7 Different ways the wall is used to support objects required in everyday lives.

Photograph credit: Author. Date: Various

The portion of the walls adjoining both the footpaths that I studied ranges across 500 metres on each side of the road⁶³. As mentioned earlier these material structures are a key feature adjoining the railway lines in Mumbai and are put to multiple uses by different social groups in the city. Just as the footpath dwellers use them in specific ways, these walls have been used (historically) for commercial and more recently artistic purposes (Varughese, 2018). Writing about an extended stretch of the wall further along the Tulsi Pipe Road, Varughese observes:

⁶³ Information obtained from Public Information Officer, G/North Ward through Right to Information (RTI) Act 2005.

The wall is a palimpsest; the layers of paint, white and otherwise, bear years of advertising and publicity, selling brands from soap to cooking oil, and more recently voicing motivational calls to vote and appeals to live in communal peace and to save India's tigers ... These palimpsestic iterations on the wall are, however, not the only form of movement which finds inspiration in the white tableau of Tulsi Pipe Road; from this same wall, the people of Mumbai are called upon to engage in movements for justice, to support women's rights, to 'save the girl child', to plant more trees and to conserve water (p. 175).

Regarding the wall as a medium of public art that acts as a repository of "postmillennial social memory" (p. 174) for "everyday gazers", Varughese argues that urban India is increasingly being coded around the aesthetics of Hindu sensibilities. Throughout her work, the wall is referred to as the space of the 'public', a clear juxtaposition with the way the wall is used and made legible by the footpath dwellers. In referring to the passer-by's reaction to the art "viewed during a moment of movement", (p. 175) Varughese not only makes this space relevant for only those 'passing by', but it is once again obvious that there is a disregard for considering this place as someone's home. Her analytical interpretation of public art therefore also obscures how these spaces are crucibles of the simultaneous existence of the public and the private.

As mentioned earlier, scholarly works on walling, particularly in the context of the city, places neoliberalism at the heart of contemporary urban trajectories (Smith, 2002; Blomley, 2008). The vignette of the wall shows how, by temporarily departing from their spaces, these groups persist and retain their places on the footpath. Persistence is about dwelling in a state of "permanent temporariness" (Yiftachel, 2009a, pp. 89-90).

Although they have set up their domestic spaces on the footpath, they have to be ready to move at all times.

5.6 Navigating legalities

In this section, I advance the navigation accounts by paying attention to the persistent attempts of people to acquire ‘formal’ recognition of residential location. In doing so I highlight two key assertions: one, people *choose* to be selectively ‘legal’ in addressing their everyday obstacles and two, it is by bypassing official procedures that people are able to register themselves in the formal realms, albeit partially. If documentations, such as the ones mentioned above, define ‘legitimate’ belonging in the city, then the lack of these renders people ineligible to access services that could improve the vulnerabilities in people’s lives, even if that improvement is negligible. The processes through which people acquire these formal documents are reflective of navigating the official barriers. To people with limited means it is these navigations that Simone articulates as “modes of provisioning and articulation [that] are viewed as making the city productive, reproducing it, and positioning its residents, territories and resources in specific ensembles” (Simone, 2004, p. 407) that provide “hope” for people to strive towards citizenship (Rao, 2013). Analysing the processes and the anticipation of obtaining Aadhaar cards⁶⁴, I show how these navigational practices create a sense of security and optimism for gaining access to selective government schemes. These processes render people legal but only at the margins, and these processes of acquiring documents are

⁶⁴ See the opening vignette in Chapter 1 in order to understand the anticipation and the management of uncertainties around it.

“spaces for vigorous and ongoing renegotiations of what can count as permitted ways of living in the city” (Rao 2013, p. 2). To quote Rao (2013) in this respect:

Documents as the *lingua franca* of the state are of central significance in this process. Negotiating with the state..., people not only learn the language of documents, but re-produce it through their practices of accumulating, collecting, showing and interpreting. Papers have a dual nature...” (p. 13)

During my fieldwork, my interest was piqued by the various official documents that people possessed that recognised the Shanti Nagar footpath as their address. I list some of those documents below as recorded in my field notes⁶⁵:

1. [REDACTED]: Aadhaar Card: s/o [REDACTED], Opp. Takshal Karm Awas; Shanti Nagar Footpath, near Mahim Station; Mumbai; Maharashtra 400016.
 2. Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai, Certificate of Birth; [REDACTED], Date: 07.06.2010; Permanent Address of Parents: Mori Road, Shanti Nagar, Near Darga, Mumbai – 400016.
 3. Survey Receipt of a group of people: Titled: Shanti Nagar Mahim, Railway Phatak, Sena Pati Bapat Marg, Mahim “Belkum ke samne” (opposite Belkum), Mumbai – 16.
 4. Survey Pauti (in Marathi) – Shanti Nagar, Mahim Station Samor (Facing).
 5. Aadhaar Card of [REDACTED]: Address: Santi Nagar, Senpati Bapat Marg, Next to Mahim Railway Station, Mahim West.
 6. Ration Card of [REDACTED]; Shanti Nagar Footpath, Mahim Station “bajula” (adjacent to), and opposite Mint Housing Quarters, Mumbai – 16.
 7. Corporation Bank pass book; Near Mahim Station, Shanti Nagar Footpath, Senapati Bapat Marg, Mumbai PP, Taksal Avas Mahim.
- (Field note: 29.12.16)

I got an opportunity to see these documents around the time people were anticipating the raid. People showed me the papers hoping that I would be able to convince the officials not to undertake the raid, under the pretext that they were legitimate residents of the footpath because they possessed formal documents. On scanning through some of these documents, what particularly struck me was the range of official papers and the

⁶⁵ The names of respondents who shared their documents with me have been concealed.

ways the addresses were registered. I also noticed that these documents were photocopies. On questioning respondents I learned that they kept the photocopied version of their documents with them, often laminated, in order to protect their papers from being seized in raids or destroyed by rain. The original documents are kept away from the street, in ‘safer’ places, either with acquaintances living in slums or back in their villages. The documents ranged from birth certificates issued by the municipality, to passbooks of state-owned banks, survey slips conducted by government officials, ration cards, and the more recent Aadhaar cards. Issued by different bodies of the state, all these documents acknowledged that their holders resided in the Shanti Nagar footpath. What was particularly interesting was the incompleteness in the addresses and the ways they were written. Without the mention of an exact house or plot number, these documents mentioned several urban landmarks as a way to represent where people lived. “Bajula” (adjacent to), “Samor” (opposite), etc. were some of the place-based directions that these addresses bore in the absence of a precise identifier. These documents span a vast range of time, showing the historical continuities of formally recognising the footpath as people’s residential location. In fact, the Aadhaar or the document that provides the unique identification number to ‘residents’ of India, and has been a recent addition to identification documents, also continues to mention these addresses. Dwelling by persistence encompasses consistent attempts by people to be formally acknowledged. Although this official acknowledgement does not guarantee any formal claims for people to retain their places on the footpath, i.e. does not protect them from eviction drives, it gives them access to means by which they can make their everyday lives slightly better or even bearable.

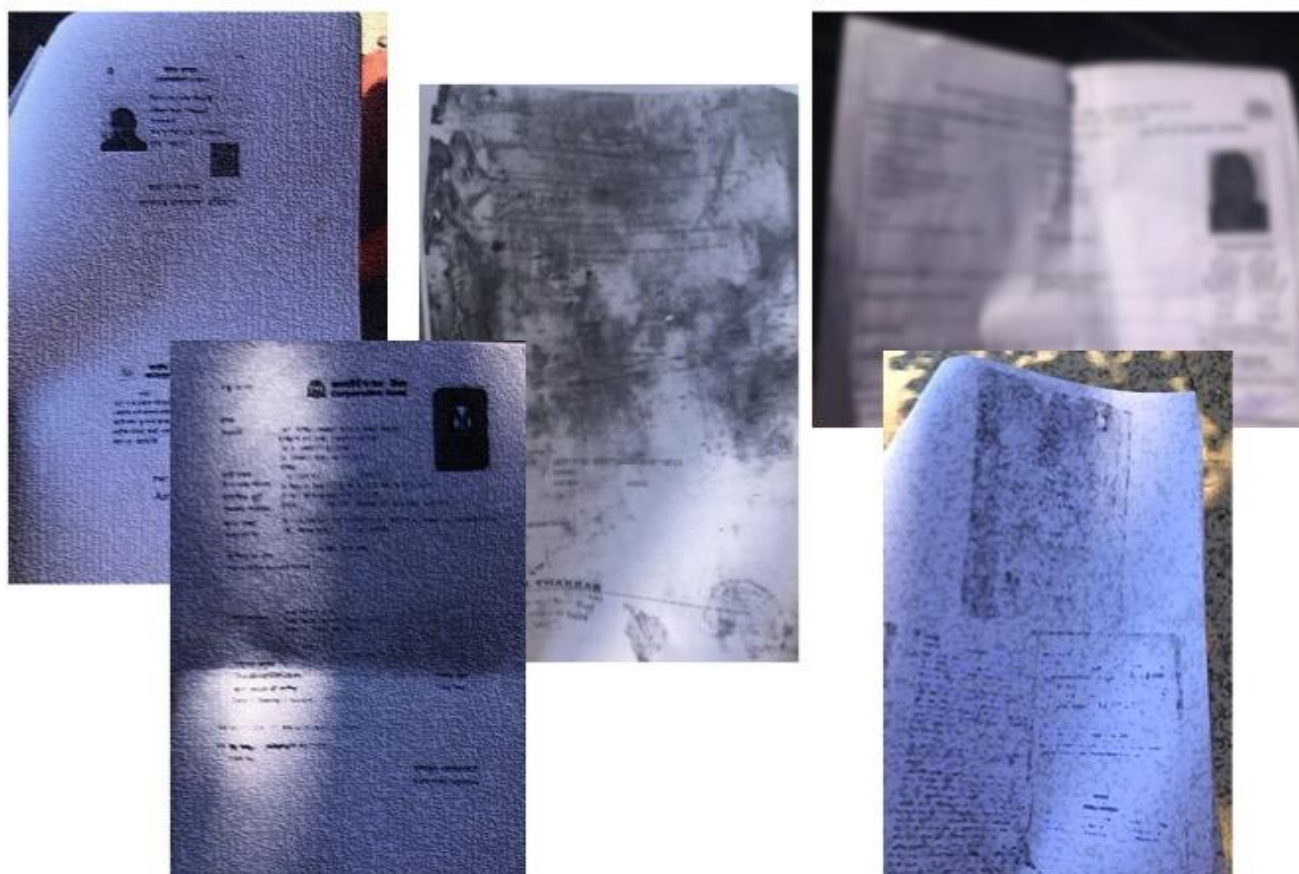


Figure 5.8 Copies of various official documents that bear the footpath as the address⁶⁶

Photograph credit: Author. Date: Various

In an interview conducted with Professor Amita Bhide of Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), I asked about the significance of having the footpath as an address, to which she said the following:

One of the important points regarding this was made during the Olga Tellis case. One of the things which the judgment actually established was the cognizance of people who were staying on pavements although it did not uphold the right to stay on the pavement. In fact it said that people do not have a right to stay on the pavement. But on the other hand it also recognized that people have no option but to live on the streets ... and then definitely upheld that the state had to do something about these people. It had to offer them alternative sites, some alternatives for livelihood....

⁶⁶ The photograph has been made deliberately illegible to protect the identity of respondents.

In this sense, it is a very important and interesting judgment. So if we take that as the basis for where are we moving forward then does various PILs, judgments on homelessness uphold the rights of the people staying on pavements or similar places? This might be an important point to consider...”

(Interview conducted on 14.07.17)

As highlighted by Professor Bhide, the judgement issued by the Supreme Court of India in 1985 in the *Olga Tellis vs Bombay Municipal Corporation* (Chandrachud, 1985) case has been a landmark decision for many reasons. In the context of my study, it reveals the historical continuities of what I understand as the state’s tacit toleration. It is particularly relevant because it mentions the communities dwelling in the same geographical location where I conducted my fieldwork. I have included a few excerpts from the legal judgement to establish its relevance with my work:

OLGA TELLIS & ORS. v. BOMBAY MUNICIPAL CORPORATION & ORS. ETC.
JULY, 10, 1985

The petitioners in writ petitions Nos. 4610-12/81 live on pavements...residing in structures constructed off the Tulsi Pipe Road, Mahim, Bombay.

Sometime in 1981, the respondents - State of Maharashtra and Bombay Municipal Corporation took a decision that all pavement dwellers and the slum or busti dwellers in the city of Bombay will be evicted forcibly and deported to their respective places of origin or removed to places outside the city of Bombay. Pursuant to that decision, the pavement dwellings of some of the petitioners were in fact demolished by the Bombay Municipal Corporation. Some of the petitioners challenged the aforesaid decision of the respondents in the High Court. The petitioners conceded before the High Court that they could not claim any fundamental right to put up huts on pavements or public roads, and also gave an undertaking to vacate the huts on or before October, 15, 1981. On such undertaking being given, the respondents agreed that the huts will not be demolished until October 15, 1981 and the writ petition was disposed of accordingly. (Page 1-2)

The counter-affidavit says that no person has any legal right to encroach upon or to construct any structure on a footpath, public street or on any place over which the public has a right of way. Numerous hazards of health and safety arise if action is not taken to remove such encroachments...It is, therefore, in public interest that public places like pavements and paths are not encroached upon. The Government of Maharashtra provides housing assistance to the weaker sections of the society like landless labourers and persons belonging to low income groups, within the frame work of its planned policy of the economic and social development of the State. Any allocation for housing has to be made after balancing the conflicting demands from various priority sectors. The paucity of resources is a restraining factor on the ability of the State to deal effectively with the question of providing housing to the weaker sections of the society. (Page 11)

Two conclusions emerge from this discussion: one, that the right to life which is conferred by Article 21 includes the right to livelihood and two, that it is established that if the petitioners, are

evicted from their dwellings, they will be deprived of their livelihood. But the Constitution does not put an absolute embargo on the deprivation of life or personal liberty, by Article 21, such deprivation has to be according to procedure established by law. In the instant case, the law which allows the deprivation of the right conferred by Article 21 is the Bombay Municipal Corporation Act, 1888, the relevant provisions of which are contained in Sections 312(1), 313(1)(a) and 314. These sections which occur in Chapter XI entitled Regulation of Streets' read thus: A Section 312- Prohibition of structures of fixtures which cause obstruction in streets. (1) No person shall, except with the permission of the Commissioner under section 310 or 317 erect or set up any wall, fence, rail, post, step, booth or other structure or fixture in or upon any street or upon or over any open channel, drain well or tank in any street so as to form an obstruction to, or an encroachment upon, or a projection over, or to occupy, any portion or such street, channel, drain, well or tank". (Page 26)

Normally, we would have directed the Municipal Commissioner to afford an opportunity to the petitioners to show why the encroachments committed by them on pavements or footpaths should not be removed. But, the opportunity which was denied by the Commissioner was granted by us in an ample measure, both sides having made their contentions elaborately on acts as well as on law. **Having considered those contentions, we are of the opinion that the Commissioner was justified in directing the removal of the encroachments committed by the petitioners on pavements, footpaths or accessory roads...** But, though we do not see any justification for asking the Commissioner to hear the petitioners, we propose to pass an order which, we believe, he would or should have passed, **had he granted a hearing to them and heard what we did.** We are of the opinion that the petitioners should not be evicted from the pavements, footpaths or accessory roads until one month after the conclusion of the current monsoon season, that is to say, until October 31, 1985. In the meanwhile, as explained later, **steps may be taken to offer alternative pitches to the pavement dwellers who were or who happened to be censused in 1976.** The offer of alternative pitches to such pavement dwellers should be made good in the spirit in which it was made, though we do not propose to make it a condition precedent to the removal of the encroachments committed by them.

There is no short term or marginal solution to the question of squatter colonies, nor are such colonies unique to the cities of India. Every country, during its historical evolution, has faced the problem of squatter settlements and most countries of the under-developed world face this problem today. Even the highly developed affluent societies face the same problem, though with their larger resources and smaller populations, their task is far less difficult. The forcible eviction of squatters, even if they are resettled in other sites, totally disrupts the economic life of the household. It has been a common experience of the - administrators and planners **that when resettlement is forcibly done, squatters eventually sell their new plots and -return to their original sites near their place of employment.** Therefore, 'what -is of crucial importance to the question of thinning out the squatters' colonies in metropolitan cities is to create new opportunities for employment in the rural sector and to-spread the existing job opportunities evenly in urban areas. Apart from the further misery and degradation which it involves, eviction of slum and pavement dwellers is an ineffective remedy for decongesting the cities. (Page 34-35)

Passed in 1985, the decision of the Supreme Court of India is significant and, I would emphasise, progressive in many ways. First, in recognising that people have been dwelling on footpaths since 1981 (or before), it ascribes a spatial specificity to life on pavements (as opposed to living in slums). Although set in Tulsi Pipe Road, the same

area where I conducted my fieldwork, the court order is reflective of footpath living as not only distinct from slum living, but also as a common form of marginal living in Mumbai. Second, the court order, while upholding the action of the municipal commissioner, also takes seriously the point of view of the petitioners. The judgement evaluates how life on the footpath is replete with precarities that undermine human dignity. Third, in doing so, it holds the state government responsible for not providing people with adequate housing. The court order is highly critical of the urban policies and planning that favour the elite and alleges that the state is not able to solve the housing crisis despite having ample land available in Mumbai. Fourth, in considering the petitioners' point of view, the court order underlines that footpath living is an economic compulsion which holds sway under Article 21, Right to Life and Personal Liberty. Finally, in suggesting the wilful rehabilitation of those evicted, it underlines a very common yet crucial practice of persistence of those forcefully evicted, i.e. "squatters return to their original sites near their place of employment" (p. 35). The judgement, passed more than 33 years ago, continues to be relevant even today as it highlights the persistence of people's survival. While it accords only economic reasons for people to return to their "original sites", it is actually the relational aspects of everyday living, the familiarity of the built environment, knowledge of the neighbourhood, and the ties with acquaintances that cause people to return to their sites. In other words, it is dwelling that creates possibilities of persistence. More significantly, this judgement, in contravention to several laws that define and govern public spaces in the city, recognises the footpath as a place of habitation. To return to the earlier point on the significance of having the footpath as an address, I stress that these practices point towards a paradox that is reflective of official practices in Indian cities. On one hand, by citing the relevant municipal clauses the court upholds the nature of the footpath as a

public place, and in doing so justifies the action of the municipal commissioner in evicting the footpath dwellers. On the other, as is evident from the language of the court order and the explicit description of life on the pavements, there is a de-facto acknowledgment of footpath dwelling as an established practice of habitation by poor groups.

In the following section I move on to demonstrate a set of navigational practices that are undertaken to acquire official documents. While this section deals with the material processes, the next section proceeds to highlight how social networks inscribe people in the formal (legal) realms.

5.7 Request for Aadhaar card applications

During my fieldwork a crucial event took place at the national level that had a direct impact, particularly on poor groups such as the footpath dwellers, and which added additional importance to the acquisition of documentation, principally an Aadhaar⁶⁷ card or a Unique Identification number. On the 8th of November 2016, the Prime Minister of India, Mr Narendra Modi, without prior warning, announced the demonetisation policy. This unexpected “imposition” (Arun, 2017, p. 456) banned the use of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 currency notes with effect from 16th November 2017. These are denominations that are used widely by poor groups in their daily transactions in the absence of access to formal credit. According to the Modi government, the drive to demonetisation, which rendered 86% of legal currency obsolete (Ghosh,

⁶⁷ Aadhaar in Hindi means foundation.

Chandrasekhar and Patnaik, 2017),⁶⁸ was aimed at achieving financial security by checking the circulation of fake currency notes, curbing unaccounted for “black money” and cracking down on the financing of terrorism. The ultimate goal of the demonetisation drive would be to achieve a “cashless economy” (Arun, 2017, p. 456) that would be supported through a massive drive for digitisation (*ibid.*) This sudden drastic policy measure was met with country-wide reactions both positive and negative. The critics of the policy commented that the demonetisation drive implemented under the guise of tackling the shadow economy was a strategy to draw attention away from more important economic issues that the country continues to grapple with. More importantly, this would have enormous negative impacts on poor people who largely rely on cash transactions in their everyday lives as well as lacking access to digital resources.

I learnt from respondents that they had heard Mr Modi on the radio when he announced the new policy. It had taken an immediate toll on their businesses as their customers could no longer transact in those denominations from the following day. 54 year old Scindia, a basket maker and dweller in Mahim for 35 years, explained how it impacted him:

Yesterday my customer of 10 years took a bulk of the orders but could not pay me. He owes me close to Rs 3000 (equivalent to 33.58 GBP)⁶⁹ but did not have the cash. He said he will repay me in cheque, but I don't have a bank account. This would mean we have to open bank accounts. Another headache added to our ongoing hardships. These days they (the banks) create a lot of trouble with Aadhaar cards We cannot stop working, but without the cash how will we buy our raw materials? At this rate poor people will die on the street.

(Interview conducted on 21.11.16).

⁶⁸ For more see *Demonetisation Decoded: A Critique of India's Currency Experiment* by economists Jayati Ghosh, C.P. Chandrasekhar and Prabhat Patnaik. In their review of the policy the authors reiterate that none of the targeted aims have been fulfilled, and it was a mere political move to draw attention from more pressing issues in the country (Ghosh, Chandrasekhar and Patnaik, 2017).

⁶⁹ This roughly amounts to 30% of his monthly income.

Scindia's words helped me understand the specificities of the impact of this drastic monetary measure. Unable to use or exchange the cash that was made obsolete, these groups were left without any financial means to sustain their everyday lives. What remained was trust and the strength of social networks to help each other during this time of crisis. In the sudden absence of cash, poor people carried out their everyday transactions in a cycle of debt extension; Scindia's customers owed him, Scindia owed his grocer from where his family fetches the daily supplies and his grocer owed his supplier. I learnt that in Dharavi various cash exchange economies had emerged where the old currency notes were being exchanged for the new ones at exorbitant rates. For instance, for every exchange of the old Rs 500 note, the buyer would charge between Rs 100-250 (20%-50%) and for Rs 1000 notes between Rs 400 to Rs 500 (40%-50%). Respondents complained how much money they were losing in this and even requested me to exchange some of the cash for them. It was around this time that many people from the community approached me for either renewing their old bank accounts or setting up new ones, all of which required an Aadhaar card or the Unique Identification Number.⁷⁰ They hoped that with their bank accounts they would be able to avoid the spurious economy of cash exchange in which they lost more than half of their monthly income.

The process of registering for an Aadhaar card is straightforward, on paper. The website of the Unique Identification Authority of India, the nodal agency that administers the Aadhaar cards, has the following procedures listed for the enrolment:

⁷⁰ Although signing up for an Aadhaar card is voluntary, increasingly it is being made mandatory to access any government entitlements, even in state-run banks.

The Aadhaar enrolment process includes visiting Enrolment Centre, filling the enrolment form, getting demographic and biometric data captured, submitting proof of Identity and address documents, before collecting acknowledgement slip containing Enrolment ID. The highlights of Aadhaar enrolment are:

Aadhaar enrolment is free of cost.

You can go to any authorized Aadhaar enrolment centre anywhere in India with your proof of identity and proof of address documents.

UIDAI process accepts **wide range of PoI (Proof of Identity) and PoA (Proof of Address) documents**. View the list of supporting documents. Common proofs of identity and address are election photograph ID card, Ration card, passport and driving license.

Photograph ID cards like PAN card and Govt ID cards are permissible for identity proof. Address proof documents also include water - electricity - Landline telephone bills for the last three months.

In case you do not have above common proofs, Certificate of Identity having photograph issued by Gazetted Officer/Tehsildar on letterhead is also accepted as PoI. Certificate of Address having photograph issued by MP or MLA /Gazetted Officer/Tehsildar on letterhead or by Village Panchayat head or its equivalent authority (for rural areas) is accepted as valid PoA.

Even if someone in a family does not have individual valid documents, the resident can still enrol if his/her name exists in family entitlement document. In this case the **Head of Family** in entitlement document needs to be enrolled first with valid PoI & PoA document. The head of the Family can then introduce other members in the family while they are enrolling. UIDAI accepts many document types as Proof of Relationship. Please View the list of supporting documents.

Where there are no documents available, resident may also take the help of Introducers available at the enrolment centre. The **Introducers** are notified by the Registrar. For further details please contact office of the concerned Registrar.

(Aadhaar Enrolment - Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) | Government of India, no date)

In order to initiate the enrolment of the respondents, I followed these procedures listed on the website. My first task was to contact the ‘authorized’ Aadhaar enrolment centre in the area listed on the website, however this was a limited success as two out of the three phone numbers of the contact persons listed were not reachable. The person who responded to my call refused to entertain the applications of the respondents on hearing that they were footpath dwellers, and declined to accept their other supporting

documents that verified their current address. It was the respondents who informed me of the ‘outsourced’⁷¹ enrolment centres that were running in Dharavi and in the slum of Naya Nagar, along with the various quotations of the identity ‘packages’ that ranged from Rs 500 to Rs 1300 (equivalent to 5.6-14.59 GBP).⁷² Comprising various combinations of identity documents, these, ‘informal’ centres, one could argue, are exploitative and extortionist mechanisms that promise people legality (Rao, 2013; Datta, 2016). However in conditions of marginalisation by the wider city and institutional forces, it is these “illicit yet, ordered initiatives” (Rao, 2013, p. 11) that enable people to inch closer to citizenship claims. Documents, although “malleable and constructed on the one hand, yet take on an aura of irrefutability on the other” (Tarlo, 2003, p. 9 in Rao 2013, p. 13) and it is this materiality and facticity of documents that gives them authority. Unable to find an enrolment centre that would register the respondents as per the established procedures, we decided to pick a centre that we got to know was open to “negotiations”. An acquaintance of Rekha had informed her that one centre in Nayi Basti charged less for Aadhaar enrolment compared to the one in Dharavi and if the applicant took more people, the person was likely to get a discount.

5.8 Getting the Aadhaar

One Wednesday evening in February, I went with four of the respondents to Nayi Basti. The enrolment centre (henceforth referred as the ‘shop’) was prominently located, bordering the dense slum of Naya Nagar. A huge crowd had gathered inside the tiny shop that was barely 20 square metres. A long rectangular table divided the already tiny

⁷¹ I found out that these enrolment centres were outsourced from authorised personnel whose names were actually listed on the website.

⁷² 500-1300 rupees is equivalent to 5.6 - 14.59 GBP approximately.

room and made it even smaller. On the other side of the table two young men, also residents of the slum, were administering the process. The ‘main person’ (henceforth), in a skull-cap and beard, dressed in a long white shirt and trousers, appeared firm and experienced. He looked younger than he behaved. His assistant, who looked even younger than him, was sitting next to him and did the initial work of screening. The room had a coat of green paint and on the table three computers were mounted, one machine to capture fingerprints and one machine for the iris scan. Apart from these the only other infrastructure was a printer. One of the computer monitors faced the applicants. The scene inside was chaotic as people leaned over the table requesting that they be served first. A young woman asked them to take her application before others because her infant was left unattended at home, while another elderly woman said she could not stand for too long, and yet another woman said that she needed to hurry up because she had to fill water for her household from the public tap before it ran out. When the chaos was at its peak the man on the other side of the table shouted and asked everyone to leave. As we entered, the main person rudely told us to wait outside, intimidating those accompanying me. However, considering that the room hardly accommodated more than four ‘customers’, we thought it would be better to wait outside.

Our turn came after one hour, all this while we were standing outside next to the car repair yards. I observed from their inquisitive glances that the men in the shop had noticed me. I am not sure whether this was because of my appearance, which was obviously of a different class than everyone else, or because they were suspicious of me, especially as I was taking photographs of the surrounding area. Considering there had been instances of official crackdowns on ‘illicit’ enrolment centres, I suspected that the

men were apprehensive and that they thought I was carrying out surveillance in disguise. When we entered the shop, the main person asked Sarita, one of the respondents accompanying me, about me but did not make direct conversation with me. As the customers paid money to the main man while leaving, that is when the two men administering the process glanced at me again. The atmosphere was tense, but I gathered courage to ask “isn’t Aadhaar enrolment free?” to which the man firmly replied “not here, go see outside”. When my respondents had finished and were about to hand over Rs 300 (equivalent to 3.10 GBP), I told the men, “you know what you are doing is wrong, and I can report you.” Without responding to me he told the respondents to pay Rs 100 (equivalent to 1.13 GBP), drastically reducing the price. As we stepped out I took a look at the banner that was hung on the entryway that read: “Aadhaar Pajikaran Kendra” (Aadhaar Enrolment Centre) in bold and a message below stated: “Aadhaar Enrollment (sic.) is ... and voluntary.” I later realised that a word had been blanked out. I took a photograph and left hurriedly. It was only later that evening when I was reflecting on the fieldwork and looking at the photographs that I realised that, amidst the tension, I had missed a vital part of the message, the white blank portion that read “free” (Figure 5.9).



Figure 5.9 A banner outside the Aadhaar enrolment centre that mentions it is ‘voluntary’ but covers the ‘free’ aspect of it.

Photograph credit: Author. Date: 15.02.17

To a great extent the photograph (Figure 5.9) clarified my confusion about how documents such as the Aadhaar card are obtained by navigating ‘formal’ channels. The removal of the word “free” is not just an open defiance of the official directives (as stated on the UIDAI website), but is instead an invitation to people constrained by official procedures to participate in the formal realm. It is indicative of the circumventions (Anjaria and McFarlane, 2011) that the poor engage in to address the “radical discrepancies and disconnections” (Hansen and Verkaaik, 2009, p. 21) that the city pushes them into. The banner was “neither fully visible to an outside gaze, nor officially codified, but also neither concealed nor secret” (*ibid.*). It is a good example of what Hansen and Verkaaik (2009) term as urban infra-power, “a web of connections and structures of solidarity, fear, desire and affect that traverse communities and

neighbourhoods” (p. 20). The shop therefore became more than just an enrolment hub; the way people approached the two men with requests for various types of documentation gave the place the character of a problem-solving centre. Expressed through the blanking-out of the word “free”, this place is symbolic of people navigating their way through official hurdles. One of the clauses of enrolling for the Aadhaar is that, in the absence of documents, a certified individual can act as an “introducer”. These two men were therefore acting as “introducers” to all those who approached them with inadequate or no documents. As long as they are receiving their remuneration for the services rendered, individuals like the introducers list whatever information their applicants are providing them, including those that mention the footpath as their official address.

On our way back from the enrolment centre, Rekha told me that I should not have gotten into an argument with the men. She warned me that it was unwise to intimidate them by threatening to report the centre. Her words indicated that these are the processes through which the footpath dwellers get things done, and this might put their relationship with the men in jeopardy. She hinted that I would leave, but it is people like these who would continue to cooperate and support people like her in navigating official channels. I had tried explaining to her that she had been exploited through the “corrupt” practice of extorting money for a service that is meant to be free. It was only later I realised that perhaps no other place in the city would “legally” enrol Aadhaar cards for them. This in turn would mean that without the Aadhaar cards that the Modi reform made even more necessary they would not be able to open their bank accounts. These agents, who are also arguably within the same social and spatial environment, then acquire the role of “urban specialists” (Hansen and Verkaaik, 2009) who skilfully steer

through the formal and informal, the legal and illegal layers of the city. As a privileged city dweller and as someone conscious of individual rights, corruption to me appears as an exploitative and unjust practice of exhorting the poor. It serves “as a cultural, semantic, and moral rubric that expresses and shapes a sense of structural injustice in this moment of sharpening urban inequality” (Doshi and Ranganathan, 2017, p. 183). However, for the footpath dwellers I accompanied, paying for the Aadhaar card was just one more mechanism of interdependency (Simone, 2004) through which they could access services that are legally denied to them. The obtaining of Aadhaar cards points towards another crucial point, that people often selectively make themselves visible in the city, and the desire for being inscribed in the legal realms is not necessarily total. The Aadhaar cards were delivered to the respective applicants within one month to their address on the footpath, of course after they arranged for the cards to be brought to them through their established social networks.⁷³

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter has examined how poor people navigate the various obstacles they face in their everyday lives to survive in the city. Through the elaboration of two vignettes, I have shown how people circumvent official actions and procedures, and how they manoeuvre through the formal and legal realms of the city in order to remain in place, as well as to make claims to services within the city. While these navigations help people to retain their dwelling, it also helps them to make fresh claims to services in order to cope with the city better.

⁷³ See Chapter 1 to understand how the Aadhaar cards were delivered.

The chapter began with an ordinary image of a regular practice in Mumbai where a police barricade has been appropriated into the domestic lives of the footpath dwellers. This is a typical example of re-appropriating official property intended to regulate the city. It speaks to the blurred boundaries between the state and society, a theme I have explored throughout the chapter. Through the first case study I argued that persistence is made possible not just by remaining in place, but also by temporarily moving away. To illustrate this, I included a discussion on the practical and social use of the wall along which respondents dwell. The walls form an important material in organising everyday forms of dwelling, as well as in enabling them to escape. The ways people use the walls highlight the characteristics of dwelling. For instance, the inscriptions on the wall show how people remain attached to their places even when not physically present. This also reveals the specific kinds of spatial tensions that emerge during times of crises, such as a municipal raid. Materials such as the wall, which are often regarded as creating exclusions, are very important for people who use them as a shield from official actions. In other words, people make use of these urban materials to navigate their everyday hardships with the hope of retaining their places in the city.

Through the second vignette of the Aadhaar card application, I studied how people register themselves in the formal spheres of the city. Here, persistence is not just spatial but representational, i.e. documents recognise the footpath as a residential space, contradicting the laws that prohibit this practice. However, these navigations are rife with risks and surviving the city through them comes at various costs. A news article highlighting the practices within the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) in Mumbai, reported on the experiences of Rekha, one of the key respondents, in her endeavour to access the service. It begins with an account of a miscarriage she had in

2010 after falling from the wall while heavily pregnant. The article reports that Rekha had two miscarriages and the lack of access to the ICDS scheme, despite her being entitled to it, left her with no choice but to take recourse to private clinics (Sengupta, 2013). In describing the ways people circumvent the raids and navigate the acquisition of official documents, this chapter aims to highlight the various risks that people undertake every day, and show that while navigational practices enable people to dwell, nevertheless the association with a place is always highly precarious.

6 Persisting between Contestations

6.1 Introduction

As my fieldwork was drawing to a close, the municipality had hurriedly constructed a toilet block on the footpath, amidst tremendous objections from the residents of the area (see Figure 3.1). This controversial project, which I document in this chapter, extends my research in three ways. This chapter answers my third research question: how do contradictory spatial claims enable the persistence of urban poor groups in the city? First, it unsettles some of the dominant assumptions about the poor as encroachers, since we see in this chapter that sometimes it is instead the state that encroaches. Second, this chapter shows that while spatial contestations over the footpath pave the way towards opening up critical questions of public space, it is often unclear who exactly constitutes the public. Rather, ‘the public’ in this context is not inclusive of all people in the city, but gets defined according to dominant narratives of belonging in the city, from which the poor are often excluded (Fernandes, 2006; Ghertner, 2012). This chapter shows how elite citizens tend to control the built environment by relying on a discourse of rights, but also by defining the limits of who should be allowed to use public utilities. And finally, the vignette that I construct in this chapter through several empirical accounts, indicates that although revanchist discourses are being framed among the elites in the city to remove markers of poverty, these groups do not always succeed in their efforts. In other words, urban poor groups continue dwelling by persistence.

The completion of the toilet block on the footpath with the full sanction of the municipality alludes to the contradictory practices of the state that I delineated in the

previous chapter. By building the toilet block, the municipality violated its own regulations of not permitting any construction in a “public place”. This chapter shows that as the contestations unravel on the ground, it becomes evident that the removal of encroachments is not the top priority for the municipality. I argue that the footpath dwellers persist because of the state’s lukewarm implementation of the encroachment removal actions. While the previous chapter expounded on negotiations with the state, this chapter looks at the silences of the state, thereby elaborating on the wilful ignorance of state actors (Anjaria, 2009; Anand, 2011).

Methodologically, paying attention to the toilet block (see Figure 3.1) brought me into direct ethnographic contact with agents - members of the local bureaucracy, elite residents and journalists – with whom I had not previously interacted. I decided to follow these ethnographic encounters as they enabled me to understand the layers of contestation over the footpath beyond the footpath dwellers themselves. Prior to this, while cognisant of the pavement as a contested space, I was reading the contestations through the lives of the footpath dwellers. The account developed here unsettles often binary assumptions about spaces in the city being contested by people regarded as “encroachers” versus “the rightful users”, but points instead towards the multifaceted nature of urban tensions between the state and elite residents, elite residents and footpath dwellers, political representatives and elite residents, and so forth. In this chapter, I will argue that contestations over the construction of a public toilet (that is linked to the issue of footpath dwellers) is not so much about staging public grievances, but instead highlights larger questions of upper-class⁷⁴ residents’ framing terms of

⁷⁴ I use this term to describe both the middle class and elites. I use the term middle class particularly when referring to the members of Zameen ALM, even though some members in the group are very affluent. The usage is intended to set this group apart from urban poor groups, in this context the respondents among the footpath dwellers.

citizenship, contradictory state practices and the flexible implementation of the law. While the previous chapter focussed on people's agency, this chapter looks at how state practices enable the dwelling by persistence of the footpath dwellers. By highlighting the multifaceted nature of these contestations, I will show that the persistence of the footpath dwellers is made possible through these (often) unresolved tensions.

6.2 Introducing the “AC Toilet in Mahim”

The photograph (Figure 6.1) portrays a “functioning” toilet block on the Shanti Nagar footpath in Mahim that was completed after I exited the field site. A casual look at the photograph shows the clean, sanitized appearance of the exterior of the public toilet. Local newspapers also reported that the interiors of the toilet were clean and well-kept, an anomaly from the way public toilets are usually used and maintained in Indian cities (Phadke, Ranade and Khan, 2009; Sen and Thakker, 2011; Chaplin, 2017). More importantly, the photograph shows women entering the toilet block, yet another aberration considering that there is a profound disparity in the provision of public toilets in Indian cities for women, compared to men. As Phadke, Ranade and Khan emphasise in their chapter “Why Loiter”, “If we had to pick one tangible symbol of male privilege in the city, the winner hands-down would be the public toilet” (2009, p. 79). While this imbalance in the provision of public toilets is a challenge for working women across the city, it is even more stark for lower-class women, who not only are unable to use public toilets, but have inadequate access to sanitation in their domestic spheres (Desai, McFarlane and Graham, 2015). As was evident from the accounts of respondents, poor women cope with this inadequate access to a crucial biological need by disciplining their bodies to avoid shame and humiliation (Sen and Thakker, 2011; Truelove, 2011).



Figure 6.1 The completed toilet block on Shanti Nagar footpath

Photograph credit: Anto Antony. Date: 23.10.17

The photograph of the organised toilet block portrays the ordered nature of the urban. Local news agencies reporting on this toilet block consistently mention the word ‘AC’ (air-conditioning), another deviation from the norm for public toilets in Mumbai. Therefore, in many ways this utility, built for the “public”, is an exception from the established practices of public sanitation provisions in Mumbai. The toilets are not only well-maintained and clean but are also apparently luxurious. The construction of luxury toilets across Mumbai is a relatively recent initiative (Mundle, 2018) under the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), a national policy initiative with the aim to “achieve universal sanitation coverage” (*Swachh Bharat Mission - Gramin, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation*, no date). Originally targeted at rural

households, this mission also focuses on accelerating the provision of “dignified” sanitation to urban areas, particularly to slums and lower income neighbourhoods. More recently, the focus of the mission has been on public places with a specific emphasis on providing “luxury” toilets. This points towards an important shift in the way the “public” is constructed; it is no more the hardworking masses who have to make do with the “dirty”, “stinking” sanitation facilities or relieve themselves in the open (Mundle, 2018). Rather this “public” is well deserving of the privileges of air-conditioning. Who is this public?

This public comprises the “new-middle class”, who “form civic and neighbourhood organizations in order to reclaim public space and consolidate a style of living that can adequately embody its self-image as the primary agent of the globalizing city and nation” (Fernandes, 2006, p. xxiii). The footpath dwellers definitely do not fit this definition of the public. As I will elaborate later, although this public toilet is less than five metres from their dwelling units, respondents did not use the utility and they continued to either fight with the gate-keepers of another decrepit toilet⁷⁵ a little further away, or relieve themselves along the railway tracks.

During my fieldwork I came across several accounts of hardship that the respondents, particularly adolescent girls and women, had to endure in order to

⁷⁵ I had tried to address the deliberate restriction of access of these women to the public toilet in the field site, however I was unsuccessful in the attempt. My plan was to leverage the provisions within the Right to Pee Campaign, that guarantees women free access to public urinals (Yardley, 2012). To ensure that people are made aware of this, the provisions of the campaign mandates the public urinal to display that the service is meant to be free for women. On the day I went to the public toilet to get respondents’ access, I found the board missing. I asked the gate-keeper about the board to which he responded by saying that I could use the toilet for free, as other women streamed into the public urinal, silently placing coins on the table. The man had obviously realised that I was aware of this mandatory provision and by deliberately not displaying it he was violating the provisions. This explains his insistence and lack of protest in letting me use the toilet for free. The next day, I went back with three of the female respondents after a lot of convincing that they would be allowed to use the toilet for free henceforth. While that day, they gained entry with me, they were not allowed to use it later when I was not there.

address this crucial biological need. I learnt that the women of the community wake up very early, perhaps even before dawn, to defecate along the railway tracks. The urge to urinate during the day is controlled through the disciplining of the body, by drinking less water, going in big groups or even devising discreet ways to relieve themselves by the street side. One of the respondents told me that the basket making women wear long skirts which really help, because they can just squat on the road and nobody would realise anything. Even so, accessing the open space along the railway track meant climbing the wall that separates the tracks from the footpath, an act that was difficult or impossible for elderly women, expectant mothers or people with physical disabilities. I asked why they did not go to a public toilet that was about 100 metres from where they lived, adjoining the station. I was informed that they avoided using these toilets because the gate-keepers often humiliated them and demanded exorbitant sums of money to prevent them from using the services.

One morning as I reached the field site, I noticed that things on the footpath looked different from the previous day. It was the respondents who informed me about the toilet, the construction of which had started out of the blue. By the time I left the field, the toilet block was constructed and inaugurated. Through subsequent interactions with respondents over the phone, I learnt that they were not allowed to use the new air-conditioned toilet. An acquaintance from the field shared the photograph (Figure 6.1) of the completed toilet block with me (see Figure 3.1). During my fieldwork, I was able to follow the different phases of its construction. From discussions with the contractor and the labourers, I learnt that the toilet project

was being executed under the Swachh Bharat Mission and had been delegated to an NGO called Karm Bahujan Magasvargly Sanstha⁷⁶.



Figure 6.2 Construction of toilet on the footpath began over-night.

Photograph credit: Author. Date: 27.05.17

The ground was dug up, there were heaps of cement and bricks on the road and a few people had erected camps adjacent to the respondents' dwelling units (Figure 6.2). In other circumstances, occupying space on the footpath would have been met with resistance from the respondents, but on this occasion they accommodated the working men and made space for their temporary resting structures. Respondents

⁷⁶ At the time when I searched for the NGO online, I could not find any of its credentials. However, the notice board that was displayed by the BMC had mentioned the contact details of the NGO. Very recently when I searched for the NGO again, I came across an online news portal that mentioned a stalled toilet project that was being executed by this NGO. The article mentions that the toilet project was stalled as the residents of Matunga, a neighbourhood very close to Mahim, raised objections about the toilet block claiming the land to be theirs.

knew that the men, working on behalf of the municipality, would eventually leave. Therefore picking a fight with these labourers would only attract the wrath of the municipality. In fact, I noticed that a natural alliance had built up between the construction workers and the respondents. During the process of construction, it was the respondents that supplied tea and water to the construction workers, some men from the group were entrusted by the builders to watch over the building materials when the work was stalled, and I observed a general spirit of cooperation between the two groups. This cooperation seemed significant to me for two reasons. One, while respondents also became involved in its construction, when the toilet was built they were not allowed to use it despite living adjacent to it. Second, while elite residents of the area were fighting with the municipality to stop the toilet project, the scene on the ground was very different. Both the construction workers and respondents, despite being so closely involved in it, had no voice over the future of the construction, yet together they were participating in the completion of the project. As mentioned before, the respondents did not object to the presence of these construction workers because they were working for the municipality. Not sharing space or objecting to the construction would attract negative attention. Therefore, although the respondents were aware that they would not be able to use this toilet in the future, they cooperated and even participated in its completion instead of objecting or creating any form of hindrance. Dwelling by persistence is about remaining inconspicuous, it signifies the formation of social alliances and cooperation in order to retain a place in the city.

In the subsequent sections I will elaborate on the contestations around the construction of the toilet block.

6.3 The objection

In this section I include a letter of objection that was submitted by members of Zameen (in Hindi, earth) Area Locality Management (henceforth ALM)⁷⁷ to the Deputy Municipal Commissioner - Zone II of the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC or MCGM, used interchangeably throughout the thesis). This letter was a plea to revoke the permission that was granted to build the toilet block on the Shanti Nagar pavement in Mahim. It is a reflection of the underlying concerns of the members of the ALM regarding the completion of the toilet block. I have presented the letter verbatim in order to highlight all the concerns that the members of the ALM cite, and to draw attention to the specific language and phrases that highlight the dominant upper class narratives that shape rights-based citizenship in the city, aesthetic discourse on public space and the justification for the displacement of urban poor groups.

⁷⁷ I will explain the significance of these civic bodies later in the chapter.

ZAMEEN ALM

(MCGM Regn. No.: ALM/15/GN) Email: zameenalm@yahoo.com

Mahim Mata Building, Flat No.1, Gr Floor, Marinagar, Opp. Mahim Railway Station, Senapati Bapat Marg, Mahim (W), Mumbai – 400016

[Our Motto: Cleaner, Greener, Safer & Encroachment Free Mahim]

Tel. : 022-24464369

To,

Shri Anant L. Vagaralkar

Deputy Municipal Commissioner – Zone 11,

F/South Ward Office Building, 3rd Floor,

Dr Ambedkar Marg, Parel

Mumbai – 400012

Tel: 022-24150400, Fax – 022-24112269

Kind Attention: Shri Anant L. Vagaralkar – Dy. Mun. Commissioner – Zone II

Sub. : Revocation of permission (if already given) to construct proposed toilet block on footpath opposite Mahim Railway Station West on Senapati Bapat Marg i.e. between Street Pole No.:SBM-73 & SBM-75; which is in violation/contrary to the permission for adoption cum beautification duly approved and sanctioned by your kindself in favour of Zameen ALM (vide your letter no.: MDF/4112 dt. 06.01.17 forwarded to the Asst. Commissioner of GN Ward) for the entire stretch of footpath outside India Govt. Mint Staff Quarters i.e. from Street Pole No.: SBM – 73 to SBM-93.

- Sir we request you to intervene in the matter and revoke the construction of the proposed toilet at above area as your kindself has already allotted this entire stretch of footpath to our ALM for the benefit and safety of pedestrians as well as for beautification.... Besides, residents in and around the proposed area of construction of toilet block have very strongly opposed the move for another toilet as there already exists two saunchalays which are barely 100 meters from the proposed one.

Dear Respected Shri Anant Vagaralkarsaheb,

While we thank you very much for approving and sanctioning our adoption cum beautification request (vide your letter no.: MDF/4112 dt. 06.01.17) covering entire stretch of footpath outside India Govt. Mint Staff Quarters which is opposite Mahim Railway Station West on Senapati Bapat Marg i.e. from Street Pole No.: SBM-73 to SBM-93 (photocopy of approval letter and reminder for commencing beautification programme received from Asst. Commissioner of GN Ward bearing nos.: ACGN/51663/AEM(M) dt.07.04.17 and ACGN/018/AEM(M)/SR dt.18.04.17 are attached herewith for your kind perusal and necessary action), the resident members of Zameen ALM as well as people of Mahim were shocked to see the footpath being dug up/excavated by some unknown contractors on Monday evening, 8th May, 2017 (photographs of excavation of footpath attached herewith for your kind information and necessary action please).

On questioning the contractor's labourers/supervisor, we were told that they have been given permission to build a toilet block/sauchalya at the above area. However, the requisite permissions and also relevant boards/barricades were not put up at the excavated site displaying the nature of work/permission granted/date for commencement & conclusion of work/contact details of nodal officer, etc. which is mandatory before starting any trenching/excavation work as laid down by H'ble Municipal Commissioner of MCGM vide his circular no.:MGC/A/6785 dt.06-03-17.

Sir, you will appreciate that we have not yet given the undertaking on Rs 200/- stamp paper [to enable us to get the formal/official beautification permission from GN Ward] as the encroachments on entire stretch of footpath i.e. from Street Pole No.: SBM-73 to SBM-93 have not yet been cleared and to make matters worse; now a part of the footpath (i.e. portion of the footpath from Street Pole No.: SMB-73 to SBM-75) has been illegally dug up for a proposed construction of sauchalya (toilet block) without any boards being put up displaying the details of the work that is being carried out.

Sir, you will also appreciate that we have been working very hard since 2008 to get back our footpaths

merely for the use of pedestrians for their safety and also to ease smooth flow of vehicular traffic and therefore in view of the same; we would request you to kindly intervene in the matter and instruct the Asst. Commissioner of the GN Ward to revoke any permission that might have been granted for the construction of the proposed toilet block at a portion of the area (i.e. between Street Pole No.: SBM-73 & SBM-75) as this area has already been given to us for adoption cum beautification which, kindly note, will be used exclusively for the general public/pedestrians for their safety and a fraction of the same for beautification.

Sir, it is needless to state that no permission should be given to construct the proposed sauchalya at above area as primarily; we already have two sauchalyas (toilet blocks) which are barely 100 meters away from the proposed construction of toilet block (one which is situated on footpath near the 3rd gate south end of Mahim Railway Station and the other which is a few meters away, i.e. near Johnson and Johnson Co.).

While we are not against any social programme that might benefit the public at large the people of Mahim are opposing this proposed construction of toilet for several reasons – the first being that there already exists two large toilet blocks which are barely 100 metres away from the proposed construction of this toilet; yet another reason being they allege that anti-social elements will encroach around the toilet and indulge in anti-social activities like drug abuse/prostitution and eve-teasing; the area around the proposed toilet will encourage slums/hawkers and other engineering works, the people of Mahim want public funds to be utilized wisely. Kindly note that the proposed construction of toilet block will defeat the very purpose for which adoption cum beautification permission has been approved and sanctioned by your kindself to Zameen ALM and it will continue to jeopardise the safety of pedestrians as there have been around 35 deaths on this stretch of the road (as per RTI figures obtained since 2008 till December 2016) due to unavailability of walking space on this stretch of footpath. It may also be kindly noted that it is the intention of the Municipal Commissioner of MCGM to decongest footpaths in and around all public conveniences so that not only the residents of the area, but also general public can get non-interrupted access to railway stations, bus-stops; market places; places of worship and educational institutions to name a few and hence the proposed toilet block should not be permitted to be constructed.

Sir, in view of the above we would most humbly and sincerely request you to kindly intervene in the matter and instruct the Asst. Commisioner of GN Ward – Shri Ramakant Biradar to revoke the permission (if already given) to construct the toilet block and if at all toilets are required to be built for the use of the general public under any Swachach Bharat Yojana Scheme, then the same should be constructed at areas where it is most required i.e. near slum colonies where it would benefit the under privileged and marginalized sections of society.

We are sure you will find the opposition/objections/grievances of the people of Mahim most genuine and hope that you will take appropriate action in the matter and instruct the Asst. Commissioner of GN Ward to revoke the permission (if already given) to construct the proposed toilet block on footpath outside Indian Govt. Mint Staff Quarters (i.e. between Street Pole No.: SBM-73 & SBM-75) which incidentally has already been given to our ALM for adoption cum beautification (i.e. entire stretch of the footpath outside Indian Govt. Mint Staff Quarters from Street Pole No.: SBM-73 to SBM-93).

Hope to receive your immediate response in the matter and oblige.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,
for and on behalf of Zameen ALM
& Residents of Mahim

Herman Dias
Hon. Secretary

Encl. :a.a.

6.4 Civic bodies and citizen's associations, Zameen ALM

The ALM scheme was initiated by the MCGM in 1996, as one of a number of measures intended to decentralise governance in urban areas. It was ratified through the Seventy Fourth Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, which gave voice to resident welfare associations and NGOs in representing civic issues to the state (Baud and Nainan, 2008; Ghertner, 2011). The key focus of the ALMs was initially to manage solid waste, but over the years their scope was expanded, and they have acquired the nature of a “movement of citizen-local government interface” (Baud and Nainan, 2008, p. 485). Advancing far beyond the scope of solid waste management, ALMs in the city have taken on the civic (and I would stress moral) responsibility for the maintenance of neighbourhoods, with the sanction of the local government. Anjaria attributes this to “an important shift in urban politics in India” that is “framed in terms of quality of life, access to good governance, and freedom from governmental inefficiency” (2016, p. 27). According to Nair, with the proliferation of citizens' groups comprising elite residents, Indian cities have witnessed the emergence of “more muscular middle-class residents' welfare associations” (Nair, 2005, p. 345) whose concerted activism is directed at the city's poor. The antipathy of the newly invigorated middle class towards the city's poor is evident in a 1998 editorial written by a lawyer, Raju Moray:

The plight of the pedestrians in Mumbai is pitiable. Most roads in Mumbai (including newly laid Development Plan roads) do not have footpaths. And footpaths, wherever they exist, are encroached upon by hawkers. So walkers, joggers [etc.] ... [are] constantly at risk of being knocked down by passing vehicles. The right to life of such citizens (a fundamental right guaranteed by Article 21 of our Constitution) is jeopardized daily (Moray, 1998 in Anjaria, 2016, p. 27).

While Baud and Nainan (2008) call these “invited spaces” of collaboration between governments and private sector and citizen movements, Anjaria (2009) argues that these citizen’s groups significantly reconfigure the nature of citizenship. Unsettling the assumption that neoliberalism is deployed in a straightforward way through the working of the state against the poor, Anjaria argues that these civic bodies play a significant role in framing belonging in the city. Through their activism in the city these citizen groups have shaped the “new legal discourse on squatters” (Anjaria, 2016, p. 27). These “invited spaces” are therefore predicated on exclusionary lines and the privilege of participation is only available to those with tenure rights in the city. Thus ‘participation’ in these spaces is not just prohibitive to those without specific affiliations, but is cloaked by a language of rights which comes with being residents of certain neighbourhoods (Ghertner, 2012). Very often, as in the case I am about to elaborate, participation in “invited spaces” involves an annihilation of spaces (in terms of their actual removal) for certain groups like the footpath dwellers. However, this case demonstrates that this not a straightforward process and it is the multifaceted contradictions within the urban that make space for contested claims.

I learned of Zameen ALM during an interview with the Associate Engineer of the G/North Ward, Mr Shrikant Gupte⁷⁸. He mentioned Zameen ALM in passing while stressing on the challenges of removing the “vagrants”. In this context he mentioned that one of the “biggest clearance drives” that took place a few years ago (in 2013) was initiated along with Zameen ALM. As mentioned in the previous chapter, clearance drives, i.e. the act of the municipality removing “encroachments” on the footpaths, is also a periodic activity and in official language is referred to as “taking

⁷⁸ Name and designation of the official has been changed upon request.

action”. While speaking of the “vagrants”⁷⁹ living outside Mahim station, he elaborated that it had been impossible to remove them despite sustained efforts in the past and present. One such effort was the initiative taken by an Advanced Locality Management group, Zameen ALM, to ‘beautify’ the footpath. Although the effort to beautify the footpath was undertaken by the elite residents living in private accommodation in the area, it had the sanction of the local municipal body. When I was conducting my fieldwork there were no traces of the “beautification” and the elaborate blue-print⁸⁰ was a mere document. A subsequent conversation with a family living on the footpath told me that the “buildingwale” (people staying in the middle-class/elite buildings) had tried to plant trees in small enclosures on the pavement. Initially the footpath dwellers were looking after the saplings and watering them, acting as de facto custodians of the plants. However, when they realised that the planting of the saplings was an initial investment for the beautification of the rest of the footpath, which meant their eventual removal, they uprooted all the saplings and iron enclosures. Persistence here has been expressed through the sustained attempts by the footpath dwellers to directly counter any actions of the citizens’ groups that threaten their dwelling. These “struggles and gains of the agents” are not directed at the state, as Bayat suggests, but at the “rich” (Bayat, 2000, p. 546), who are the elite residents of the neighbourhood who express open hostility towards the footpath dwellers. Through this example I reiterate my point about the multifaceted nature of urban contestations which enables the footpath

⁷⁹ Throughout our conversation, Mr Gupte referred to the pavement dwellers as “vagrants”, suggesting it is an ‘official’ word. He used this term to distinguish all those who are not living in slums but squatting in ‘public’ spaces.

⁸⁰ I saw the plan for Beautification of Pavement during a conversation with Herman Dias, but could not get a copy from him despite making several requests for it.

dwellers' dwelling by persistence through the forging of alliances with different actors of the state and in opposition to elite citizens.

As is evident from the letterhead of the organisation, the motto of Zameen ALM is "Cleaner, Greener, Safer and Encroachment Free Mahim". Zameen ALM works as a residents' collective to represent the interests of those living in Mahim. The secretary of Zameen, Mr Herman Dias, told me that the residents' body initially began with the objective of waste management, but that it subsequently acquired a much bigger role, and has increased in membership. In recent years the ALM has been mobilising its members to focus on issues of cleanliness, reducing crime, noise pollution and most importantly, the beautification of the Shanti Nagar pavement. While describing the organisation to me, he boasted of the success of a recent act of judicial activism that ALM was part of, which led to the scrapping of the Rs 39 crore (equivalent to approximately 4.5 million GBP) Mahim Skywalk Project. Mr Dias stressed that infrastructures like the Skywalk increase events of "eve-teasing" and would therefore be detrimental to the moral health of a "peaceful" neighbourhood like Mahim. Eve-teasing,⁸¹ as an expression of misogyny is a term that is very specific to the streets in Indian cities⁸². Put together, these concerns about the safety of the neighbourhood were cloaked in a language of protection that safeguarded the propriety of (upper-class) women and young girls, which the members contended could be achieved through the social and spatial control of their neighbourhood. Scrapping the toilet

⁸¹ "In the Indian term "eve-teasing," the word "eve" alludes to the biblical story of Eve tempting Adam to stray from the path of righteousness. An Oxford English Dictionary definition for "teasing" is "to tempt someone sexually with no intention of satisfying the desire aroused." Both parts of the term put the blame on the woman; she is the temptress who isn't providing something she has promised. The man is therefore fully within his rights to take it forcibly; or at least, his actions or reactions are understandable" (Mohanty, 2013).

⁸² In Chapter 4, I have explained how the presence of the footpath dwellers, are seen both as reducing and increasing instances of "eve-teasing" on the street by different actors.

project and removing the footpath dwellers were measures through which they hoped to regain control over the neighbourhood. I have elaborated on the specific concerns regarding the toilet block in subsequent sections.

6.5 The right of the footpath

I got in touch with the secretary of Zameen ALM, Mr Herman Dias, during the peak of tensions regarding the construction of the toilet block in question (Dhupkar, 2017). The key contention of the members of the ALM, who claimed to represent the interests of the “citizens” in the area, was that it was being constructed without the consent of the residents and in a location that is meant for “public use”. Accusing the municipality, Zameen ALM claimed that the state had faltered in adhering to the regulations of construction, which necessitated obtaining public consent before the commencement of the project. In the documents submitted, public use constituted the ability to walk on and for the ‘beautification’ of the pavement, a task that Zameen ALM had taken up a long time before and had not been able to achieve. The letter cited above acts as a reminder to the municipality that it has been given to Zameen for beautification, and gives explicit directions on how the pavements are to be used, in asserting the demands for the revocation of the permission.

I got invited to the meeting that was meant to voice the concerns of the residents to their ‘closest’ representative⁸³. Contrary to my expectations of attending a meeting in an enclosed private space, the meeting took place outdoors (not on the street) but within the premises of a housing society called New Moti Mahal. When I later asked

⁸³ I use the term ‘closest’ to refer to the hierarchy of political representation in Indian democracy. The 74th Amendment Act was meant to foster decentralisation in urban areas. Local councillors therefore gained significance in being most closely in touch with their constituencies.

Mr Dias why this was, he said that they did not hold the meeting outside on the street to avoid the interference of intruders, whom he hinted were the footpath dwellers. Considering that the issue of the toilet block was linked to the larger question of encroachments on the footpath, the location of the meeting suggested that the ALM members did not consider it necessary to invite anyone from the pavement.

Due to the short notice, I managed to arrive barely in time for when the meeting was scheduled to begin, even though it actually started an hour later, after the councillor arrived (see Gupta, 2012 on the political and bureaucratic tradition of arriving late to meetings). This often signals not just how busy the political representative or high-ranking official is, but also how the time of those attending is considered to be less valuable. This late arrival, which had already enraged the members of the ALM who had been waiting in the heat, thus set the tone of the meeting. Nevertheless, the delay gave me a chance to interact with the members of the ALM and observe the modalities of organising their demands before the councillor. Similar to many public meetings in India, I noticed that men and women were standing in separate groups and that it was men who mostly took over the task of setting the agenda for the meeting. I took this opportunity to interact with some of the members to understand what was going on with the toilet block. Mr Herman Dias introduced me to a senior member of Zameen as the “lady from London” doing research on the “tokri-walas” (basket makers). From the person’s body language and the tone of his questions, I gathered that my topic of research was not something of which he approved. Without asking me about my research he suggested that my research should “end the problem of encroachments” in Mumbai.



Figure 6.3 The meeting of Zameen ALM members with councillor Sheetal Gambhir regarding the toilet block.

Photograph credit: Author. Date: 11.05.2017

One of the first objections, I gathered, was to the placement of the toilet block. The residents who lived adjacent to the block claimed that it would be a nuisance for the residents living around it. Second, some of the women participants told me that toilet blocks are centres of “criminal activities” and they anticipated that this toilet would attract “immoral” activities. In the letter, the anti-social activities that they feared were referred to together as “drug abuse/prostitution and eve-teasing”. Within this ambit of criminality they also categorised the hawkers and all forms of informal living. From the articulation of the objections, one can get a sense of the danger that is associated with public toilets among the middle and upper classes. As a neglected,

under-maintained place, public toilets are centres of criminal activities in the perceptions of the ALM members. It is worth noting here that slum dwellers and hawkers are also included within the ambit of criminality. Concerns over the toilet attracting anti-social activities emerged from normative discourses on the sexual safety of women, primarily unmarried young girls (Phadke, 2013; Shah, 2014). Cloaked in the language of the safe neighbourhood, these discourses view the streets as spaces of moral contamination, or as Kaviraj (1997) articulates, as “intrinsic disorderliness”, which is attempted to be addressed by ordering the space in heteronormative terms. The ordering entails a “performance of morality” through which “honor and respectability for women,... must be continuously managed, negotiated, and performed (Shah, 2014, p. 144). Thus it is not just the safety of the pedestrians, but the control over the sexuality of women that frames discourses around safety in a city that is so fragmented along class, caste and religious lines:

Safety for women then has become increasingly about emptying the streets of other marginal citizens deemed to be a “threat” to women. At the top of this list is the lower-class male (also often unemployed, often lower caste or Muslim), but sex workers, bar dancers and others seen to be in need of surveillance also qualify. In this politics, both those seen as the threat and those perceived to be in danger are rendered illegitimate users of public space (Phadke, 2013, p. 52).

Thus these objections are not benign concerns of safety, but the expressions of “metropolitan space gone out of control” (Rajagopal, 2002, p. 67). However, contrary to assertions that it is often the “despotic state” (*ibid.*) that facilitates the neoliberal growth of cities through the demolition and destruction of the spaces of the poor, in the context of my study it is the citizens’ group that seeks to take control of public space. In upholding the status of the footpath as a public place, the members not only considered the pedestrian as its rightful occupier, but rendered all

other users as “out of place”. In the next section, I will elaborate the outcome of the meeting with the councillor and the nature of the exchanges that further highlighted Zameen ALM’s claim over the footpath.

The third reason presented to the councillor and the municipality was the safety of pedestrians. The construction of the toilet would mean that commuters would have to walk on the road, already a major reason for accidents in Mahim. Members were prepared with the statistics of road accidents in Mahim, obtained through the Right to Information Act (RTI), to back up their case. Finally, they stated that the concerned toilet block’s location was in direct contravention with the plans of the ALM to take over the footpath and beautify it. These objections that were carefully drafted and presented to the councillor, reflect the attitudes of civic bodies as rationalisers of urban space (Anjaria, 2009). They claim that pedestrians have to negotiate the pavements by walking mostly on the street, a very usual practice in Indian cities (Anjaria, 2016; Bandyopadhyay, 2017). The assertion that the footpath ought to be cleared of all “obstructions” (the toilet block) implicitly makes the respondents’ occupation of the pavement responsible for road accidents in Mahim. In doing so they reflect the citizen group’s aspiration for the footpath to be empty, what Nicholas Blomley (1999, 2004) terms as *terra nullius*. They claim that they can put the pavement to better use. In their presentation of this argument, the presence of footpath dwellers has been erased from their spatial imaginary in the context of Mahim and the urban landscape in general. And this is the instance that draws my attention most closely, as the issue of the toilet block in this meeting and in the subsequent discussions intersected with the “issue” of the presence of footpath dwellers. Through the articulation of the beautification of the footpath, the members

asserted an imagined, yet powerful claim over the pavement. As per the blueprints that were shown to me, the beautification of the footpath entailed removing all encroachments, i.e. the pavement dwellers and their dwellings. The plans were clearly devoid of any possibilities for the simultaneous beautifying of the pavements with the coexistence of the current users of the space. In fact the plan⁸⁴ that I saw incorporated designs that, they claimed with pride, would make it difficult for people to use it for any purpose other than walking. The edges of the pavement, I was told, would also be barricaded to minimize accidents and increase the safety of pedestrians. Strategically drafted, the figure of the pedestrian is one who, “by moving through, rather than dwelling in streets ... embodied the normative subject of the public sphere as well as public space” (Anjaria, 2016, p. 28).

6.6 “Citizen” confrontation, politics of digression

The meeting with councillor Sheetal Gambhir was passively confrontational to say the least. The fact that she was heavily pregnant inhibited the possibility of more severe confrontations. If the members had organised themselves by thoroughly preparing to set the agenda for the meeting, the councillor seemed to be well prepared with her responses, most of which seemed like a counter to their objections. She began the meeting by declaring that she had a few things to say before she heard the members express their grievances. From her assertions it was evident that she was aware of the on-going toilet block issue and had already made an attempt to represent their voices at a higher level. It was also evident that she had not been

⁸⁴ The plan that was sanctioned by the BMC office in G/North Ward was shown to me by Herman Dias, however I could not manage to obtain a copy of it.

successful in resolving their grievances and the meeting was a chance for her to regain the confidence of her voters.

She waved a copy of the letter that she had submitted to MCGM communicating the concerns of the residents. I managed to obtain a copy of this letter. She said that the directive for the toilet had come from the ‘centre’ and it was a project under the National Swachh Bharat Yojana (Clean India Mission) and that it was “not being built from the MP/MLA/local councillors funds”. Mentioning the funding of the project seemed crucial in order to communicate to those present that the project was not financed from her resources. By doing this she not only distanced herself from the project and managed to imply that she was with her voters, but she also highlighted her weak position within the party hierarchy. She further added “tomorrow if you see my photograph on the toilet, please don’t assume that I have given the funds for it.” Her consistent emphasis on not funding the project points towards the political nature of urban (especially infrastructure) projects and reflects how macro-political directives have an impact at the micro-level. Being a representative of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) she was representing the party that got a massive majority mandate in the 2014 parliamentary elections. Within the BJP she was positioned at a level in the party hierarchy where she had direct interactions with her voters. Her condition was precarious from both ends: on not following her party orders she would be reprimanded by senior members, and for not being able to represent the interests of the members of her constituency she would lose the confidence of her voters. Her dilemma was made evident when, at the end of the meeting, she was reminded that she was voted in to power because of her father, Suresh Gambhir’s legacy. The present members of Zameen ALM thereby indicated

to her that they doubted her ability to fulfil her duties towards her constituents. These subtle intimidations were further enabled by the fact that she was a female representative operating in a predominantly male sphere.

People were visibly unhappy with their councillor's opening remarks, which according to some was a deliberate strategy to subvert their anger. Without making it very explicit she hinted at the vulnerability of her position and reassured those present several times that she was in solidarity with the residents, although she could not do anything to stop the construction. She responded categorically to each objection raised by the residents. On the issue of the positioning of the toilet she responded by saying that unlike other public toilets, these toilets were being built with "highly advanced technology"⁸⁵ adhering to "high" standards of health and safety. She assured them that the toilets would not emit any stench, adding that under the scheme these toilets were going to have luxury amenities and were being constructed especially for women commuters, alluding to the assumption that the majority of the users of the toilet would be people who use the Mahim railway station. However, the members retorted that commuters who were mostly in the lower income category would be unlikely to make use of "luxury toilets". It is this particular point that further establishes how citizens' groups act as custodians of urban space: the ALM members did not see any need for a luxury toilet for people belonging to lower economic classes. Furthermore, they stressed that this toilet would not benefit the residents of the neighbourhood as they all had access to toilets in their homes. They also questioned the need for another toilet when there was

⁸⁵ She gave the example of a similar toilet that was built in a North-Western suburb of Mumbai, Kandivali, and spoke about how efficiently it was functioning.

already an existing toilet which commuters could use adjacent to the Mahim railway station, less than 50 metres from the proposed construction site.

In articulating what commuters could and should use, the members of Zameen ALM revealed their vision of a desirable neighbourhood in which the “rightful residents” are property owners. Not only did they decide for other commuters, whom they presumed to come from low income neighbourhoods, what quality of toilets they could use, but in their discussion the potential use of the toilet by another group that was living next to it and which has been inextricably linked to that space in the neighbourhood for some time, was totally absent. Thus, this instance proves that the annihilation of “unwanted” bodies takes place not just through state machineries (as with evictions), but in the everyday narratives and in the imagination of property owners in casting their aspirations for the city. In fact the members expressed that building the toilet on the pavement would be a de facto acknowledgment of the existence of pavement dwellers, as it would not only enable them to use this facility, but would also invite more such groups. Obviously the members of the ALM were completely oblivious to the realities of sanitation access for the pavement dwellers.

It was at this point that the entire focus of the discussion turned towards the presence of the “encroachments”.⁸⁶ In what I sensed was a very tactical shift, the councillor diverted the focus of the meeting away from the issue of the toilet towards the need to pressurise the local government to remove the encroachments. Picking up from their concern on the safety of the pedestrians she stressed that if it is about the safety of commuters then it has already been jeopardised due to the occupation of the pavements by the encroachers. Not just that, but in stating this she also hinted at the

⁸⁶ This is a term that members of Zameen ALM and the councillor used to refer to the pavement dwellers, indicating their clear opposition to the presence of footpath dwellers.

inability of the ALM to raise this issue efficiently with the state. The instigation agitated the members even further and several people began raising their voices. Herman Dias brought out the beautification plan for the pavement and laid it out in front of her, and expressed furiously that they had been trying to raise this issue for several years with the BMC. A burkha-clad woman, who had been standing amongst a group of women who were silent so far shouted out:

Kya baat kar rahe hai aap? Itne saalo se hum BMC mein application dal rahe hain in logo ko hata ne ke liye. Par kuch nahi hota hai. Mudde par baat kijiye.

(What do you mean? We have been submitting an application to the BMC to remove these people for so many years now. But nothing happens. Please don't digress from the issue).

Therefore the Zameen ALM members were both attempting to hold their local representative accountable while also alleging that she was an accomplice in the construction of the toilet. What was also evident in the woman's frustration when she said "but nothing happens", is the claim that the state had failed to act in their interests. She suggested that it is this inaction that makes the state complicit with the footpath dwellers in returning to the footpath even after they have been evicted.

This time Sheetal Gambhir tried another strategy, this time by putting the blame on the people for not objecting to it when the construction started. However this attempt backfired on her as they collectively said that they were not informed about it. In order to stress this they cited the legal obligation of the state to display a notice before the beginning of any construction work. As the letter states:

"On questioning the contractor's labourers/supervisor, we were told that they have been given permission to build a toilet block/sauchalya at the above area. However, the requisite permissions and also relevant boards/barricades were not put up at the excavated site displaying the nature of work/permission

granted/date for commencement & conclusion of work/contact details of nodal officer, etc. which is mandatory before starting any trenching/excavation work as laid down by H'ble Municipal Commissioner of MCGM vide his circular no.: MGC/A/6785 dt.06-03-17" (Zameen ALM letter to MCGM, 2017).

Herman Dias used the phrase "this was done like a thief, in the middle of the night", suggesting that this was not only done without the consent of the residents, but that it also took away the space that was meant for their use. In this articulation of what can be termed as stealth by the state is embedded in an upper class sentiment which considers the apathetic state as negligent towards middle-class needs. In this situation it is the state which flouts its own rules and takes away city space meant for the "citizens". A body of scholars have referred to this as state "informality" (Roy, 2009), where the state engages in its own violations (Ballard and Jones, 2011; D. Ghertner, 2015). Here, the violations are not just in terms of flouting the state's own spatial norms, i.e. constructing a toilet in a "public space", but also that the modality of it did not follow the laid out procedures, in this case informing the public of the construction of the toilet. Zameen ALM's letter thus argues that:

... portion of the footpath from Street Pole No.: SMB-73 to SBM-75) has been illegally dug up for a proposed construction of sauchalya (toilet block) without any boards being put up displaying the details of the work that is being carried out (Zameen ALM letter to MCGM, 2017).

Scholarship that examines how the state justifies its own violations of planning norms, has alluded to the fact that the state bends its own rules to favour the elites (Roy, 2009b). While many instances within Mumbai demonstrate this, the opposite is also true. In this case of the toilet block it can be argued that it is the elites that are defeated in this endeavour. Towards the end of the meeting it had become evident that it was beyond the councillor's capacity to stall the toilet project. By reminding

the councillor of her accountability and rehearsing the legal provisions, the members were strongly hinting at their awareness and capacity to legal recourse. Herman Dias cried out loud to her that “if we could stop the multi-crore skywalk project, then this is nothing. We will move the court if this project continues.”

After the councillor left, the members dispersed and Mr Dias very kindly invited me to his house. His house is the oldest bungalow opposite Mahim station and next to the Moti Mahal ground, where the meeting had just taken place. He told me that his father used to work in the railways and had acquired the place 60 years previously. We walked into a huge living room with wooden flooring. It looked well lived in. His family members moved in and out of the room for some errands or the other. He introduced me to his wife who got us water and soft drinks. He apologised to me for not having air conditioning and having to endure the heat. I assured him that I would be fine and expressed my gratitude for including me in the meeting. We discussed the proceedings of the meeting and the “encroachments” on the footpath. He said that Ms Sheetal Gambhir had recently assumed her political role and she was voted in to power owing to her father Suresh Gambhir’s legacy, noting that “Her public name is Sheetal Suresh Gambhir”. I asked him “do you think she is not trying hard enough to ban the project because it’s sanctioned from her party?” “Exactly”, he replied. By adding that “everyone benefits from these projects”, he also tacitly echoed the popular middle class narratives around corruption (Doshi and Ranganathan, 2017), from which politicians, bureaucrats and builders financially gain from such projects, but it is the middle-class citizens who suffer.

6.7 The compromise

In this section I describe the meeting with the Head Commissioner of the G/North Ward not just as a follow-up to the unresolved meeting with the councillor, but also as a moment to understand how elite citizens turn to the bureaucracy as a form of arbitration. Arbitration of unresolved issues is sought not just because the state here is what Ferguson and Gupta (2002) refer to as vertically encompassed, i.e. the state sits at a higher position and wields power to implement changes, but it is this very authority that is believed would improve the outcome of participation in the “invited spaces” (Baud and Nainan, 2008) in which the citizens seek redressal of their issues. In other words the arbitration was sought because it was believed that the state would support the citizens’ group. For my research this was a chance to witness how, from the outright objection to the toilet block, this meeting at the Head Commissioner’s office transformed into a negotiation over the relocation of the proposed project to another spot. In so doing the ALM attempted not just to claim their control over the footpath to use it for their purpose, but also to remove the footpath dwellers. This becomes particularly important when the Head Commissioner reacts nonchalantly to the issue of the pavement dwellers.

The meeting at the office of the Head Commissioner of G/North Ward, Mr Ratikant Bindre, along with the members of Zameen ALM and the councillor Sheetal Gambhir, took place on 15 May 2017. By the time I reached Mr Bindre’s office, the meeting had already begun. About 14 people attended the meeting. I went in quietly and took a seat in the last row. Ms Gambhir was sitting next to the Commissioner and the ALM members were sitting across the huge table opposite the official. Mr Herman Dias and a few other seemingly vocal and influential members were leading

the conversation. Mr Dias was sitting with open maps while another person was talking in eloquent legal language about the violations that the toilet construction had already created. I learnt later that this person was an established lawyer in the city, a resident of Mahim and a prominent member of Zameen ALM. As the members objected to this construction by alleging that the workmen did not have the work order, Sheetal Gambhir claimed that she had seen the notice board at the construction site (Figure 6.4), a change from the earlier stance. During the previous meeting this was one of the objections raised by the members. When they had claimed that there was no board or work order, she had accepted it. However, at this meeting, the members felt that she let them down. In conversation later some of the members expressed that they were convinced that Ms Gambhir was complicit in the “illegal” construction of the toilet. They said that by openly defying them at the official meeting, she exhibited a lack of support towards the people she is representing in the political sphere.

Ms Gambhir explored the possibility of shifting the toilet to another site within the neighbourhood. The members of the ALM pointed out on the map the potential places where a toilet block could be built (see Figure 3.1). They suggested a spot near the railway station which they claimed would not be an obstruction for pedestrians but would also enable the beautification project to take place. It was at this point that I realised that the issue regarding the toilet was now open to negotiation. The focus of the conversation regarding the toilet had turned to looking for a different spot instead of the outright objection to a toilet in the area. The map created by Zameen ALM was laid out in front of the official and people began

discussing the new spot. I was beginning to understand the more obvious reasons for the stark objection to the toilet. In addition to the inconvenience of stench and health hazards, the positioning of the toilet block was also detrimental to the economic value of the residential buildings adjacent to the proposed public utility (Baviskar, 2003; Ghetner, 2015). Moreover, the proposed public utility would also take away the space that, according to the members, belonged to them. Thus the earlier concerns around moral and pedestrian safety had begun to fade and spatial relocation emerged as the key agenda of the members. The official presiding over the meeting promised to look into the suggestion for the new spot, which was directly opposite the current spot and next to the adjoining the wall of the railway station.



Figure 6.4 MCGM's notice on the toilet, its usage and future use.

Photograph credit: Author. Date: 24.05.2017

It was decided that the commissioner would send out an order to halt the construction, which required the ALM members to undertake official procedural steps to submit a “written complaint”. Before concluding the meeting, the members of the ALM enquired with the commissioner the status of carrying out the beautification. The commissioner responded that they were free to execute the project as they had already received the permission to do so. He was reminded by the group that to carry out the beautification works they would need the footpaths to be “encroachment free”, referring to the presence of the pavement dwellers. The Head Commissioner’s curt yet blasé reply, “due action will be taken”, seemed to imply that he was not only aware of this aspect, but that it was also something that did not constitute his official priority or, as Anjaria (2009) articulates, “illegality unworthy of attention” (p. 399). As he signalled the end of the meeting by standing up to leave the room, the members reminded him that the “action” against encroachers had not been effective (indeed, as noted in the previous chapter). In order to address this they suggested multiple ways the encroachers could be incarcerated in order to prohibit them from occupying the footpath. The commissioner left the room without responding to these suggestions. The meaning behind the departure of the commissioner without responding to these suggestions became clear to me in an interview where he expressed his frustration with these citizen’s groups. According to him, these groups were not only anti-poor but also criticised the state without undertaking any productive work.

6.8 Negotiating resolution

The members of the ALM engaged in a lengthy procedure of gathering and submitting the relevant documents required to lodge a formal complaint. As I waited with them at the dispatch office I had further discussions with the members about the issue. Some expressed their frustration around the pointless bureaucratic processes that ultimately yields nothing. A few others talked about how they felt abandoned by their councillor as she had not only defied them, but moreover lacked the authority to either stop the construction of or relocate the toilet project. Some hinted at the possibility of corruption in circumstances where everyone “from the PM to the peon”, or in this case the Head Commissioner, the councillor, the contractor, politicians and bureaucrats had something to gain personally from this project. In this instance the ALM members’ discussion on corruption is rooted in middle- and upper-class frustrations about not receiving their entitlements as tax-paying citizens. In other words, this discussion of corruption was a reaction to what they considered an unsuccessful attempt to push their agenda of stalling the toilet project. Meanwhile the secretary, Mr Herman Dias, called a journalist and the grievances of the members of the ALM got reported in the local press in the following way:

Speaking to Mumbai Mirror, Dias said, “Barricades and boards giving relevant details like the nature of work undertaken, permission granted for building the toilet, dates for commencement and conclusion of work, contact details of nodal officers and other information have not been put up at the site that has been dug up for the toilet. According to rules laid down by the municipal authorities themselves, this is mandatory before taking up any kind of trenching and excavation work...” “The whole idea of beautification of the entire stretch of footpath outside India Government ministers’ staff quarters (opposite Mahim station) is for the purpose of having encroachment-free footpath for the exclusive use of pedestrians for their safety and to ease smooth flow of vehicular traffic. Therefore, any move to construct any kind of structure on the very footpath which has been given to Zameen ALM for beautification will prove detrimental to the safety of the pedestrians and the purpose of beautification will be defeated...” (Dhupkar, 2017)

As I left the BMC office with the members, I sensed their frustration at the futility of their efforts at mobilisation. Despite involving the press and intimidating the commissioner and the corporator with legal consequences, members of Zameen ALM saw that the toilet project would continue regardless of their objections. The talk of corruption therefore acted as their own rationalisation for the state's apathy. From the meeting at the commissioner's office and the changing of the terms of negotiations, it appeared to me that stalling the toilet project was only a means to regain control over a space that had been once promised to the ALM and which was gradually slipping out of their control. I realised that the larger frustration was around the fact that the pavement dwellers would continue to dwell on the footpath and the plan for beautification would remain on paper. It was an acceptance of the fact that the rule of law, the implementation of which formed the basis of the activism of the members of the civic body, was basically malleable (Anjaria, 2009). Reflecting on similar contestations over urban space between hawkers and citizens' groups, Anjaria argues that the state's role vis-à-vis the middle class is "even more insidious," leading ultimately to a "rather ambivalent relationship to a modernist urban ideal, which sees hawkers and others working on the street as necessarily transgressive" (Anjaria, 2009, p. 400).

In my interactions with the corporator and municipal commissioner, I sensed a clear difference in the way they perceived the issue of the toilet. For Ms Gambhir, this meant following the orders of her party that made her unpopular among the citizens' group which had the power to influence her constituency. The short telephone conversation I had with Ms Gambhir revealed the limitations that a locally elected female representative faced in her encounters with a male-dominated political and

administrative system characterised by fragmented accountability.⁸⁷ To the commissioner, this appeared as yet another instance of the “educated, self-serving” civic activist interference in the municipality’s work to further their personal interests.

Observation of the corporator’s meeting with the ALM members, the short telephone interview with her, and the witnessing of the meeting at the commissioner’s office provided me with the opportunity to reflect on the authority she commanded and her understanding of accountability. From her words and behaviour it became clear that she was first accountable to her party, which gave her a political platform, and secondly to the voters of the area. The contestations around the toilet block therefore put her in an awkward position. The public meeting was a chance for her to “perform” (as expressed by one of the members of the ALM) her allegiances to her voters, while carefully forwarding her party’s mandates to complete the toilet project. She assured her voters that while she was trying her best to stall the project, the toilet block becoming a reality was highly likely. She also tactfully mentioned that if the ALM members saw her photograph on the toilet block, they should not misunderstand her. When her attempts to convince the ALM members were failing she tried to digress at the expense of the footpath dwellers, by invoking upper-class complacency. Accusing the ALM members of being complacent regarding the “encroachments” on the footpath was not a benign act of political deflection, but a tactful accusation of their failure to protect public spaces in the city.

⁸⁷ Scholars writing on female political workers in Mumbai have illuminated that although their position is subordinate compared to their male counterparts, they command authority in their everyday political activities (Sen, 2004; Bedi, 2007). Sen (2004) writes about the role of female party workers in proliferating and executing the dominant discourses of Hindutva through violent dispensation of gender normativity. Bedi (2007) elucidates how Shiv Sena women have carved out an autonomous space through their “politics of visibility” within a patriarchal environment. In both these instances women political workers have been accorded a powerful role.

My conversation with the Head Commissioner, Mr Ratikant Bindre, that took place on 29th May 2017, illuminated the tensions between the self-righteous citizens' groups and the members of the state. Scholarship on these civic bodies has illuminated how these groups further the neoliberal agendas of the city by circulating discourses of world-class aesthetic appeal, rightful use of public space and removal of the poor. Additionally it is assumed that these civil society "activists" receive the support of the state in furthering their agendas. Through my study, I demonstrate that the remaking of the urban environment is not straightforward, and that very often the state agents and middle-class citizens are in opposition to each other.

I cite below a few excerpts from my interview with the Head Commissioner (HC) that highlight the alleged "inaction" of the state regarding encroachments. Persistence is also enabled through these deliberate bureaucratic ignorances (Anand, 2011):

Author: What steps have you taken in dealing with the people who live outside Mahim station? Despite your constant removal these people come back. Why do you think this happens?

HC: We have to be extra careful when undertaking these actions. If something happens to them, then an FIR will be registered against the BMC representatives. We are therefore careful when taking action. Moreover we can't do much because the people cross over to the tracks. And there is always a danger of coming under the train. In any case we just take away their roofs and not their materials. These are really poor people and therefore they don't have a place to go. We are fully aware that they will come back if we remove them. It's a regular phenomenon Unless they

are properly rehabilitated they will not move from here. This is their source of livelihood among other things. Why should they go from here.

Author: Then what about Zameen ALM's demand about getting them removed from here?

HC: In fact Zameen should take the responsibility of social problems like these. It is the state's duty to ensure that they are properly rehabilitated. I know for a fact they have been living in these spots for many years. And this is not just here, but all over Mumbai. They have nowhere to go so they will stake whatever spaces are available to survive. And this is more than survival, these people have established their own networks here. It is a structural problem, linked to migration and lack of livelihood opportunities. Moreover these are all nomadic communities, therefore they are suited very well to live like this.

HC: What is your research on?

Author: Homelessness roughly.

HC: Look at this place called Kuttawadi⁸⁸ near Haji Ali. These people barely live between the sea and the dargah. See how they live. Every time there is a high tide people move away and come back when the tide goes down. But they have been living like this for years. Write about them.

I was not expecting the conversation to go this way, and definitely not hoping to hear the Head Commissioner, on whose commands the municipality takes regular actions against the footpath dwellers, say that encroachments in Mumbai are a social problem that needs to be addressed. He claimed that bodies like Zameen ALM, who

⁸⁸ <http://www.mid-day.com/articles/sea-view-shanties-a-security-nightmare/157768>

according to him do “social work”, should act in ameliorating the conditions of the footpath dwellers rather than obstructing the work of the municipality. To me this statement was significant as it clarified how public officials responsible for administering spaces of democratic participation, such as redressing grievances of bodies like Zameen ALM, perceive its members. According to the Head Commissioner, members of these groups worked only to serve their self-interest, and were not really concerned with the larger structural causes of poverty. Evoking a rhetoric of poverty, he contended that unless the issues of marginalisation are addressed structurally, the occasional removal of encroachments would be a mere municipal action that is carried out occasionally to satisfy the demands of the “civic society” and to tick off the duty registers, rather than a concerted effort to cleanse Mumbai of poor people. He also hinted that the municipality did not have the personnel to deal with the issues of encroachments. This suggests something fundamental that reflects the official understanding that these illegalities that are unmanageable are ultimately “unworthy of attention” (Anjaria, 2009, p. 399). In the context of my study, this inaction permits the continuity of footpath dwellers’ practices. Finally, the grievances of Zameen ALM against the toilet block, point out how the state perceives upper class residents as causing obstructions in carrying out the work of the state. The commissioner used the phrase “bina matlab ka dakhla dena” (to interfere without any reason) to express his grievances against groups like Zameen ALM. What is even more interesting here is that although the footpath dwellers are “encroachers”, the commissioner does not perceive them as impediments.

Similarly, his disdain towards the ALM and their ability to make their beautification plans real is indicative of the realities that defy elite visions and rational plans (Ghertner, 2011). This is not to claim that the AC is sympathetic towards poor people in his city, nor that his progressive language is not a performance of benevolence. Perhaps he is a progressive administrator. What is pertinent here is his signposting of the messiness of the urban that is in between “the spontaneous fullness and anarchy of life ... (and) the impoverished, grey and disciplining forces of society, city and the state” (Hansen and Verkaaik, 2009 in Anjaria, 2016, p.14). It appears that the selection of the spot for the construction of the toilet was not decided by the municipality, but by the private agency who got the tender for the toilet project. When I asked the contractor, Mr Govind Kamble, why the spot was selected he told me that he was following orders of the BMC Engineers, who had inspected it and deemed it to be fit for the project. Thus, there was no clarity on the “rationale” or “official procedures” or how decisions made in the higher echelons of a political party can have fragmented impact on the ground. It is this “production arbitrariness” that Gupta (2012, p. 33) refers to in emphasising the need for “disaggregating the state” (p. 33). In other words, like the city, the state is not a unified entity that is making rational decisions to rule its subjects, but one that is operating at multiple levels for various groups of people through contestations, negotiations and claims-making.

6.9 Conclusion

The completed air-conditioned toilet block marks a deviation from established sanitation practices in the city. It is not only well-maintained, but the installation of

the air-conditioning signifies luxury. This toilet points towards the changing nature of urban service provision in Indian cities. Nevertheless, it has received severe objections from the residents of Mahim. I traced these contestations because the grievance regarding the toilet intersected with their previous complaints concerning “encroachments” on the footpath. As I demonstrate through the letter of objection, members of Zameen ALM explicitly hold the state responsible for these transgressions. The main objections centre on the health nuisance and the reduction in the moral character of the neighbourhood as it would attract criminal activities, cause accidents and deplete space provided for beautification. The members also questioned the need for a luxury toilet which they suspected would be used by railway commuters, who they claimed were mostly people from lower income neighbourhoods. In so doing they explicitly indicated the nature of the ‘public’ and public space. In response to their grievances the councillor tried to address their concerns, but was constrained by commands from her party which mandated the construction of the toilet. When the members along with the corporator raised the issue at the local municipal office, matters became even more complex. Unable to find a solution to their grievances the members tried to negotiate moving the toilet block, so that they could retain the place on the footpath for beautification.

This chapter reveals two important ways that dwelling by persistence is enabled. One, the dispute around the construction of the toilet block highlights the multifaceted nature of urban contestations. The struggle for space is not just between the footpath dwellers and the state and/or elite residents but rather, as the chapter shows, there is a complicated nature to contestation and a shifting formation of alliances. It shows that footpath dwellers, in order to persist, engage in strategic

confrontations. Their cooperation in the construction of the toilet block, despite not being able to use it in the future, suggests that they persist by avoiding the negative attention of state actors. Yet, they confront the elite residents of the area more directly, as was evident by the way the footpath dwellers spoilt the initial beautification efforts by the citizen groups. My chapter shows that contestations between different actors in the city are not straightforward and in this case, this unresolved tension caused the defeat of the citizens' group and enabled the persistence of "encroachments", the toilet block and the footpath dwellers.

Second, this chapter shows that the state itself engages in practices that violate its own laws. When the citizens' group attempted to negotiate with the Head Commissioner to revoke the permission for the toilet block, clearing the footpath of all encroachments (including the pavement dwellers) and receiving the sanction for progressing with its beautification, they did not receive any support from the municipality. The Head Commissioner's silence on the issue of the encroachments indicated that removing the footpath dwellers was not the key priority for the municipality. This is revealing of how urban poor groups persist through these silences of the state. The citizen's group, realising that they had been unsuccessful, rationalised the inaction of the state through corruption talk, yet another rhetoric that suggests the continuities of "informal" urban practices.

7 Conclusion

One morning as I was sitting with respondents in the field site, a group of foreign tourists walked past the family of footpath dwellers.⁸⁹ From that group two tourists stepped out to take pictures of respondents. The tour operator, who was leading the way, warned the tourists not to ‘waste time’ there and move on if they wanted to follow their itinerary. The tour operator said that the ‘real thing’ was just a few minutes walk further on. As they left, I asked Basanti where the people were headed, to which she responded, they were headed to Dharavi to see how people live and work. In Basanti’s description, Dharavi, and slums in general, appeared as a place of ‘more’ permanence, shielded from the everyday risks of living next to a busy road. The tour operator’s insistence on finding enterprise, work, community and multi-culturalism in slums, and not on the footpath, pointed towards the familiar frames through which cities in the global south are recognised. This example urges us to recognise forms of urbanism that include a range of contexts, relations, geographies and histories which go beyond the familiar frames. Despite being so starkly visible, why is that groups like the footpath dwellers are constantly overlooked?⁹⁰ My research thus began with an interest in understanding the experiences of marginalisation in the lives of urban poor groups in Mumbai.

My research initially explored homelessness in the lives of footpath dwellers such as Basanti, but it evolved into a focus on understanding people’s persistence in the city. Contrary to dominant perceptions, my research showed that footpath dwellers have had long-standing associations with the city. However, they have been subjected to

⁸⁹ In Chapter 3 I present a methodological reflection of interactions between respondents and foreign tourists.

⁹⁰ I pose this question through a vignette where tourists have overlooked the footpath dwellers. But here I am also alluding to the neglect of these groups by a host of actors such as local residents, policy makers, urban planners, politicians and even researchers.

numerous negative perceptions – from a range of institutions, other city residents, and many academics - that dismissed their association with the city, in effect denying them a place.

Drawing on Heidegger, my thesis frames dwelling as an inherently corporeal experience of existence rooted in place. I use the concept of dwelling to allude to practices of everyday living. Heidegger viewed dwelling as an authentic form of life, taking place in peace and in a rural setting, yet in the city, and especially on its streets, people dwell in ways that are constantly fraught with tension. The footpath is dangerous for women, men and children as they constantly negotiate the risks of getting hit by moving traffic, face problems of food preparation, flooding, warmth, sanitation, and the threat of being evicted by the municipality. Upper-class residents of the area have attempted to remove them from the footpath, and occasionally lodge complaints with the local police station against them. Their temporary shelters are at constant risk of being destroyed by extreme weather conditions, they live among rats, and are susceptible to diseases. Thus the footpath exposes its dwellers to various dangers and regular challenges. Dwelling on the footpath entails undergoing these challenges, and persistence requires acts of navigating around and through obstacles in order to retain that dwelling place on the footpath. This retaining of place goes beyond remaining fixed in place, and sometimes entails moving away in order to return. While scholarship on urban marginality has examined how poor groups are increasingly evicted from cities, my research has focused instead on how groups stay. I have studied how these groups cope with and overcome their conditions of precarity, persisting both by staying, moving away and returning. *Dwelling by persistence*, the key conceptual contribution of my thesis, contributes an original framework which enables us to understand the continuities of

everyday practices of the groups which experience life in precarious conditions. In this thesis I have deployed this framework of dwelling by persistence to examine the three inter-related concepts of home, urban navigations and persisting between contestations. In the subsequent section I elaborate on these connections through an overview of the key findings of my thesis.

7.1 Thesis findings

In focussing on a group of footpath dwellers in Mumbai, my thesis makes a contribution towards understanding the lived experiences of urban poor groups who have been understudied and misrecognised. My thesis questions the association of street living, footpath dwelling or similar forms of inhabitation with homelessness. An understanding of the lived experience is crucial in not just accepting the varied living practices in the urban form, but also recognising what meanings people attach to their dwelling. In other words, instead of categorising urban poor groups through various pre-determined labels, it is imperative to understand their relationship with place and their use of space. Through these three intersecting themes of home, urban navigations and contestations, my research makes a contribution to the scholarship on home, agency and the ways in which powerful groups (including the state and upper-class residents) as well as urban marginal groups seek to shape urban space. I have highlighted that urban poor groups hold on to place through a logic of home, by rendering themselves selectively visible, and due to an ambiguous institutional realm in which the state participates in violating its own rules.

My thesis begins with a vignette in which a key respondent, Rekha, and I were looking for a postman to track down the status of the delivery of her Aadhaar card. The search for the postman revealed Rekha's social connections and knowledge of the

neighbourhood. It also revealed how groups like hers navigated the formal circuits of the city to receive services (in this case the postal service). This vignette urges us to read the city beyond the familiar frames of inhabitation, such as the lack of a residential address. My research questions were prompted following observations such as these in which the everyday practices of the footpath dwellers challenged dominant notions of home-making, circumventing official procedures in accessing services that are tied to 'formal' housing and living in a space that is embroiled in contestations.

In the subsequent sections I have organised the key findings that emerged in response to the research questions.

7.1.1 What constitutes 'home' for the footpath dwellers?

Home is endurance - Respondents referred to various spaces on the footpath and domestic practices as 'ghar' or their home. I understood how by attaching a sense of ownership to spaces and incrementally investing in these spaces people not only held on to place but also attempted to persist in that place. Attachment to family and the larger kinship system of the pavement dwellers revealed how home formed a key organising principle of spatial, social and economic life on the footpath. A respondent's comment, that being in Mahim was like being in his village, was symbolic of how kinship plays a role in spatially locating people in cities.

Various symbolic and spatial markers were used to delineate a home space as separate from the street that ran along the footpath. The way people used the footpath as their home highlighted the material practices of dwelling. I noted in Chapter 4, how people marked their home spaces through the use of shoes. Shoes were considered to be belonging to the outside or to be used away from home. Although respondents' dwellings centred on the footpath (i.e. the elevated portion of the road), their everyday

practices spilled over onto a wider portion between the footpath and the carriageway (see Figure 3.1). Shoes were expected to be left at the margin of the footpath on the street. These practices suggested that for respondents, they considered home to be a space distinct from the street. These practices of the footpath dwellers challenge some of the popular associations of street dwelling with homelessness, by examining the meaning of home that constitutes a set of feelings and attachments that is experienced beyond an 'interior' space, by developing feelings of belonging to a place, through material practices of control and care, enduring violence, and by generating economic activities.

If shoes marked an attempt to maintain physical boundaries, then restrictions on physical acts also marked the moral boundaries of the footpath dwellers. One such example was the imposition of restrictions on the mobility of the women in the group. Respondents shared that these boundaries were crucial to protect the "izzat" (see page 167 for a discussion on 'izzat') of the home. The idea of home here is linked to a notion of family honour that is rooted in protecting female propriety. My research revealed that when these spatial boundaries were transgressed, women were disciplined through violence. For the respondents, this violence was so normalised that women seldom spoke of these aggressions, particularly when members of the family committed these acts. Some women also rationalised this violence as being a necessity to maintain their home. Indeed, the endurance of this violence was legitimated as essential to keep the family from disintegrating. Staying attached to family therefore possessed a spatial logic, as well as a factor that provided strength for respondents to persist.

Preparation of food, rearing of pets and decoration of their domestic spaces also revealed how respondents practiced home. These practices were deeply rooted in place

and revealed how space was shaped according to use. The practice of eating food cooked at 'home' i.e. by a member of the family within the delineated space on or around the footpath, signified attachment with places that they considered home. Similarly the act of caring for pets, who they carefully protected from the dangers of the street, revealed how respondents made a distinction between the street and home. Attachment to their places of dwelling was also revealed through the way they decorated and personalised their spaces. Some of these affective attachments uncovered how they understood home-making in the city. While they related fondly to their village, it was not their home. In conversations they described the village in opposition to the city, which was full of hardship and chaos. Yet, it was the city that provided economic opportunities, support of social networks, and a familiarity that facilitated the continuation of their family vocation.

Work constituted a significant aspect of home for many respondents. Most of the respondents practised their basket making vocation from their dwellings. Thus home was not just a domestic space, but a space of work and one that facilitated their connections with the rest of the city. Other respondents who did not practice basket making either undertook other economic opportunities from their dwelling space, or travelled to another part of the city to work. However, in all these instances, home formed a significant aspect of centring their economic activities. The street here played an important role in facilitating their income generating activities, by providing a market.

7.1.2 How do footpath dwellers navigate spatial and official barriers to respond to everyday challenges?

Selective visibility - Having reflected on the constitution of home for respondents, I now reflect on how these practices of home-making were improvised in order to persist in the city. These improvisations of their dwelling spaces and circumvention of official practices revealed that temporary displacement and the formation of alliances comprised key navigational practices to make de facto claims on the footpath. The two vignettes that I used to indicate the navigational practices of respondents also revealed how encounters with the state are negotiated. Chapter 5 documents the process through which people evaded a massive municipal action. I showed how this evasion was made possible by the prior information received from within the local bureaucracy. This act of communication is worthy of attention as it highlights how the city is dwelt, collectively, by means of a web of networks. Place then becomes a crucial facilitator of everyday exchanges that enables persistence.

A message delivered by a member of the local municipality to a key respondent regarding an impending municipal raid provided an opportunity to observe these navigational practices. While this ‘heads up’ proved helpful for the footpath dwellers to minimise the impact of the municipal action, it also uncovered the inter-group dynamics at the heart of which were varied aspirations regarding housing. While a majority of the members did not wish to be included in housing programmes that dislocated them from their source of income, there were few families that wished to be rehoused in “buildings”. Persistence is also about setting aside and managing these differences in order to prepare for impending eventualities.

The footpath dwellers' preparation for the raid provided an opportunity to observe how urban materials were used to create spaces of refuge (see Figure 3.1). Earlier, I had observed how the wall formed a part of their domesticities, and how people used the portion beyond it (facing the railway tracks) as an extension of their everyday practices. The raid made me realise how people used jurisdictional divisions to their advantage, indeed as a means to navigate municipal action. The portion of the wall that belonged to the railway company 'could not' be accessed by the municipality without permission. In other words, the municipal action of conducting the raids could only be carried out in the area where the municipality had jurisdiction. However, the way the municipal action was executed revealed that evicting the footpath dwellers was not the real objective of the municipality. These municipal actions were routine procedures that were undertaken to perform official duties. This instance showed that while respondents used their agency to manage the raid, the state also enabled this navigation by deliberately ignoring these practices. Scholars have termed this wilful ignorance as 'gray-spacing', executed through the state's flexibility. This vignette furthers my framing of persistence by revealing how alliances with representatives of the state, who are often from the same socio-spatial environments, foster knowledge exchanges that are crucial for surviving the vulnerabilities of the city.

These alliances are also crucial for making partial claims to the city. While the previous vignette showed how respondents hide out to evade municipal action, the vignette about applying for Aadhaar cards highlighted how respondents made themselves selectively visible in the city. Political-economic changes mandated the possession of an Aadhaar card for accessing other crucial services in the city. For respondents, the card was necessary for opening a bank account in order to ensure the continuity of financial

exchanges with customers. Their current 'housing' status would have made them ineligible for applying for this Aadhaar card, as they lacked a 'proper' address, and so they registered for the document through 'unofficial' channels. I realised that the Aadhaar card was only a recent addition to some of the documents that they possessed that bore the footpath as their address. Despite this, approaching official channels to apply for the cards proved to be difficult for respondents, as the footpath was not accepted as a valid address. The unofficial channel, i.e. the Aadhaar application 'shop' in a nearby slum, provided this service at a cost, which would not only facilitate their Aadhaar card applications, but also enabled them to avoid the process of verifying accompanying documents. This example showed that while the respondents' lack of legitimacy in the city makes them vulnerable, it is these channels of negotiation that enable them to make formal claims. In other words, respondents paid a price (often arbitrarily decided and exorbitant) to access a service that is meant to be free. For many, this would appear as an exploitative practice, but without these channels of negotiation the footpath dwellers would not be able to access services which were crucial for their everyday survival. Selective visibility is therefore a strategic navigational practice which is enabled through collective agency as well as the existence of an ambiguous institutional realm.

7.1.3 How do contradictory spatial claims enable the persistence of urban poor groups in the city?

Ambiguous institutional realm - To answer this, I turn to practices within the city that extend how the presence of an ambiguous institutional realm enables the persistence of practices that are 'illegal', 'informal' and 'encroaching'. In Chapter 6, I revealed the contestations around the construction of a toilet block. This construction which was

being facilitated by the local bureaucracy, pointed towards how the state often participates in contradictory practices. In this case, the contradictory practice entailed constructing a toilet block on a footpath which is meant to be obstruction free. Resistance to the construction by the residents of Mahim enabled me to understand the multifaceted nature of contestations around the use of the space. For the upper-class residents, both the toilet block and the footpath dwellers were obstructions. Plotting the developments around the toilet block enabled me to understand how upper-class citizens deploy discourses of rights and the intimation of legal action in negotiating with the state to remove these obstructions. It revealed how these residents use 'invited spaces' of participation to forward their agendas, such as shaping the neighbourhood in aesthetic terms, to exclude marginal groups from the city.

Concentrating on the toilet block directed my ethnographic focus to actors who had an impact on the lives of the footpath dwellers. This finding revealed that while the footpath dwellers entered into alliances with the state, they were directly antagonistic towards the upper-class residents of the area. While respondents held the upper-class residents of the neighbourhood accountable for the occasional disruptions to their dwelling, the upper-class residents blamed respondents for being the source of 'nuisance' in the area. Through the events surrounding the construction of the toilet block, I witnessed the narratives around sanitation, from which the respondents were excluded. I saw that respondents participated in the building of the toilet block by helping the construction workers. However, this cooperation was not in the hope of being able to use the facility with the completion of construction, but was yet another strategy to remain inconspicuous by not objecting to it.

The Area Locality Management (ALM) members approached the municipal office through their local representative. However, the meeting proved to be an unsuccessful attempt at negotiation. Not only were they unsuccessful in stalling the project, the Assistant Commissioner did not yield to their requests of even accepting their suggestions for changing the spot of construction. The changing terms of negotiation at the meeting revealed that ALM members were using the toilet project to forward their agendas of beautification, in order to gain control over the footpath. However, while the toilet project acquired legitimacy from the state, footpath dwellers continued to negotiate their place in the city. This chapter shows that 'encroachment' is an everyday phenomenon in Mumbai, in which the state also participates. The persistence of the footpath dwellers is symptomatic of the state's tacit acknowledgement of encroachment.

My research makes a contribution towards scholarship on home by examining its fulfilment in a 'public space' (the footpath). I argue that 'home', although not a 'haven', is a functional as well as an emotional space, that enable people to endure the vulnerabilities of the city. My research shows that, although home is experienced on a footpath that is widely exposed to a busy street, people create material and physical boundaries to make a symbolic distinction between the two spheres. I show in my research home-making enables groups to make de-facto claims to places where they have no recognised legitimacy. Through several examples in my research, I show how the state significantly impacts on people's experiences of home. For instance, through the vignette of the preparation for the raid, I show how people empty the footpath and 'undo' their homes, in order to return to their places later. Similarly, through several examples in the thesis, I show how urban materials, even those that belong to the state (such as a police barricades) were appropriated by people in their everyday domestic

practices. Thus I speak to a scholarship on home-making by showing how the outside or public space plays a crucial role in shaping the domestic. In the same way, I contribute towards a scholarship on the city, by showing how public space is intrinsically shaped by domestic practices. Although my research is set in Mumbai, I stress that these practices are representative of cities in the global south.

Finally, it contests scholarship on contemporary urban transformation, which has argued that the state and upper-class citizens work in conjunction to remove markers of poverty, by showing that this contestation is fragmented. This thesis therefore attempts to further an understanding of the state as ‘malleable’, and simultaneously contributes to scholarship centred on agency, by highlighting that people navigate the city by making themselves deliberately inconspicuous and selectively visible. While it has been argued that the state and upper-class citizens work in conjunction to remove markers of poverty, my thesis shows that this contestation is fragmented. The upper-class residents’ hostility towards the poor is more direct as compared to the state. Empirically, my thesis forwards scholarship that questions the monolithic nature of the state. As I have shown, urban poor groups form alliances with members of the bureaucracy who are often from the same social and geographical environment. My study contributes to scholarship on ‘invited spaces’ wherein I show that the relationship between the state and its participants (often upper-class residents) are often combative, and upper-class residents are not always successful in forwarding their agendas.

7.2 Scope of future research and policy implications

While I have attempted to construct a narrative of the persistence of footpath dwellers in Mahim, this study provides avenues for reflecting on whether the respondents are representative of urban poor groups in Mumbai who live in similar spatial conditions. I

acknowledge that my research was conducted with a group whose association with Mumbai has been of a relatively long duration. On the basis of this ethnographic research, the thesis examines questions on the persistence of groups who arrived in the city more recently or whose association with Mumbai is more intermittent. Moreover, in focussing on questions of dwelling experienced over space, this thesis does not focus on how social affiliations, such as caste and religion, play a role in how groups make place.

In reviewing what has been left unsaid, but not unconsidered, it can be pointed out that there exists a lack of systematic analysis of the role of the state. While the state featured dominantly as an enabler of persistence, there has been a lack of accounting for the role of the state in the existing conceptual frameworks. Therefore a limitation of the study has been that it lacks a thorough literature-based discussion on the differentiated nature of the state.

I believe my work can be strengthened further through a reflection on these questions and an incorporation of what is lacking. Additionally, I am interested in developing my work in two specific directions; one, in the role technology plays in strengthening social networks and two, in understanding the everyday relationship between members of lower-level bureaucracy and urban poor groups. As mentioned in Chapter 3, although I have exited the field, I have been in regular contact with respondents. My respondents often call me on Whatsapp through which I get to learn about the updates in their lives. For my respondents purchasing advanced phones with “unlimited” data has been a development after I exited my field. I have been particularly interested in the content of their Whatsapp correspondence, which are mainly forwards of chain messages and photographs of their products. In my future work, I am interested in exploring how newer forms of communication flows integrate groups within the city. My second area

of interest, which directly follows from my present research, is in understanding the nature of alliances between urban poor groups and members of the state operating in lower levels of the hierarchy.

A study of this nature also presents scope for reflecting on the policy implications that would have an impact on the urban environment, as well as shape the future of these groups in the city. It is crucial to acknowledge how urban planning and policies could either strengthen or undermine the persistence of these groups. Although not explicitly acknowledged, the impact of housing policy has recurrently featured in the narratives of respondents in the study. In other words, while in the discussion I have not provided any policy recommendations, I have echoed how some respondents have been impacted by housing policies in the city. For example, some respondents have recounted why, despite being provided flats in a suburb in a distant location under the Slum Rehabilitation Scheme, they have returned to the footpath. Respondents said that being rehoused in a distant suburb not only uprooted them from crucial social and economic support systems and networks but living in a building had significantly raised their everyday costs. A very important aspect that was pointed out to me by respondents was regarding their use of space, to which the housing schemes had not been attuned. Dwelling, as it has been evident in the research, is not about living within designated space. Respondents dwell around and beyond their immediate dwelling units. For instance, while every family has a designated space that they call their own, their everyday activities spilt over and even merged with the spaces of their immediate neighbours. Another crucial omission from these housing policies has been the treating of houses as only domestic and interior spaces, and not as space that can also be sites of income generating activities, as well as bustling markets. Housing schemes tend to

negate the socio-spatial aspects of people's dwelling, which are intrinsically linked to the everyday lives of poor groups. In this context, a policy recommendation would be to take account of how people use spaces and to incorporate that in the planning imagination.

The second policy implication of this research would be to take into account people's relationship with place, and to design relocation plans within the same neighbourhood. This ofcourse has deep political implications, as it will involve a radical redistribution of prime land in the city if location-based rehabilitation is to be undertaken. This might prove to be a more effective way of ensuring the persistence of people's dwelling, rather than rehousing people in designated unit areas without essential support systems.

Finally, a third policy implication concerns the recalibration of the various urban planning and city by-laws. As my empirical chapters have pointed out, city officials and politicians are aware of people's inhabitation of the footpath. However these urban poor groups are periodically subjected to municipal actions, pushing these groups into further precarious situations. My policy recommendation here would be to officially end these brutal municipal actions. Instead, the local government in conjunction with other actors, such as the state government, NGOs, police and political representatives should think of gradually rehabilitating these groups. It is imperative that these groups are not outlawed, owing to their living conditions, and they are allowed to access basic facilities such as public toilets, public food distribution system and medical aid. By ensuring that people, have access to at least these basic human needs, some of the precarities associated with street living can be minimized, and these groups could attain more 'secure' forms of dwelling.

Bibliography

Aadhaar Enrolment - Unique Identification Authority of India / Government of India (no date). Available at: <https://www.uidai.gov.in/enrolment-update/aadhaar-enrolment.html> (Accessed: 3 August 2018).

Anand, N. (2011) 'Ignoring Power: Knowing Leakage in Mumbai's Water Supply', in Anjaria, J. S. and McFarlane, C. (eds) *Urban Navigations: politics, space and the city in south asia*. Routledge, pp. 191–212.

Anand, N. and Rademacher, A. (2011) 'Housing in the Urban Age: Inequality and Aspiration in Mumbai', *Antipode*, 43(5), pp. 1748–1772.

Anjaria, J. (2016) *The Slow Boil: Street Food, Rights and Public Space in Mumbai*. Stanford University Press .

Anjaria, J. and McFarlane, C. (2011) *Urban navigations: Politics, space and the city in South Asia*.

Anjaria, J. S. (2009) 'Guardians of the Bourgeois City: Citizenship, Public Space, and Middle -Class Activism in Mumbai', *City & Community*, 8(4), pp. 391–406.

Anon (2010) *The dictionary of human geography*. 5th edn, *Journal of Historical Geography*. 5th edn. Edited by D. Gregory et al. Wiley Blackwell.

Appadurai, A. (2001) 'Deep democracy: urban governmentality and the horizon of politics', *Environment and Urbanization*, 13(2), pp. 23–43.

Arabindoo, P. (2011) 'Rhetoric of the "slum"', *City*, 15(6), pp. 636–646.

Badiou, A. (2008) 'The communist hypothesis', *New Left Review*2, 49, pp. 29–42.

Ballard, R. and Jones, G. A. (2011) 'Natural Neighbors: Indigenous Landscapes and Eco-Estates in Durban, South Africa', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 101(1), pp. 131–148.

Bandyopadhyay, R. (2010) 'Negotiating Informality: Changing Faces of Kolkata's Footpaths, 1975-2005 Dissertation Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts , Jadavpur University by Jadavpur University', pp. 1975–2005.

Bandyopadhyay, R. (2017) 'Obstruction: counter-pedestrianism and trajectories of an infrastructure public', *Decision*. Springer India, 44(2), pp. 121–132.

Banerjee-Guha, S. (2011) 'Homeless in neoliberal cities: View from Mumbai', *Mumbai Reader*, 10, pp. 62–77.

Banerjee-Guha, S. (2013) 'Accumulation and dispossession: Contradictions of growth and development in contemporary India', *South Asia: Journal of South Asia Studies*, 36(2), pp. 165–179.

Baud, I. and Nainan, N. (2008) "'Negotiated spaces" for representation in Mumbai: Ward committees, advanced locality management and the politics of middle-class activism 13201617', *Environment and Urbanization*, 20(2), pp. 483–499.

Baviskar, A. (2003) 'Between violence and desire: space, power, and identity in the making of metropolitan Delhi', *International Social Science Journal*, 55(175), pp. 89–98.

Baxter, R. and Brickell, K. (2014) 'For home unmaking', *Home Cultures*, 11(2), pp. 133–143.

Bayat, A. (1997) 'Un-civil society: The politics of the "informal people"', *Third World*

Quarterly, 18(1), pp. 53–72.

Bayat, A. (2000) 'From Dangerous Classes' to Quiet Rebels': Politics of the Urban Subaltern in the Global South', *International Sociology*, 15(3), p. 533.

Bedi, T. (2007) 'The Dashing Ladies of the Shiv Sena', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42(17), pp. 1534–1541.

Benjamin, S. (2008) 'Occupancy urbanism: Radicalizing politics and economy beyond policy and programs', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 32(3), pp. 719–729.

Bhide, A. and Spies, M. (2013) 'Dharavi - Ground Up : A Dwellers-Focused Design Tool for Upgrading Living Space in Dharavi , Mumbai', *Commission for Development Studies at the Austrian Academy of Sciences*, pp. 1–53.

Bhowmik, S. (2001) *Hawkers and the Urban Informal Sector: A Study of Street Vending in Seven Cities*. Available at: <http://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/Bhowmik-Hawkers-URBAN-INFORMAL-SECTOR.pdf> (Accessed: 14 October 2018).

Björkman, L. (2015a) 'Becoming a Slum : From Municipal Colony to Illegal Settlement in Liberalization-Era Mumbai', *Becoming a Slum : From Municipal Colony to Illegal Settlement in*, 38(July), pp. 36–59.

Björkman, L. (2015b) *Pipe politics, contested waters: Embedded infrastructures of millennial Mumbai*. Duke University Press.

Björkman, L. and Harris, A. (2018) 'Engineering Cities: Mediating Materialities, Infrastructural Imaginaries and Shifting Regimes of Urban Expertise', *International*

Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 42(2), pp. 244–262.

Blomley, N. (1999) 'The right to not be excluded: common property and the struggle to stay put', (January), pp. 1–18.

Blomley, N. (2004) *Unsettling the city: Urban land and the politics of property*. Routledge.

Blomley, N. (2008). 'Enclosure, Common Right and the Property of the Poor', *Social & Legal Studies*, 17(3), pp. 311–331.

Blomley, N. (2010). *Rights of passage: Sidewalks and the regulation of public flow*. Routledge.

Blunt, A. (2005). 'Cultural geography: Cultural geographies of home', *Progress in Human Geography*, 29(4), pp. 505–515.

Blunt, A. and Dowling, R. M. (2006) *Home*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Blunt, A. and Sheringham, O. (2018) 'Home-city geographies', *Progress in Human Geography*, p. 030913251878659.

Blunt, A. and Varley, A. (2004) 'Geographies of home', *Cultural Geographies*, 11(1), pp. 3–6.

Bourdieu, Pierre. (2006). 'Outline of a Theory of Practice'. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. Trans. Richard Nice.

Brickell, K. (2012) "'Mapping" and "doing" critical geographies of home', *Progress in Human Geography*, 36(2), pp. 225–244.

Burra, S. (2000) *A Journey Towards Citizenship: the Byculla Area Resource Centre*,

Mumbai. Mumbai.

Butler, Judith (2009), 'Performativity, Precarity, and Sexual Politics', *Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana*, 4: 3, i-xiii.

Caldeira, T. P. (2000) *City of walls: crime, segregation, and citizenship in São Paulo*. University of California Press.

Census of India (2011) *Instruction Manual for Houselisting and Housing Census*. Available at: [http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-Documents/Houselisting English.pdf](http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-Documents/Houselisting%20English.pdf)

de Certeau, M. (1984) 'The Practice of Everyday Life', (June), p. 254.

Chakrabarty, D. (2002) *Habitations of modernity: Essays in the wake of subaltern studies*. University of Chicago Press.

Chandavarkar, R. (2003) *The Origins of Industrial Capitalism in India: Business strategies and the working classes in Bombay, 1900-1940*. Cambridge University Press.

Chandrachud, Y. (1985) 'Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation'. Available at: <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/709776/>.

Chaplin, S. E. (2017) 'Gender, Urban Sanitation Inequalities and Everyday Lives ENDER, A literature review and annotated bibliography', (June). Available at: [http://cprindia.org/system/tdf/working_papers/Chaplin \(2017\) Gender & urban sanitation literature review.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=6352](http://cprindia.org/system/tdf/working_papers/Chaplin%20(2017)%20Gender%20&%20urban%20sanitation%20literature%20review.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=6352).

Charlton, S. and Meth, P. (2017) 'Lived experiences of state housing in Johannesburg and Durban', *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 93(1), pp. 91–115.

Chatterjee, P. (2004) *The politics of the governed: reflections on popular politics in*

most of the world. Columbia University Press.

Chaudhry, A., Joseph, A. and Singh, I. P. (2012) Homeless Women and Violence. Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Housing/Pages/WomenAndHousing.aspx> (Accessed: 18 September 2018).

Corra, M. and Willer, D. (2002) 'The Gatekeeper', *Sociological Theory*, 20(2), pp. 180–207.

Cresswell, T., 2014. *Place: an introduction*. John Wiley & Sons.

Da Cunha, J. G. (1900) *The origin of Bombay*.

Das, P. K. (2015) *Claiming Participation in Urban Planning and Design as a Right*.

Das, V. and Randeria, S., (2015) 'Politics of the urban poor: aesthetics, ethics, volatility, precarity: an introduction to supplement 11', *Current Anthropology*, 56(S11), pp.S3–S14.

Das, V. (1990) 'Our work to cry: Your work to listen', in *Mirrors of violence: communities, riots and survivors in South Asia*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Datta, A. (2012) "'Mongrel City": Cosmopolitan Neighbourliness in a Delhi Squatter Settlement', *Antipode*, 44(3), pp. 745–763.

Datta, A. (2015) 'Ethical dilemmas of the encounter: Ethnography, fieldwork and political violence', in *Studies in Indian Politics*, pp. 284–289.

Datta, A. (2016) *The illegal city: Space, law and gender in a Delhi squatter settlement*. Routledge.

DeLyser, D. et al. (2009) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative geography*. Edited by D. DeLyser et al. SAGE.

DeLyser, D. (2010) 'Writing Qualitative Geography', in DeLyser, D. et al. (eds) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative geography*. London: SAGE, pp. 341–358.

Desai, R., McFarlane, C. and Graham, S. (2015) 'The politics of open defecation: informality, body, and infrastructure in Mumbai', *Antipode*, 47(1), pp. 98–120.

Dhupkar, A. (2017) 'Mahim residents not cool about AC toilet', *Mumbai Mirror*, 16 May. Available at: <https://mumbaimirror.indiatimes.com/mumbai/civic/mahim-residents-not-cool-about-ac-toilet/articleshow/58690677.cms>.

Doshi, S. (2013) 'Resettlement ecologies: Environmental subjectivity and graduated citizenship in Mumbai', in Rademacher, Anne Sivaramakrishnan, K. (ed.) *Ecologies of urbanism in India: Metropolitan civility*. Hong Kong University Press, pp. 225–248.

Doshi, S. and Ranganathan, M. (2017) 'Contesting the Unethical City: Land Dispossession and Corruption Narratives in Urban India', *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 107(1), pp. 183–199.

Dovey, K. (2009) *Becoming Places: Urbanism / Architecture / Identity / Power*.

Dupont, V. (2000) 'Mobility Patterns and Economic Strategies of Houseless People in Old Delhi', in Dupont, V., Tarlo, E., and Vital, D. (eds) *Delhi : urban space and human destinies*. Manohar Publishers & Distributors.

Easthope, H. (2004) 'A place called home', *Housing, Theory and Society*. Taylor & Francis Group, 21(3), pp. 128–138.

Fernandes, L. (2006) *India's new middle class : democratic politics in an era of economic reform*. University of Minnesota Press.

Gandy, M. (2008) 'Landscapes of disaster: water, modernity, and urban fragmentation

in Mumbai', *Environment and Planning A*, 40, pp. 108–130.

Ghertner, D. (2015) *Rule by aesthetics: World-class city making in Delhi*. Oxford University Press.

Ghertner, D. A. (2010) 'Calculating without numbers: Aesthetic governmentality in Delhi's slums', *Economy and Society*, 39(2), pp. 185–217. d

Ghertner, D. A. (2011) 'Gentrifying the State, Gentrifying Participation: Elite Governance Programs in Delhi', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 35(3), pp. 504–532.

Ghertner, D. A. (2012) 'Nuisance Talk and the Propriety of Property: Middle Class Discourses of a Slum-Free Delhi', *Antipode*, 44(4), pp. 1161–1187.

Ghertner, D. A. (2015) 'Why gentrification theory fails in "much of the world"', *City*, 19(4), pp. 552–563.

Ghosh, J., Chandrasekhar, C. P. and Patnaik, P. (2017) 'What Was the Point of Demonetisation?', *The Wire*, 19 March. Available at: <https://thewire.in/books/demonetisation-decoded-extract> (Accessed: 2 August 2018).

Gibson, K. E. (2011) *Street kids : homeless youth, outreach, and policing New York's streets*. New York University Press.

Gilbert, P., Gilbert, J. and Sanghera, J., 2004. A focus group exploration of the impact of izzat, shame, subordination and entrapment on mental health and service use in South Asian women living in Derby. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 7(2), pp.109-130.

Glaser, B.G. and Strauss, A. L. (1967) *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative theory*. New Brunswick and London: Aldine Transaction.

Glover, W. (2007) 'Construing Urban Space as 'Public' in Colonial India: Some Notes from the Punjab', *Jps*, 14, pp. 211–224. Available at: http://www.global.ucsb.edu/punjab/journal_14_2/glover.pdf.

Gowan, T. (2010) *Hobos, Hustlers and Backsliders: Homeless in San Francisco*. University of Minnesota Press.

Graeber, D. (2002) 'The Anthropology of Globalization (with Notes on Neomedievalism, and the End of the Chinese Model of the Nation-State): Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism.; Consumers and Citizens: Globalization and Multicultural Conflicts.; The Anthropol', *American Anthropologist*, 104(4), pp. 1222–1227.

Grewal, I. (1996) *Home and harem: Nation, gender, empire and the cultures of travel*. Duke University Press.

Gupta, A. (2012) *Red tape: bureaucracy, structural violence, and poverty in India*. London: Duke University Press.

Gupta, A. and Ferguson, J. (2002) 'Spatialising states: towards an ethnography of neoliberal governmentality', *American Ethnologist*, 29(4), pp. 981–1002.

Gupte, J. (2017) "'These streets are ours": Mumbai's urban form and security in the vernacular', *Peacebuilding*. Routledge, 5(2), pp. 203–217.

Haan, A. de (1997) 'Rural-Urban Migration and Poverty: The Case of India', *IDS Bulletin*. Wiley/Blackwell (10.1111), 28(2), pp. 35–47.

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (2007) *Ethnography: Principles in practice*. 3rd edn. Routledge.

- Hammersley, P. M. (1995) *The Politics of Social Research*. Sage.
- Hansen, T. . (2001) *Wages of violence: Naming and identity in postcolonial Bombay*. Princeton University Press.
- Hansen, T. B. and Stepputat, F. (2001) *States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State*, Duke University Press. Durham N.C.:Duke University Press.
- Hansen, T. B. and Verkaaik, O. (2009) 'Introduction-Urban Charisma On Everyday Mythologies in the City', *Critique of Anthropology*, 29(1), pp. 5–26.
- Harris, A. (2018) 'Engineering Formality: Flyover and Skywalk Construction in Mumbai', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 42(2), pp. 295–314.
- Harrison, P. (2007) 'The space between us: Opening remarks on the concept of dwelling', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 25(4), pp. 625–647.
- Harvey, D. (1978) 'The urban process under capitalism: a framework for analysis', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 2(1–3), pp. 101–131.
- Hay, I. (2010) 'Ethical Practice in Geographical Research', in Clifford, N., French, S., and Valentine, G. (eds) *Key Methods in Geography*. SAGE, pp. 35–48.
- Hecht, T. (1998) *At home in the street: Street children of Northeast Brazil*. Cambridge University Press.
- Heidegger, M. and Krell, D. F. (1993) 'Building Dwelling Thinking', in *Basic writings : from Being and time (1927) to The task of thinking (1964)*. Rev. and e. San Francisco, Calif: HarperSanFrancisco., pp. 343–364.
- Herbert, S. (2000) 'For ethnography', *Progress in Human Geography*, 24(4), pp. 550–

568.

Hooks, B. (1991) *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*. London: Turnaround.

Hutnyk, J. (1996) *The rumour of Calcutta: Tourism, charity and the poverty of representation*. London and New Jersey: Zed Books.

Ingold, T. (2000a) *The perception of the environment : essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill*. London; New York: Routledge.

Ingold, T. (2000b) 'The Temporality of the Landscape (Chapter 11)', *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, 25(2), pp. 189–208.

Ingold, T. (2005) 'Epilogue: Towards a Politics of Dwelling', *Conservation and Society*, 3(2), pp. 501–508.

Jacobs, J. M. (1961) *The death and life of great American cities*. New York: Vintage.

Jeffrey, A., Mcfarlane, C. and Vasudevan, A. (2012) 'Rethinking Enclosure: Space, Subjectivity and the Commons', *Antipode*, 44(4), pp. 1247–1267.

Jha, M. K. and Kumar, P. (2016) 'Homeless Migrants in Mumbai', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 51(26–27), pp. 69–77.

Jones, G. A. and Sanyal, R. (2015) 'Spectacle and Suffering: The Mumbai slum as a worlded space', *Geoforum*. Elsevier Ltd, 65, pp. 431–439.

Jones, O. (2009) 'Dwelling', pp. 266–272. *International encyclopedia of human geography. Volume one*. Edited by Rob Kitchin and Nigel Thrift. Elsevier.

Kamlani, J. (2014) *Scent of Yesterday: My Journey from Lotus Roots to Sugarplum Dreams*. Createspace Independent .

- Karkaria, B. (2017) “‘Dark forces will be unleashed’: the fire temple v the Mumbai metro | Cities | The Guardian”, *The Guardian*, 14 December. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/dec/14/metro-tunnel-mumbai-cricket-zoroastrian-india> (Accessed: 18 September 2018).
- Kaviraj, S. (1997) ‘Filth and the Public Sphere: Concepts and Practices about Space in Calcutta’, *Public Culture*, 10(1), pp. 83–113.
- Kidambi, P. (2016) *The making of an Indian metropolis : colonial governance and public culture in Bombay*. Aldershot ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Kothari, M. (2003) ‘Privatising human rights—the impact of globalisation on adequate housing, water and sanitation’, *Social Watch Report*. Available at: <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/APCITY/UNPAN010131.pdf>.
- Lancione, M., (2018), ‘The politics of embodied urban precarity: Roma people and the fight for housing in Bucharest’, Romania. *Geoforum*.
- Lees, L., Shin, H. B. and López Morales, E. (2016) *Planetary gentrification*. Polity Press, Oxford.
- Letherby, G. (2017) ‘Whose life is it anyway? Issues of power, empowerment, ethics and responsibility’, in *Feminist Research in Theory and Practice*. McGraw-Hill Education, pp. 99–122.
- Ley, D. (1988) ‘Interpretive social research in the inner city.’, *Research in human geography*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 121–38.
- Loukaitou-Sideris, A Ehrenfeucht, R. (2009) *Sidewalk: conflicts and negotiation over*

public space. The MIT Press, Cambridge.

Mallett, S. (2004) 'Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature', *The Sociological Review*, 52(1), pp. 62–89.

Mander, H. (2007) 'Living Rough: Surviving City Streets - A study of homeless populations in Delhi, Chennai, Patna and Madurai', *Living Rough: Surviving City Streets*, pp. 1–100.

Mander, H. (2010) 'Barefoot: Death on the streets', *The Hindu*, 2 October. Available at: https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/columns/Harsh_Mander/Barefoot-Death-on-the-streets/article15766411.ece (Accessed: 20 September 2018).

Marcus, G. E. and Fischer, M. M. J. (1986) *Anthropology as cultural critique: an experimental moment in the human sciences*. University of Chicago Press.

Massey, D. (1991) 'A Global Sense of Place', *Marxism Today*, 35, pp. 315–323.

Massey, D. B. (1994) *Space, Place, and Gender*, *Space, Place and Gender*.

McDowell, L. (ED) (1997) *Undoing place?: a geographical reader*. Arnold.

McFarlane, C. (2011) *Learning the City: Knowledge and Translocal Assemblage*, *Learning the City: Knowledge and Translocal Assemblage*. Edited by John Wiley & Sons.

McFarlane, C. (2004) 'Geographical imaginations and spaces of political engagement: Examples from the Indian Alliance', *Antipode*, 36(5), pp. 890–916.

McFarlane, C. (2011) *Learning the city: knowledge and translocal assemblage*. John Wiley & Sons.

McFarlane, C. (2011) 'The city as assemblage: Dwelling and urban space', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 29(4), pp. 649–671.

McFarlane, C. (2012) 'Rethinking Informality: Politics, Crisis, and the City', *Planning Theory and Practice*, 13(1), pp. 89–108.

MCGM (2016) *VitalStatisticsReport, Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai, India*.

Available at:

https://portal.mcgm.gov.in/irj/portal/anonymous/qlvitalstatsreport?guest_user=english

(Accessed: 4 October 2018).

Mehta, S. (2009) *Maximum city: Bombay lost and found*. Vintage.

Meier, L. and Frank, S. (2016) 'Dwelling in mobile times: places, practices and contestations', *Cultural Studies*, 30(3), pp. 362–375.

Meth, P. (2003) 'Rethinking the “domus” in domestic violence: Homelessness, space and domestic violence in South Africa', *Geoforum*, 34(3), pp. 317–327.

Meth, P. (2013) 'Committees, witchdoctors and the “mother-body”: Everyday politics in the township of Cato Manor, South Africa', *Habitat International*. Elsevier Ltd, 39, pp. 269–277.

Mitchell, D. (1997) 'The Annihilation of Space by Law: Anti-Homeless Laws in the United States', *Antipode*, 29(1990), pp. 303–335.

Mitchell, T. (1991) 'The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics', *The American Political Science Review*, 85(1), pp. 77–96.

Mohanty, I. R. (2013) 'The Term “Eve-Teasing” Must Die', *Wall Street Journal*. India Real Time - WSJ. Available at: <https://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2013/04/21/the->

term-eve-teasing-must-die/ (Accessed: 1 October 2018).

Morris, B. (2004) 'What we talk about when talk about "walking in the city"', *Cultural Studies*, 18:5(2), pp. 675–697.

Mumbai Social Action (2012) *Alternative Realities Film - With homeless, for dignity on Vimeo*. Available at: <https://vimeo.com/52339849> (Accessed: 17 September 2018).

Munck, R., (2013), 'The Precariat: a view from the South', *Third World Quarterly*, 34(5), pp.747-762.

Mundle, S. (2018) 'Swachh Bharat Mission: A remarkable transformation - Livemint', *livemint*, 14 June. Available at: <https://www.livemint.com/Opinion/T6KY7kJw2ZYYWzChGxJLkJ/Swachh-Bharat-Mission-a-remarkable-transformation.html> (Accessed: 14 September 2018).

Muñoz, S., (2018), 'Urban Precarity and Home: There Is No "Right to the City"', *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 108(2), pp.370-379.

Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (no date) *About Mumbai - Welcome to Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai, India*. Available at: http://www.mcgm.gov.in/irj/portal/anonymous?guest_user=english (Accessed: 24 July 2018).

Nair, J. (2005) *The promise of the metropolis : Bangalore's twentieth century*. Oxford University Press.

Nakamura, C. (2014a) 'Mumbai's quiet histories: Critical intersections of the urban poor, historical struggles, and heritage spaces', *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 14(3), pp. 271–295.

Naples, N. (1996) 'A Feminist Revisiting of the Insider / Outsider Debate', 19(I), pp. 83–106.

Neuwirth, R. (2016) *Shadow cities: a billion squatters, a new urban world*. Routledge.

O'Neill, B. (2014) 'Cast Aside: Boredom, Downward Mobility, and Homelessness in Post-Communist Bucharest', *Cultural Anthropology*, 29(1), pp. 8–31.

Ong, A. (2006) *Neoliberalism as exception : mutations in citizenship and sovereignty*. Duke University Press.

Di Palma, V., Periton, D. and Lathouri, M. (2008) *Intimate metropolis: urban subjects in the modern city*. Routledge. Routledge.

Patel, S. (1990) 'Street Children, hotel boys and children of pavement dwellers and construction workers in Bombay - how they meet their daily needs', *Environment & Urbanization*, 2(2), pp. 9–26.

Phadke, S. (2005) "'You Can Be Lonely in a Crowd'", *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 12(1), pp. 41–62.

Phadke, S. (2013) 'Unfriendly bodies, hostile cities: reflections on loitering and gendered public spaces', *Economic & political weekly*, 48(39), pp. 50–59.

Phadke, S., Ranade, S. and Khan, S. (2009) 'Why loiter? Radical possibilities for gendered dissent', in *Dissent and Cultural Resistance in Asia's Cities*. Routledge, pp. 199–217.

Pons, P. O. (2003) 'Being-on-Holiday: Tourist Dwelling, Bodies and Place', *Tourist Studies*, 3(1), pp. 47–66.

Rajagopal, A. (2002) 'Violence of Commodity Aesthetics: Hawkers, Demolition Raids

- and a New Regime of Consumption', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37(1), pp. 65–76.
- Ramanathan, U. (2008) 'Ostensible poverty, beggary and the law', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43(44), pp. 33–44.
- Rao, U. (2013) 'Tolerated encroachment: Resettlement policies and the negotiation of the licit/illicit divide in an indian metropolis', *Cultural Anthropology*, 28(4), pp. 760–779.
- Roy, A. (2009a) 'Civic governmentality: The politics of inclusion in Beirut and Mumbai', *Antipode*, 41(1), pp. 159–179.
- Roy, A. (2009b) 'Why India cannot plan its cities: Informality, insurgence and the idiom of urbanization', *Planning Theory*, 8(1), pp. 76–87.
- Scott, J. C. (1986) 'Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 13, pp. 5–35. doi: 10.1111/j.1469-0691.2011.03558.x/pdf.
- Sen, A. (2004) 'Mumbai slums and the search for a heart _ Ethics, ethnography and dilemmas of studying urban violence. - PDF.pdf', *Anthropology Matters*, 6(1).
- Sen, A. and Thakker, N. R. (2011) 'Prostitution, pee-ing, percussion, and possibilities: Contemporary women documentary film-makers and the city in South Asia', *South Asian Popular Culture*, 9(1), pp. 29–42.
- Sengupta, Y. (2013) 'Children's Day Special - No Anganwadi for homeless', *DNA, India*, 14 November. Available at: <http://www.dnaindia.com/analysis/standpoint-children-s-day-special-no-anganwadi-for-homeless-1919063> (Accessed: 7 August 2018).
- Shah, S. P. (2014) *Street corner secrets: Sex, work, and migration in the city of Mumbai*. Duke University Press.

Silverman, D. (1985) *Qualitative methodology and sociology: describing the social world*. Gower Pub Co.

Simone, A. (2004) 'People as Infrastructure':, *Public Culture*, 16(3), pp. 407–429.

Simone, A., (2016), 'The uninhabitable? In between collapsed yet still rigid distinctions', *Public Culture*, 12(2), pp.135-154.

Smith, N. (2002) 'New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy', *Antipode*, 34(3), pp. 427–450.

Soja, E. (2003) 'Writing the city spatially ¹', *City*, 7(3), pp. 269–280.

Somerville, P. (1997) 'The Social Construction of Home', *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, 14(3), pp. 226–245.

SPARC (1985) *We, the invisible, a census of pavement dwellers*. Mumbai. Available at: [http://sparcindia.org/pdf/articles/We The Invisible.compressed.pdf](http://sparcindia.org/pdf/articles/We%20The%20Invisible.compressed.pdf) (Accessed: 7 October 2018).

Speak, S. (2013) "'Values" as a tool for conceptualising homelessness in the global south', *Habitat International*. Elsevier Ltd, 38, pp. 143–149.

Sukarieh, M. and Tannock, S. (2013) 'On the Problem of Over-researched Communities: The Case of the Shatila Palestinian Refugee Camp in Lebanon', *Sociology*, 47(3), pp. 494–508.

Standing, G. (2014) 'The Precariat-The new dangerous class', *Amalgam*, 6(6-7), pp.115-119.

Swachh Bharat Mission - Gramin, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (no date).

Available at: <http://swachhbharatmission.gov.in/sbmcms/index.htm> (Accessed: 14

September 2018).

Thrift, N. (1999) 'Steps to an ecology of place', in Massey, D., Sarre, P., and Allen, J. (eds) *Human geography today*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 295–352.

Tipple, G. and Speak, S. (2004) 'Attitudes to and interventions in Homelessness: Insights from an International Study', in *In paper delivered to International Conference Adequate and Affordable Housing for All*, pp. 24–27.

Truelove, Y. (2011) '(Re-)Conceptualizing water inequality in Delhi, India through a feminist political ecology framework', *Geoforum*. Elsevier Ltd, 42(2), pp. 143–152.

Tsing, A. (2011) *Friction: An ethnography of global connection*. Edited by Princeton University Press.

Tuan, Y.-F. (1978) 'Sign and Metaphor', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 68(3), pp. 363–372.

Tuan, Y.-F. (1984) *Dominance and Affection*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Turner, J. F. C. (1972) 'Freedom to Build, dweller control of the housing process', in Turner, J. F. C. and Fichter, R. (eds) *The John Turner Archive*. Collier Macmillan.

Tripathi, A. (2016). 'Cognizing Homelessness: A Gaze into the Lived Experiences of the Homeless People in Mumbai. A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work School of Social Work Tata Institute of Social Sciences'.

UN-HABITAT (2015) *SLUM ALMANAC 2015 2016 Tracking Improvement in the Lives of Slum Dweller*. Available at: <https://unhabitat.org/slum-almanac-2015-2016/>.

Urry, J. (2002) *The tourist gaze*. 2nd edn. Sage Publications.

Valentine, G. (1998) 'Food and the Production of the Civilised Street', in Fyfe, N. R. (ed.) *Images of the street : planning, identity, and control in public space*. Routledge, pp. 192–204.

Valentine, G. (1999) 'Imagined Geographies: Geographical knowledge of Self and Others in everyday life', in Massey, D., Allen, J., and Sarre, P. (eds) *Human Geography Today*, pp. 47–61.

Varughese, E. D. (2018a) '(Social) Memory , Movements and Messaging on Tulsi Pipe Road : “ Seeing ” Public Wall Art in Mumbai'. Taylor & Francis, 6401. d

Vasudevan, A. (2015) 'The makeshift city: Towards a global geography of squatting', *Progress in Human Geography*, 39(3), pp. 338–359.

van de Ven, A. (2008) 'Photographing people is wrong: With a camera in Kolkata', *City*, 12(3), pp. 383–390.

Vigh, Henrik (2009) 'Motion Squared: A Second Look at the Concept of Social Navigation', *Anthropological Theory*, Vol. 9(4), pp. 419-438.

Wacquant, L. (2002) 'Scrutinizing the Street: Poverty, Morality, and the Pitfalls of Urban Ethnography', *American Journal of Sociology*, 107(6), pp. 1468–1532.

Wardhaugh, J., 2012. Beyond the Workhouse: Regulating Vagrancy in Goa, India. *Asian Journal of Criminology*, 7(3), pp.205-223.

Watson, A. and Till, K. E. (2010) 'Ethnography and participant observation', in Dydia, D. et al. (eds) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative geography*. 1st edn. London.

Weinstein, L. (2014) *The durable slum: Dharavi and the right to stay put in globalizing*

Mumbai. University of Minnesota Press.

Weinstein, L. (2017) 'Insecurity as confinement: The entrenched politics of staying put in Delhi and Mumbai', *International Sociology*, 32(4), pp. 512–531.

Williams, P. (2013) 'Reproducing Everyday Peace in North India: Process, Politics, and Power', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 103(1), pp. 230–250.

Williams, P., Vira, B. and Chopra, D. (2011) 'Marginality, agency and power: Experiencing the state in contemporary India', *Pacific Affairs*, 84(1), pp. 7–23.

Wolch, J. R. and Dear, M. J. (1993) *Malign neglect: Homelessness in an American city*. Jossey-Bass.

Wright, T. (1997) *Out of place: Homeless mobilizations, subcities, and contested landscapes*. SUNY Press.

Yardley, J. (2012) *In Mumbai, a Campaign Against Restroom Injustice*, *The New York Times*. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/15/world/asia/in-mumbai-a-campaign-against-restroom-injustice.html> (Accessed: 15 September 2018).

Yiftachel, O. (2009a) 'Critical theory and "gray space": Mobilization of the colonized', *City*, 13(2–3), pp. 246–263.

Yiftachel, O. (2009b) 'Theoretical notes on "gray cities": The coming of urban apartheid?', *Planning Theory*, 8(1), pp. 88–100.

Young, I. M. (2005) 'House and Home: *', in *On Female Body Experience*. Oxford University Press, pp. 123–154.

Annexure 1 – Profiles of Key Respondents

Over the course of my fieldwork, although I interacted with members of all the families living on the footpaths, ten individuals emerged as key respondents. I introduce them briefly in this section:

Rekha, 22, was born to Basanti and Ramu in Mahim. Although she did not remember the year of her birth (and therefore provided only a rough estimate of her age) she remembers growing up in the same place “next to the railway line”. She recollected that the place looked very different when she was growing up. She is married to her first cousin, Pattu Babu Chawda and they have two children (and experienced two miscarriages earlier). Unlike other women in the group, I noticed Rekha never actively participated in the basket making activities. For her lack of interest in “domestic” work she was often criticised by women in the group, although she did not seem affected by it. She was known for being short-tempered and often picked fights with passers-by. Rekha dropped out of school after the sixth standard, because she did not like the way her teacher treated her. She spent most of her time looking after her children, chatting in the tea shop nearby, watching movies on her two-inch phone screen, and sitting by the roadside observing traffic.

Ramu Parmar, 55, was my first point of contact in the initial days of fieldwork. He was the first to come to Mumbai from Abu Road in the state of Rajasthan, and establish the basket making trade in Mahim. He is the person who is often contacted by NGOs and civil society organisations when they require participants in their poverty alleviation programmes. Ramu is respected by other footpath dwellers for the contacts he has developed and occupied the maximum amount of space across both the footpaths. Even when the family was away from Mumbai, I never saw anyone take over their spot. In a small diary, which he maintained very carefully, I saw the contact numbers of people who wield influence in the city, including those of top representatives from key political parties in Mumbai. A very active basket maker, Ramu met with an accident midway through my fieldwork and was away from Mumbai for a significant period of time. Upon his return, he spent most of his time lying down and feeling depressed about not being able to work.

Basanti, 45, is Ramu's wife and arrived in Mumbai in 1984 along with Ramu. She helped Ramu make baskets and simultaneously did all the domestic work, like cooking, cleaning and buying groceries. Basanti and Ramu had six children and about eight years ago they lost one of their daughters (aged 22) to an incurable disease. Although most of her children are now married and have created separate dwelling units, Basanti raises her grandson who lost his mother a few years previously. Basanti's youngest child, Krishna, is 10 years old and two years before was arrested under the Prevention of Begging Act. I spent a lot of time with Basanti, visiting the local magistrate court and listening to her worries. She often suffers from terrible headaches and body ache. Earlier quite jovial, Basanti became very depressed after Ramu's accidents and I seldom saw her smile.

Chaman, 56, is Ramu's brother-in-law and lived adjacent to his family along with his wife Viri. Chaman met with an accident in Mahim 15 years ago as he was trying to cross the road. Having lost one leg, Chaman sat by the roadside and wove baskets all day. He also considers himself to be the "eye" of the street and acts as a police informer. Chaman's immobility often acts as an opportunity for the footpath dwellers to entrust him with looking after their belongings and also catering to their customers when they are not around. I learnt from accounts of other respondents that once he hit Viri so hard that she lost the hearing capacity in one of her ears. As a 'senior' member among the basket makers, he often adjudicated the "mandavali" (dispute resolving meetings) between family members.

Deepika, 15, is Chaman's youngest child and one of his three daughters. Although she claimed that she went to school I never saw her attend any lessons during my fieldwork. I was informed by other residents that Deepika had dropped out of school a few years before, when her family began looking for prospective grooms for her. She sang beautifully, loved to paint (all the walls around her dwelling place are filled up with her drawings) and took a keen interest in rearing pets. During the course of my fieldwork, she recorded many of their 'traditional' songs on my dictaphone. Most of these songs were religious in nature and bore messages about the expected roles of women.

Alam Sheikh, 24, lives on the footpath adjoining the Mint Colony. Popularly known as the 'dada' (elder brother in Hindi, this term is colloquially used to refer to someone who

wields power), he is revered by the footpath dwellers for solving conflicts between people. Although he does not participate in the “mandavali” taking place between the basket makers, he is called upon to resolve conflicts that take place between the footpath dwellers and ‘outsiders’, such as passers-by, lower-level members of the municipality, customers and commuters on the road. He is a member of one of the few families on the footpath that were not basket makers and lives on the footpath with his mother, elder sister and three of her daughters. Alam met with a train accident (although some respondents claim that it was an attempted suicide) a few years previously, in which he lost his left leg. Through the intervention of an NGO, Alam received disability benefits which enabled him to set up a mobile shop that he ran from his home. His shop, where he sells local sweets, savouries and items of everyday household needs, is very popular among the footpath dwellers. Alam and Rekha are close friends and both of them spent a lot of time in the local tea shop, often lecturing younger men of the group on topics ranging from recent political developments to ‘alternative’ job options.

Azra, 45, lives with her son and daughter-in-law. She suffers from a chronic heart disease and spent a lot of her time resting by the roadside. Abandoned by her husband, she worked many jobs as a part-time maid in middle-class households nearby, to raise her son in order to give him a “good future”. Although her son looks after the household now, she lamented his lack of capability in undertaking a “proper job”. Many respondents view her as a “matlabi” (opportunist) because according to them she took “wrong advantage” of a housing scheme (I have explained the friction among the footpath dwellers around housing in more detail in Chapter 5).

Tajunbee, 67, lives alone on the footpath adjoining the railway track. She arrived in Mumbai eight years prior to the Mumbai riot and subsequently lost her daughter in the violence. Unlike other footpath homes, her place is fully covered, completely blocking out the view from the street. To enter her tent, one has to go to the side and squeeze through a tiny opening. On the inside, her home looks very well-organised and one will notice the stacks of eggs immediately upon entering. During the day, she sells boiled eggs to earn her living and earns a meagre sum from this activity. Although she had family members in Mumbai, she preferred to live in Mahim because it gave her a sense of independence.

Sangeeta, 21, lives on the footpath adjoining the Mint Quarters and is Rekha's immediate neighbour. She was born and raised in Mahim and lives on the footpath with her husband and three children. Before the road next to which she lives was widened, she used to stay next to Alam. However, constant space-related skirmishes with members of Alam's family prompted them to move to their current location. She told me that her father "bought" the spot in which she dwells as a part of her dowry for Rs 1500 (equivalent to 15.60 GBP) from one of the footpath dwellers and since then they have been living there. She and her husband, Kiran, worked all day and specialised in making decorative household items. She liked to be well-dressed all the time and was well-organised with her products. The front of her home was always decorated with the finished products that she and Kiran wove throughout the day.

Tati, 22, born and raised in the neighbourhood, lives with her husband Jabra. She was very fond of her pet dog Sheeru and took pride in him for being the protector of the footpath dwellers. Being married for more than 8 years and unable to bear a child, she felt stigmatised among the group of footpath dwellers. For the past four years, she had been organising an annual religious festival (Ganpati Puja) quite ceremoniously on the footpath. She and her husband spent all their annual income on this festival, which they saved very painstakingly throughout the year. This festival also put her family in huge debt and therefore she was always on the look-out for extra income opportunities. While her husband took up additional day jobs, such as working as a temporary construction worker, Tati occasionally worked as a vendor in the local trains in Mumbai.
