Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be submitted in whole or in part to any other university for the award of any other degree.

Signature…………………………………………………………………

Making Delhi Like Paris:

Space and the Politics of Development in an East Delhi
Resettlement Colony

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Abstract

This thesis traces the settlement and history of an East Delhi resettlement colony, and the everyday and associational lives of its residents. Settled by the state at the height of the Emergency in 1976, from *jhuggies* demolished at the centre of the city, Punarvaspur sits within a longer history and politics of planning by the colonial and postcolonial developmental state. As such, Punarvaspur and neighbourhoods like it have long been, and continue to be the site of debates and anxieties about the place of 'the urban poor' in the city, and of much NGO and political work. As the subjects of large-scale demolitions of housing and livelihood in the course of resettlement, residents' experience of these debates has been far from abstract. Even after 30 years, the aftermath of the resettlement still shapes social relations in the close physical spaces of Punarvaspur. For residents their frequent designation as 'slum dwellers' makes them the subject of much development work, while by extension also labelling them as 'illegal' ex-squatters.

Drawing on the work of social theorists and geographers, particularly the work of Henri Lefebvre and Doreen Massey, the main aim of this thesis is to explore the spatial dimensions of the politics of development, through the lived experiences and spatial practices of its residents. By tracing how the socio-historical roots of planners' dominant 'representations of space' are neither fixed, static, nor uniform, it can be seen how they are modified by the 'spatial practices' and lived experiences of city dwellers as they are traced out over the fabric of Delhi. For instance, the space of the neighbourhood becomes a medium for the organisation and articulation of social relations in its public spaces. This can been seen in the marking of public spaces by groups through speech, organisational affiliations and concrete devotional shrines. Similarly, residents, NGOs, local politicians and others deploy ideas of morality, respectability, and difference to limit and enhance the agency and ability of themselves and others to act in the public space of the neighbourhood. In this way certain locales are understood as being in need of development as relationships around development are inscribed in space.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Alison Cornish.

ॐ 1960 – 2005 ॐ

CONTENTS

Glossary

alag	separate, different
angan	courtyard
anganwadi	crèche
anguti-chaap	thumbprint (often used in lieu of a signature)
anparh	illiterate
araam	rest, ease (also convenient)
araam se	leisurely, comfortably
atank	terror
badnami	a bad reputation (literally, bad name)
bahaar	outside
bahu	daughter-in-law
balwadi	crèche, see *anganwadi*
baniyan	vest
barat ghar	wedding/community halls
bare admi	'big-men', often with a political reputation/connections
basti	neighbourhood/community, usually used to mean 'slum'.
bekar	'useless', (unemployed)
bhajaan	hymn
bhandara	community meal
bindi	small, often circular, decorative item worn (mostly) by Hindu women between but above the eyes
biraderi	kin or caste based group or affiliation
chabutara	small shrine
chalu	(slang) 'smart'/clever often with a negative tone
chamcha	'yes-man', sycophant
chammach	spoon
chanda	a collection, donation, contribution
charpoy	light, usually wood framed, rope strung bed
chettai	woven bamboo mats
chhota/i/e	small, little
chowk	crossroads
chulha	hearth, kitchen
chunni	See *dupatta*
'colony'	North Indian term for formal/planned settlement
dakshin	south
dargarh	tomb of a Muslim saint (*pir*)
devar	husband's younger brother (HyB)
'discom'	newly privatised electricity distribution company
diya	small devotional oil/butter lamp
dupatta	long scarf worn with *salwar kameez*
gaali	verbal terms of abuse, swearing
gali	lane
gandegi	dirt, filth
gaon	village
gaonvar	(villager) – 'bumpkin'
garib	poor
garibii	poor people
ghari	vehicle
ghat	steps down to a river
gherao	form of protest where the object of the protest (i.e. government officer, politician) is surrounded (often in their office) by protestors, often having the effect of restraining their movements, until the protestors demands are met.
ghunghat	veiling (covering head and/or face) by women in front of unknown or more senior men
goonda	'goon', gangster

Gujjar	caste group with a local reputation for 'gangsterism'.
gurudwara	Sikh temple
gutka	chopped betel nut for chewing (including sometimes tobacco)
haat	weekly market
haldi-kumkum	festival; exchange of turmeric (*haldi*) and vermillion (*kumkum*) by women in recognition of their married status
halwa	type of sweet
'hi-fi' log	colloquialism referring to wealthier people
hunar	skill, craftsmanship
Idgarh	area set aside for the overflow of worshipers at Eid prayers
ithihad	unity
jaan-pechaan	'known-recognised' people
Jaat	caste group
jagraan	Hindu devotional musical performance
jagrook	awareness/consciousness
jangal	'jungle', i.e. waste-land, barren ground, uncultivated scrub
jansunwai	public hearing
jhuggi (jhompri)	'shack'
ji-huzari	'yes-man'
kaam	work
kabari	rag-picking/waste sorting and merchanting trade
kabristan	Muslim graveyard
kabza lena	to 'capture', occupy
kachcha	temporary, unripe, uncooked, immature (antonym: *pakka*)
kachera	Rubbish
karwa chauth	festival; fasting and *puja* by married women for the long life of their husbands.
katputli	puppet
katra	courtyard enclaves or lanes associated with extended families in Old Delhi (Shahjehanabad)
kendra	centre
kirana	general grocery, dry goods store
kurta	long loose tunic worn by men and women over different kinds of trousers
kurta pajama	long, loose tunic and trousers worn by men
log	people
Lok Sabha	directly elected lower chamber of Parliament
loot-maar	(armed) robbery
lunghi	long cloth, wrapped around the waist like a sarong, worn by men.
maachli mandi	fish market
madarsa	Muslim school
Madrasi	North Indian term for person from South India
mahaul	atmosphere, environment, situation
mala	flower garland, mostly produced as *puja* offerings
mandi	market
mandir	temple
masjid	mosque
'matric'	10th standard matriculation
mohalla	neighbourhood
murti	devotional statue of Hindu god
namaaz	Muslim prayers
narivadi	feminist/ism
nasbandi	sterilisation
nawab	Mughal era governor, ruler.
neta	politician
niche	lower
pakka	permanent, cooked, mature, 'concrete'
paan	areca nut, betel leaf preparation, the remains of which are often

	spat into the street
pande	See *pandit*
Pandit	Brahmin
parchi	paper slip, often giving permission
parhe-likhe	study/education (literally, reading-writing)
parishad	council
patwari	record keeper, clerk
patila	large cooking pot
pallu	long loose end of a *sari*
pir	Muslim 'saint'
pradhan	'community' leader, usually local political figure
prasad	Hindu devotional offering, usually distributed to amongst the donors and others after it has been offered
puja	devotional offering and prayers to Hindu god(s)
pujari	Hindu priest
raksha	defence, security, protection
razai	thin cotton filled quilt/blanket
rehri	handcart (see *thela*)
rishtedar	(family) relations
sabzi mandi	vegetable market
safai karamchari	'sweeper'/sanitation worker
salwar kameez	loose tunic and trousers worn by women
sanstha	'organisation' often, but not exclusively of 'NGO' type.
sarak	street
sari	long piece of cloth worn by women, wrapped round the lower body as a skirt, before being draped up over the shoulder to cover the upper body.
sarkar	government
sas	mother-in-law
Scheduled Caste (SC)	caste; formerly considered 'Untouchable', listed in a schedule to the Constitution. Frequently abbreviated to 'SC'.
seema	border, limit
sena	army
shaadi	wedding, marriage
shamshan ghat	cremation ground
shauq	'fondness', fancy, pleasure, activity done for fun
shehr	city
silai	sewing
soochna	information, advice
sundar	beautiful
(Police) thanna	police station/post
tabla	percussive instrument composed of two small hand drums producing differently pitched notes
tang	tight, squashed, hard-pressed, tense
thela	handcart (also *rehri*)
thekedar	contractor
thekedari	contract work
tikka	red powder devotional mark
time pass	literally, a way to pass the time, but with connotations of leisure and pleasurable passing of the time.
Valmiki	caste group; now 'Scheduled Caste', formerly Untouchable
vikas	development
Yadav	a 'general' caste, traditionally involved in dairying and cattle raising.
zabardasti	forceful/violent/coercion
zameen	land

Acronyms

BSS	Bharat Sevak Samj
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CNG	Compressed Natural Gas
DDA	Delhi Development Authority
DESU	Delhi Electricity Supply Undertaking (former public electricity board – now privatised and broken up into smaller companies).
DIT	Delhi Improvement Trust
DJB	Delhi Jal (water) Board
DMP	Delhi Master Plan
GAD	'Gender And Development'
GoI	Government of India
'ITO'	An area in Delhi, the location of many Delhi Government buildings.
JJ	*jhuggi jhompri*
NDMC	New Delhi Metropolitan Corporation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
MISA	Maintenance of Internal Security Act
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MCD	Metropolitan Corporation of Delhi
PDS	Public Distribution System (for the distribution of subsidised food grains, sugar and kerosene via 'ration shops')
PIL	Public Interest Litigation
PWD	Public Works Department
RTI	Right to Information
RWA	Residents Welfare Association
SC	Scheduled Caste
ST	Scheduled Tribe
Slum and JJ Wing	Slum and *Jhuggi jhompri* department of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi
TCPO	Town and Country Planning Organisation
TPO	Town Planning Organisation
UP	Uttar Pradesh (federal state)
WID	'Women In Development'
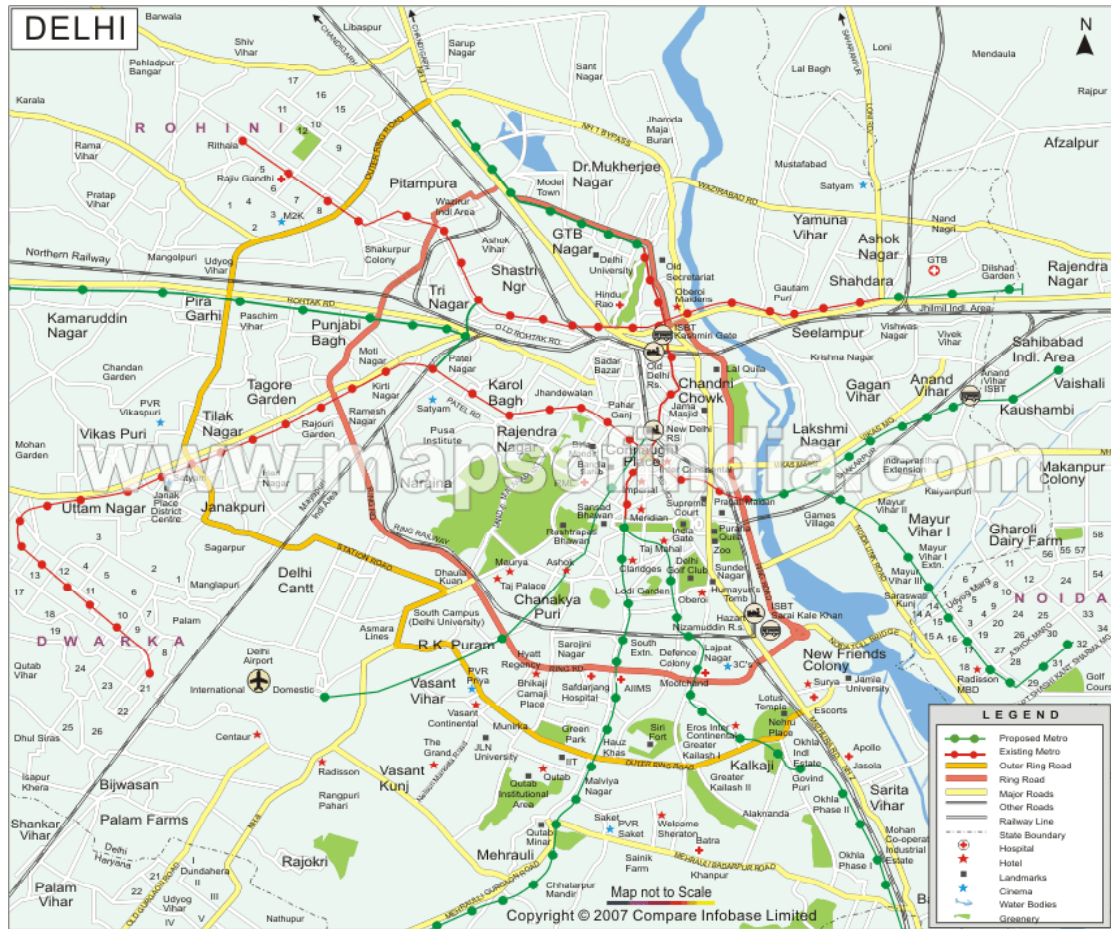
MAP OF DELHI

Punarvaspur is located near GTB government hospital, north east of Shahdara.
(Copyright mapsofindia.com)

Outline map of Punarvaspur, East Delhi

BORDER ROAD <------>

(never built)

JJ area - demolished 2001

(* masjid

SITE FOR D.E.I.D.C.

JJ JJ (* masjid

JJ

CH CH CH CH   BACK LANE   JJ

kabari sorting area

JJ

OLD PUNARVASPUR

PARK

church

▷ mandir

PARK

▷ mandir

PRIMARY SCHOOL

D

A

CH

▷ mandir

MIDDLE STREET

CH

CH

B

▷ mandir

E

(* masjid complex

PUNVARVASPUR BUS DEPOT (end of line terminal)

Valmiki Ashram/ mandir

C

▷ mandir

CH

▷ mandir

▷ Naresh Kumar's mandir

CH

MAIN MARKET/STREET

Gulshan Extension ('private' colony)

F

(* masjid

GULSHAN EXTENSION (more shops and services, colony still in process of being built over time, a number of empty plots remain)

(* masjid

DDA Flats

▷ mandir

kabari/waste sorting/recycling area

(* masjid

large JJ area

KEY PLAN
SCALE = 1 MM EA.

kabristan/graveyard

▷ mandir = temple

(* masjid = mosque

CH = chabutara (small Hindu shrine)

A, B, C, D, E, F - refer to residential blocks/addresses

OUTLINE MAP OF PUNARVASPUR

1

INTRODUCTION

"A stranger could drive through Miguel Street and just say 'Slum!' because he could see no more. But we, who lived there, saw our street as a world, where everybody was quite different from everybody else."
VS Naipaul (2000, 59)

This thesis is an ethnography of a Delhi resettlement colony and the everyday and associational lives of its residents. Settled by the state at the height of the Emergency in 1976, from *jhuggies*[1] demolished at the centre of the city, Punarvaspur[2] sits within a longer history and politics of planning by the colonial and postcolonial developmental state. As such, Punarvaspur and neighbourhoods like it have long been, and continue to be the site of debates and anxieties about the place of 'the urban poor' in the city, and of much NGO and political work. Throughout its history as a resettlement colony, these anxieties have continued to generate troubling questions, both within and beyond the planned confines of the neighbourhood. As the subjects of large-scale demolitions of housing and livelihood in the course of resettlement, residents' experience of these debates has been far from abstract. Even after 30 years, the aftermath of the resettlement still shapes social relations in the close physical spaces of Punarvaspur. For residents their frequent designation as 'slum dwellers' and by extension 'illegal' ex-squatters, is juxtaposed with anxieties about the uncertainty of neighbours' identities, the need to maintain reputations for morality and respectability, while keeping up cordial everyday relations with neighbours, and their own hopes for the good life.

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[1] *jhuggi* – 'shack'. Varying from the flimsiest tarpaulin and sticks, to '*pakka*' (permanent, firm), fully concrete houses of more than one floor, they retain a sense of impermanence, as *jhuggies* are usually understood to be 'illegally' built on that ground without permission.

[2] In this thesis, all the names of people, places and organisations that might allow potential, contemporary identification, are pseudonyms. The exceptions to this are public figures such as the Chief Minister of Delhi, Sheila Dixit and areas of the city otherwise unrelated to people in the present. 'Punarvaspur', which approximates to 'Resettlementville', reflects naming style of resettlement colonies in Delhi, which range from the pious to the utilitarian. Various residents of 'Punarvaspur' speculated with me on the origins of colony names; perhaps they reflected the religion of the expected population, Hindu in the case of 'Nand Nagri' or 'Trilok-puri'; Muslim for 'Jehangir-puri' after the Mughal Emperor, even if this far from reflects actual populations. Others objected on the grounds of secularism, citing the prosaic 'Dakshinpuri' (southern *(dakshin)* Delhi), 'Seemapuri', on the Delhi-UP border *(seema)*, while perverse humour or wild optimism seemed to motivate others e.g. 'Sundarnagri' *(sundar* – beautiful). This is in contrast to tactics of claiming political patronage evident in the names of many *jhuggi* clusters, e.g. the many 'Nehru', Indira', 'Rajiv' and 'Sonia' Camps.

Loic Wacquant recently argued that there is a need in urban sociology for the urgent repoliticisation of concepts. Not by taking sides for or against them, but by examining the concepts through which "spatial approaches appear self-evident, self-generated, or left unexplained when in reality they track the extent to which the state works or fails to equalise basic life conditions and strategies across places." (2008, 284).

While Wacquant writes of marginality in Europe and America, in this thesis I suggest that a similar study of the powerful (or disempowering) role of space and place allows the tracking of assumptions, exclusions or the 'fixing' of people within particular structural relationships that underlie otherwise innocuous concepts and practices of development. The examination of the spatial practices in an area opens up insights into the hierarchies that underpin the structures and programmes of many development organisations (e.g. the 'head office'/'field office' divide), or the stigmatised or *badnami* (bad name) quality of resettlement colonies. Conversely, attention to people's day-to-day, lived experiences also begins to disaggregate apparently dominant discourses of development about the 'nature' of a space, by shifting the meaning of the place.

Drawing on theorisations of space and place as social phenomena, I examine how the neighbourhood is constituted as a place in need of development, through a thick "constellation of social relations" (Massey 1994, 154). Here, the role of space is important to understand the construction of these social relations as they are articulated at different scales; from the day to day level of the neighbourhood, to those reaching across the city, and further beyond on a global scale. This co-construction of social relations and spaces, I argue, gives us an insight into the dynamics of specific locales, like Punarvaspur, which make up much of the complex, shifting fabric of contemporary, urbanising India. Furthermore, this offers a much more contextual and dynamic approach to understanding civil society and the politics of development, as they are experienced within people's everyday lives in working class neighbourhoods like Punarvaspur.

From this perspective, I explore how the space of the neighbourhood operates as a medium for the organisation and articulation of social relations by residents. I examine how residents work on this space, to shape their interactions through the marking of public spaces by groups in speech, organisational affiliations and concrete devotional shrines. I look at how residents, NGOs, local politicians and others deploy ideas of morality and respectability, of 'good people', 'small people' and difference ('those people') to limit and enhance their own agency and of others in their ability to act in the public space of the neighbourhood. These interactions are also shaped and informed by normative ideals of what certain organisations 'should' and 'should not'

do. Concerns about respectability and the 'proper' behaviour of men, women, NGOs and politicians in the neighbourhood query conventional understandings of these concerns as the preserve of 'middle class', and are crucial for comprehending the basis of people's engagement with others, and with these organisations. They also emphasise the heterogeneity of residents, typically depicted as the uniform targets of development.

How should we approach and understand places like Punarvaspur, their location and wider interrelationships in cities like Delhi? Typically urban India has been approached in two ways; the more macro-level, quantitatively orientated studies of policy analysts, economists and urban planners (e.g. Mitra 1994; Ramachandran 1989; Sandhu 2003), or through an interest in urban ways of living (Dupont et al. 2000; the *Bombay* series (Patel and Thorner 1995a; 1995b; Patel and Masselos 2003)); examining novel forms of sociality in the city (e.g. the Sarai Readers, especially 2002), or the urban as an imaginative form, particularly as it is associated with 'India's new middle classes' (e.g. Fernandes 2006; Mazzarella 2003). Both approaches have tended to be concerned with the transformations of various kinds, often the effect of the city and urbanisation on 'traditional' sociological forms (e.g. the family and kinship, caste, or religion e.g. Sharma 1986; Vatuk 1972; Lynch 1969), or where the city is central to the study of urban life, but appears as a backdrop. Only more recently have cities themselves emerged as subjects (Roy 2003; Nair 2007), and more latterly still, has this expanded to an interest in urban space and places as objects rather than as sites of research (Donner and De Neve 2006, 9; and contributors; Frøystad 2005; Kaur 2001; Fernandes 2004).

An understanding of space and place are central to grasping the specificity and intricacies of a locale like Punarvaspur within the context of the wider city, in so doing to open up an understanding of the significance of the interaction of social relations within and on this locale.

> "Spaces give material expression to and act as loci for creating and promulgating, countering, and negotiating dominant cultural themes that find expression in myriad aspects of cultural life. Spaces are contested precisely because they concretise the fundamental and recurring, but otherwise unexamined, ideological, and social frameworks that structure practice" (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 2002, 18).

Consequently the way people perceive, move through, make assertions about and situate themselves in space and in relation to others, offers an insight into these social frameworks of social life as they are worked through, contested and practiced in

everyday life. In more abstract terms, Edward Soja argues for the integration of 'spatiality' with 'historicality' and sociality in the imagination and interpretation of the experience of everyday life (1996, 2). Thus "combining the real and imagined, things and thought on equal terms, or at least not privileging one over the other a priori" Soja argues that this combination makes visible both the lineaments of "spatial representations of power but also the imposing and operational power of spatial representation" (1996, 67).

This understanding of "place as a project" (Dirlik 2001, 23) is important, for as Casey observes that "To live is to live locally, and to know is first of all to know the place one in is in" (1996, 18, in Massey 2004, 7). Hence, it is hard to conceive of a world without place, making it central to the imagination and experience of the world, and the way in which that world is known. This is crucial for anthropology, a discipline founded in fieldwork, which is necessarily carried out in one and often more places. In short, as an interpretive science, necessarily reflexive and located, the project of place runs through anthropology, in both its practice and analysis.

Understanding 'place as a project' forces us to look at processes of place-making, and the convergences, contestation and contradictions as different aspects of identity are fore grounded and backgrounded in a space. In this way, places which are so often seen as static sites in which action takes place, emerge not only as dynamic, but also shape that action. A place-based consciousness requires us to pay attention to the ways in which boundaries are conceptualised and deployed by actors in this process. Boundaries may be physical, symbolic, historical, or discursive – but are also in practice often porous to certain actors, fostering particular kinds of associative lives and organisational structures. This in turn, shapes place. Consequently, attention is also required to study the way in which place is made a project by different social actors, and how it is deployed, opening up insights into the social relations under study.

This alerts us to the different positionalities of actors in social relations, bringing into view the locatedness of their knowledge of each other, their histories and experiences, as part of these social relations (Watts 1999, 89). This can include taking note of how place itself is deployed and used as a concept to stabilise other potentially inflammable concepts like caste and class by giving them a place-based association. In this way place is deployed to give essentialist ballast to social categories. Place is also often deployed to make these categories visible, structuring social relations. Indeed, the place-projects of particular groups offer an insight into webs of diverse and changing social relations that criss-cross the city at all levels, making up the heterogeneous and

rapidly growing contemporary urban neighbourhoods. At a macro-level Dirlik suggests, the emphasis on place in social relations has much to do with globalisation and modernity including 'development'. Place can be 'backgrounded' to define 'universal' categories (e.g. poverty, wealth, the good life), or deployed to assert entitlements intrinsically based in place (e.g. 'place-based' communities, like resettlement colonies), moves which risk missing the heterogeneity of potentially divisive forms of identity (e.g. gender, race, class) (Dirlik 2001, 30-31). But understood in conjunction with place, this offers an insight into the interaction of actors in a locale, and the wider frameworks within which they engage, as mediated through space.

Shifting the scale outwards, from the thick mesh of social relationships which make up the neighbourhood and exchanges in the lanes of Punarvaspur, I trace some of these social relations, to find another node of interactions, at an NGO workshop. Attendees included not only NGOs, but also residents of Punarvaspur and other 'fieldsites', head office staff, fieldworkers, activists, government bureaucrats and others like myself, brought together to discuss their work in Punarvaspur and neighbourhoods like it. This workshop created an unusual setting for the interaction of actors who are 'imagined' in terms of the location with which they are associated (Punarvaspur or the head office), far more often than they actually meet. In this setting, Punarvaspur is explicitly part of a 'project', but perceptions of Punarvaspur and its state of 'development', shaped participation in the proceedings, which had to be negotiated through class, language and organisational hierarchy; some speakers more able to contribute freely to the 'official' narrative than others. In this way tracing the interweaving of social relations through space in Punarvaspur, also opens up insights into the constraints and possibilities of actors' interrelationships in the place, from residents, to politicians, government officers and civil society organisations. It also offers insights into the discursive structuring of place as a problematic locale and in the broader context of residents' lives.

As Naipaul's epigraph suggests, to declare an area a 'slum' is not only to produce a flattened, monochromatic, categorical understanding of a place, but also to designate its residents, homogenously, as 'slum dwellers' too. Yet, as Naipaul's characters point out, it is from the lived complexities and heterogeneities of everyday life, that this otherwise one-dimensional 'target' or 'problem' becomes instead 'the world'. Based on residents' experiences of everyday life in a resettlement colony, this work seeks to enrich and 'thicken' (Geertz 1973) accounts of associational life, especially those grounded in normative concepts like civil society.

In the following sections of this introductory chapter, I set out and define the key concepts central to this thesis. I discuss and review the theoretical literature on space, place and social relations, morality and respectability, the state, civil society and development, and associations, tactics and strategies. Following this, I introduce the colony of Punarvaspur as the main location of my research. This introduction concludes with a discussion of my methodological approach.

Space, place and social relations

Space and social theory

An understanding of space, and its corollary place, is central to this thesis at a number of different levels. At its most abstract, I argue that space is socially produced, but simultaneously shapes social relations. However, space becomes meaningful to people in specific settings, in 'places', which have historical as well as spatial dimensions, pointing out the temporal dimensions of space. Consequently neither spaces nor the social relations within them are static or homogenous, and while much social life takes place within what are 'public' spaces, the meaning and boundaries of such 'public' spaces shift, and are variably negotiable for different individuals within them.

However, space has not always been central to anthropology's concerns, subsumed within general observations, studies of specific rituals or the house (Low 1996, 384; 1999; Lawrence-Zuniga 2002, 1). Indeed, in the mid-20th century, space seemed to drop out of social theory more generally (Soja 1989, 31), appearing to serve simply as a backdrop for action, subject to "passivity and measurement rather than action and meaning." (ibid., 37). Space in these terms was understood as "strictly geometrical", in absolute and 'Euclidean' terms, or simply as empty (Lefebvre 1991, 1). Onto this spatial canvas, a planner's blueprint for modernisation might be laid out, the arrangement of a village could stand as a generic microcosm for rural India (Jodhka 1998), and social interactions could be mapped and 'peoples' located[3]. Yet, from the 1970s, social theorists slowly began to question this apparent passivity of space, to challenge what they saw as the privileging of time over space in Western philosophy and social analysis. Michel Foucault wrote, "Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic" (1980, 70).

The experiential impact of this passive understanding of space, in the form of grand scale town planning troubled Henri Lefebvre, who found himself unsettled by his

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[3] E.g. Map of 'Distribution of peoples' in *African Political Systems*, (Fortes & Evans-Pritchard 1940, 2).

ambivalent reaction to French 'New Towns' (Merrifield 2006, 62). This disconcertion propelled him to challenge prevailing philosophical approaches to space, particularly in the Cartesian tradition, and to oppose on ideological grounds the apparent binary split between 'physical space' (nature), 'mental space' (abstract (i.e. mathematical) notions of space), arguing instead that space is social (Lefebvre 1991, 27). This division and fragmentation of space, he regarded as a form of mystification, and in *The Production of Space* ([1974] 1991) he expanded Marx's theory of production to argue that space is above all social, and importantly, that it is actively 'produced'[4] like other commodities (Merrifield 2006, 107). 'De-naturalising' space by illustrating its social nature, Lefebvre also demonstrated that social space is shot through with power relations.

Lefebvre set out a "conceptual triad" to apprehend this process of the production of social space. 'Representations of space' are 'conceived' spaces, "the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers… all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived, with what is conceived" so that "[t]his is the dominant space in any society" (Lefebvre 1991, 33, 35). While representations of space are abstract, Lefebvre points out that they also play a part in social and political practice (1991, 41), appearing in signs, models, and jargon (1991, 35).

By contrast, 'Representational spaces' are "space[s] directly lived through [their] associated images and symbols" (1991, 39); the spaces we experience in everyday life, may not always think about specifically, but certainly 'feel'. "[Representational space] has an affective kernel or centre: Ego, bed, bedroom, dwelling, house; …It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations," and is often tied up with emotional referents, personal and public histories. Where representations of space often emerge as constructions, programmes, or policies, as much as concrete structures, the products of representational spaces are symbolic, they are 'perceived' space (1991, 42).

'Spatial practices' which "secrete that society's space;" (ibid.; 38), fall somewhere between the other two categories. It is through these practices that people live in and decipher space. This could be the routes that people take to work; how an individual's interaction with other people and the social and physical structures around them, shape that individual's own and other people's perceptions of the world. In the closeness of spatial practices to 'perceived' spaces, they reflect people's imaginations

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[4] "[S]pace thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power; yet that, as such, it escapes in part from those who would make use of it." (Lefebvre 1991, 26)

about a space, where monuments or landmarks "aid or deter a person's sense of location and the manner in which a persons acts." (Merrifield 2006, 110). Yet spatial practices in their day-to-day, taken-for-granted way are also "clandestine and underground" writes Sheilds (2004, 210), suggesting and prompting "revolutionary restructurings of institutionalised discourses of space and new modes of spatial praxis, such as that of squatters, illegal aliens and Third World slum dwellers, who fashion a spatial presence and practice outside of the norms of the prevailing (enforced) social spatialisation". This brings to mind de Certeau's work (1988, xix) for whom, the opportunistic nature of 'tactics' in spaces are similar to 'spatial practices' in their immanent, resourceful use of space which is already there.

From Punarvaspur's conceptualisation in graphical form on a blueprint, the history, development and lived experience of those who have lived and worked in the locale, offers a valuable example of the production of space and the interconnection of the three modes in which Lefebvre suggests that it is lived. In its blueprint form, in many ways Punarvaspur is a good example of the 'representation of space'. Yet, exactly whose representation of space, and how a representation of space might become physical lived space in practice is more complicated and contested than Lefebvre's categories might initially suggest. Punarvaspur has been lived and shaped by a variety of ideas about the place, giving it life as a representational space, as residents and others have engaged with it in their daily lives, negotiating and tracing spatial practices through it. In the chapter following this introduction, I examine the different conceptualisations of Delhi's urban space as it has been radically reshaped and contested from the period after the 1857 uprising, through the nationalist and postcolonial periods. Importantly, the question of the place of 'the urban poor' in Delhi, and the debates around the policy of resettlement illustrate the heterogeneous and contested nature of the these conceptualisations and 'representations of space' in the city, in particular the range of differing views of how the city should be apprehended, understood, and acted upon.

In chapters 4 and 5, 'representational space', and 'spatial practices' are shown to be important for understanding how people perceive the space of the neighbourhood[5], and how these representations and practices act on themselves and others in it. Shields points out, "As well as being a *product*, Lefebvre reminds us that space is a *medium*." (2004, 212, original emphasis). In Punarvaspur, the space of the neighbourhood can be

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[5] Following Appadurai's discussion of locality (below), I use the term 'neighbourhood' "to refer to the actually existing social forms in which locality, as a dimension or value is variably realised. Neighbourhoods, in this usage, are situated communities characterised by their actuality, whether spatial or virtual, and their potential for social reproduction." (1996, 179)

seen as a medium for ideas about 'morality' and 'respectability' in public spaces, and subject to work for its 'improvement' as experiential 'representational space' is also informed by people's 'spatial practices' in relation to the neighbourhoods lanes and streets.

Lefebvre's work has been highly influential and enthusiastically taken up in the social analysis of space. Coinciding with the emergence of a Marxist geography, *The Production of Space* was popularised, amongst others, by David Harvey[6] for its analyses that allowed a broadening of the concept of 'production' beyond commodities to space, from which space has become a major theoretical foundation in human geography. However, the shift to this understanding of space as productive has also been criticised for being excessively economistic in its concerns (Deutsche 1995, 169), rather structurally determined, and even reductionist (Cresswell 2004, 31) in its conceptualisations of people's relations to space. So while Harvey's work and that of others offers an insight into the operation of capital in space, it also raises questions about – or rather leaves open, the issue of how to deal with particular spaces, that is, with 'place'.

Reappraising place

While space has become increasingly important in social theory, over the same period, the concept of place has become problematic for both geographers and anthropologists. With decolonisation, the increased mobility of people, ideas and capital, density and speed of global linkages and flows, the "isomorphism of space, place and culture" previously conceptualised as discrete, bounded and homogenous (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 66) has become harder to sustain. In reaction to this, a critique of the construction of the Other through an assumed overlap of place and culture in text (Clifford and Marcus (1986); Marcus and Fischer 1999 [1986]), time (Fabian 2002 [1983]), and space gained traction in anthropology with a parallel questioning of the of 'the field'.

This queried the conceptualisation of 'the field' as a bounded entity both methodologically, in the practice of fieldwork and in its representation in ethnography. One of the most striking and influential reactions to this debate has been Marcus' (1995) proposal of a mobile 'multi-sited ethnography', which has served to shift the

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[6] Harvey has a long association with *The Production of Space*, providing an afterword to David Nicholson-Smith's first English translation in 1991, and seems generally to be credited with its popularisation in Anglophone countries. Lefebvre's work has since been examined and theorised around and against a number of different terms; humanist (Gregory 1978) to postmodernist (Soja 1989), principally by geographers for whom the work has represented a major shift from more postitivist to qualitatively based, humanist/culturalist approaches.

scale and mobility of ethnography vastly, reflecting and tracing the highly globalised lives of many of anthropology's contemporary research subjects.

Yet, multi-sitedness only sidesteps the problem of place. With an increased emphasis on space and mobility, Escobar objects that "place has dropped out of sight in the 'globalisation craze' of recent years," adding that "'local' economies and culture are not outside the scope of capital and modernity," but nor do they exist only in the context of globalisation (2001, 141). Dirlik agrees, adding "it is difficult to imagine life without places; so that it is necessary to keep the idea of place alive," (2001,35), by attending to "places as projects". From this perspective, globalisation is in fact a reason to study place; to better understand those processes and power relations that make some spatial relations appear more 'localised' than others, shaping the interconnections between 'places', and struggles over 'place-making' (De Neve and Donner 2006, 4).

In fact, in the same article Marcus (1995) does recognise the need for a more place-specific approach that retains the openness and permeability of space, evident under globalisation. He proposes a 'strategically sited ethnography'. Situated in a particular locale, it "attempts to understand something broadly about the system, as much as it does its local subjects" (1995, 111). Punarvaspur, as an ethnographically strategic site, can offer insights into the 'system' or set of interrelations in which it is situated. In the case of Punarvaspur, some of these interrelations might include the planner's designs for the colony, households balancing residence against livelihood opportunities, women residents working for NGOs, or 'field'-NGO-donor relations. These interrelationships interact to shape the neighbourhood, its residents and their perceptions of it, offering insights into the way they come to know the neighbourhood and come to be known in relation to it, elsewhere in the city, at national or even international level. (Marcus 1995, 110). Hence as Marcus shows, a study of 'place' does not need to be antithetical to globalisation, or detached and static as Gupta and Ferguson (1997) and others have been concerned.

Doreen Massey argues that place should be thought of *'relationally'*. In this way place can be theorised as both distinctive and dynamic, while rejecting the essentialist, exclusory conceptualisations of place often asserted as characteristics of 'belonging' (2004, 6), or conversely, 'Othering'. Defining place as a "particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus" (Massey 1994, 154) allows for relationships that stretch over a range of scales, from global to local. "Thinking of places this way implies that they are not so much bounded areas as open and porous networks of social relations" (1994, 121). In this way, the identities of places emerge through specific interactions with others, who might be residents, politicians,

or NGOs. Punarvaspur emerges as a place relationally through a nexus of relationships and associations. It is 'home' for many inhabitants through long residence, while linked to the state and the Emergency as the site to which squatters were cleared from public land. So defined by the state as a 'slum', it is the target of development NGO programmes, while simultaneously located within intermeshing family histories of rural-urban migration, and considered a reliable votebank.

While Massey allows for both specificity and generalisation in her understanding of place, particularly important is her insertion of power into the equation. "Economic, political and cultural social relations, each full of power and with internal structures of domination and subordination" (1994, 154) act on and through social relations to produce place through the specific 'power-geometry' of spatially located social relations. Power is dealt with here in a much more precise manner than the more diffuse attributions to capital allowed for by Harvey and Lefebvre, locating it within social relations. "Created out of social relations, space [and correspondingly the particularities of place] by its very nature is full of power and symbolism, a complex web of relations of domination and subordination, of solidarity and cooperation." (Massey 1994, 265). In this thesis, this is particularly evident in the chapters which discuss the '*mahaul*' (environment/atmosphere) of the neighbourhood, as it is invoked and deployed by residents to both make sense of and structure their relations with others, as well organising around them to act on the space of the neighbourhood, often with reference to caste, class and religion. This entrenches the different valuation of particular identities into the spaces of the neighbourhood, as residents engage, or evade social relations with each other. It is through the powerful negotiation of social relations, in the enforcement or denial of the associations of particular people with space, that the places of the neighbourhood emerge, and that the social itself is constructed (Massey 2005, 13).

However, there are also some provisos. Massey insists that this relational approach is not an opposition of 'space' and 'place' (2005, 183), and takes issue with Dirlik (2001) and Escobar's (2001) recent calls for a reassessment of the value of place (discussed above). She argues that these calls, asserting that place is more 'meaningful', 'grounded', or 'lived', risk reinserting the bounded, conservative essentialisms of place that theorists have sought to get rid of. Massey's own argument is that in the "relational construction of space and of identity, 'place' must be a site of negotiation," (2004, 7). Negotiation is often conflictual, and an assertion of 'place' is often the first move in an assertion of 'otherness'. This is a social act in itself and worth recognising. This is particularly so when considering peoples' interventions in the space of the Punarvaspur. Here, to build shrines, call meetings or erect gates, is to draw tacit or

physical boundaries between kinds of people perceived as being different, or Other, marking out the social relations which constitute the place, and identities there.

But to leave it at this, makes for a rather thin understanding of peoples' relationship to place, one which may even dismiss people's own understandings of personhood in their relationship to their environment[7]. As I discuss in chapter 4, the perception of the '*mahaul*' (atmosphere/environment) of a place colours people's understanding of their relationship to their environment, and the environment's effect on them. This is more than a simply rhetorical move by people, but may be based on ethno-sociological understandings of embodiment in place, and so is also central to understandings of what constitutes the depth and affectual nature of identity and of place in that context. This is not in contradiction to Massey's depiction of place as a 'constellation of social relations', but extends that understanding of 'social relations' beyond actors' relative location to each other, to include the effect of that relationship on each other.

Ethnography, place and 'the field'
Both these points chime with a more general methodological point about ethnography, place and 'the field', with specific implications for a discussion of the politics of development, place-making and the negotiation of day-to-day life in Punarvaspur. In an essay examining the concept of locality in anthropology, Appadurai notes that ethnography in fact overlaps in its pursuit of particular kinds of 'local' knowledge with the knowledge projects of those it seeks to study (1996, 182). This can have the effect, of leaving the boundaries of ethnographic knowledge, in their overlap with knowledge of the 'locality' unquestioned; an unintentional coincidence between respondents' and anthropologists perceptions' of the limits of their interests. For both, this 'misrecognition' has the effect of mutually reinforcing the sense of 'locality', producing an inadvertent bounding effect. As Fabian (2002 [1983]) has noted for time, space can also produce a distancing effect conceptually between researcher and researched allowing the object of study to be apprehended. "'Others' thus never appear as immediate partners in a cultural exchange but as spatially and more importantly, temporally distanced groups." (Bunzl 2002, x). Significantly, this boundary effect applies as much to other actors in the neighbourhood, as to anthropologists. The state and politicians find their unit of engagement through administrative demarcations (constituencies, districts, zones, 'circles' etc.), but likewise NGOs in their activities and conceptualisations of 'the field'.

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[7] Massey allows that an "important dimension of the phenomenological position is that the meaningful relationship to place is intimately bound up with the embodied nature of perception" (2004, 8), but argues that the extension of this argument is to abandon 'space' altogether, with "every groundedness, through the fact of emplacement, is meaningful" (ibid.) meaning that there is only place.

So, while the de-linking of culture and place (Gupta and Ferguson 1997) has challenged the conceptual division between 'field and 'home' for anthropologists, the premise remains a central assumption for other actors, particularly development organisations working in neighbourhoods like Punarvaspur. Underpinned by the association between people, culture and place, 'the field' remains a fundamental organising principle that continues to locate neighbourhoods like Punarvaspur in the structural hierarchy of the city, producing Punarvaspur and its residents as 'the field', the 'site (in need) of work'. There is an assumption of the fixity and 'placedness' of residents which sustains a divide which continues to be strongly produced by individuals and organisations in Punarvaspur, particularly between NGO 'head offices' in prosperous central Delhi, and marginal 'field offices'. But the divide between field and 'head' office is often an unthinking one, where differences of activity mark place ('surveying' vs 'report writing') as well as class, education, wealth (and salary). This serves to structure not only work relationships (who does what kind of work), but also provides the basis of different forms of knowledge production. Resettlement colonies or '*jhuggi* clusters' as the sites of NGO work, also structure other relationships between fieldsite-resident fieldworkers, and mobile and middle class, head office based NGO employees. The construction and reiteration of this divide, and the tensions it generates is examined in Chapters 6 and 7.

Boundaries structure social relations with respect to place, raising questions about contemporary moves in anthropology that have emphasised boundary removal in our conceptualisation of people and social relations. While the increasing speed of globalisation challenged prior conceptualisations of societies as 'bounded wholes' (Gupta & Ferguson 1997a; 1997b), the critique of the isomorphism of culture and place in anthropology need not undermine the value of 'place' to people. Rather, boundaries may be what people produce when they deploy place as something to be associated in relation to. This is not incompatible with Massey's conceptualisation of place as relational. Instead, as Barth (1969) points out of ethnic boundaries, the process of external ascription of difference and internal self-identification of people to place, allows people to construct and negotiate identities through and along boundaries, emphasising identity as relational, between groups, focusing on their interface. Hence, as residents of place like Punarvaspur negotiate relationships by asserting the interaction of identity and place, or as the 'field' continues to structure relationships between organisations and individual actors, boundary-making remains an important dimension in the negotiation and management of social relationships in space.

In conclusion to this section; taking the social production of space as given, in this thesis I employ an understanding of place as a network of social relations which are relational, particular and dynamic, and shot through with power relations. From this social relations emerge as structured by space and place. As place is socially produced, these social relations impact on how people understand and engage with that place. This can be at the level of relations between neighbours and their concerns about reputation and appropriate behaviour, or how places like Punarvaspur appear in the public imagination as 'not good' and in need of development. Paying attention to this, as Massey suggests, unlocks insights into the production of place, while remaining open to the dynamic relations in which it is situated. However, Appadurai's intervention makes two additional contributions, reminding us firstly of the continuing effect of 'place' on the way people think, as it is experienced and is meaningful to people. So, while Massey's theorisation of place is extremely useful for undermining the fixities often associated with 'place', Appadurai is a reminder of the power of place to be deployed by people in social life. Consequently he alerts us to the way in which knowledge is also structured by location and expectation, making anthropologists aware of the potential overlap of their own, and respondent's perspectives, as concepts like place may inadvertently re-enter our theorisations. Perhaps more importantly, he opens up an insight into the effect of place on the production of knowledge, and how correspondingly, 'knowledge' about the place itself as it is drawn into policies and programmes, may further shape and reproduce the place itself. In combination, these approaches open up insights into the way in which relations between residents, and individuals working for civil society organisations and the state may be shaped by place, even as different perspectives and values are brought to bear, and place becomes known, negotiated, contested, and reproduced.

Morality and respectability

One of the ways in which these social relations in space are brought to bear on residents is through the constant assessment and interpretation of the actions of others, and their value in terms of their morality, respectability and reputation. These matter in Punarvaspur where the close living space of the resettlement colony, allows for a close inspection of a resident's social relations through interaction in public space. It is on the basis of this that an individual's identity is assessed, and (particularly for women) their family's reputation and morality are gauged. It is on this basis and with a care for their own reputation that residents chose to associate and interact with others, including and excluding them from forms of sociality. As a result, concerns about what neighbours and others will think about interaction in public areas are a powerful constraint on residents, especially women considering actions such as leaving the house for work. In Chapters 4 and 5, this is examined through residents' discursive

deployment of the concept of the '*mahaul*' ('atmosphere'/'environment') in relation to the neighbourhood. I argue that the way in which it is used, is as an adjective to talk about the intangible substance of a place (its 'atmosphere', its 'environment'), but understood to have a potential effect on residents' (bio)moral substance, even as people work to act on it and improve.

Comparatively, much as been written on the operation and articulation of space, place and boundaries, but literatures on 'morality' and 'respectability', are slipperier and fewer (Howell 1997, 2). This is especially so when addressing the question of 'values', right, wrong, good and bad, in low-income settings like Punarvaspur. In contemporary India, concerns about 'respectability' are often seen as linked to public perceptions of reputation and uprightness; seen as the preserve of the middle classes. Depictions of consumption often seem to be inflected with markers of class expressed through appropriate desires and social mores; in short, the need to 'keep up with the Jones' by looking after one's family appropriately[8]. Aspirations to 'respectability' are often framed in terms of gender; appropriate female behaviour, seclusion and withdrawal from the labour force (no longer 'needing' to work), and more often in Punarvaspur through the designation of other residents as 'good' or 'not good' people, depending on the context. Hence, residents' concerns with 'respectability' stands at odds with perceived notions of the poor as motivated by necessity[9]. This is significant, because anxieties about morality and respectability often tend to be over looked in work on low-income or 'working class' areas like Punarvaspur, partly due to their associations with poverty, conceptualisations of poverty and inequality being based on measurable variables, principally income. These effectively assume that people in locales like this cannot conform to the demands of morality and respectability. Such assumptions suppose 'objective' levels of poverty as forcing women to work, neglecting, as Vera-Sanso argues (1995, 155), the importance of negative impacts of lowered reputations, produced in particular by women's entry into the labour force. Sanctions against this may curtail women's ability in the neighbourhood to draw on the informal resources of neighbours and friends, even, as I show in chapter 6, certain forms of work,

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[8] Advertising images of respectable middle class homemaker mothers which urge the purchase of consumer goods for the good of the family (water filters, fridges, AC's with air filters etc.) abound in print and broadcast media.

[9] It may be that this is in fact is an older view of 'middle classness', emphasising chastity, morality and seclusion. Fernandes points out in her review of work on middle classes that self identity in relation to women's mobility and work has changed since the early 20th century (2006, 10-13), especially as dual incomes have become increasingly necessary to sustain lifestyles appropriate to the 'new Indian middle class' (ibid., 102). However, in both settings, life-cycle stage is also important; for both 'poor' and 'middle class' women, work and children are not always seen to mix.

particularly NGO work that may offer women outlets and opportunities well beyond the neighbourhood.

In Punarvaspur, morality appears in the interaction and accommodation of different value systems. In this way, respectability is situated around practices and movements through space, negotiated as residents go about their everyday lives. Understanding of morality and respectability as spatially variable opens up understandings of the highly contextual nature of these moralities, particularly for women who work for NGOs, which often promote ideas about women's rights and agency, yet still live in the neighbourhood[10]. Atreyee Sen (2007) and Penny Vera-Sanso's (1994, 1995, 2000) work in similar low-income areas in Mumbai and Madras, emphasise instead the way people negotiate and actively deploy discourses of respectability and morality in their everyday lives.

Penny Vera-Sanso, (1994; 1995; 2000) notes the primary importance of 'what the neighbours say' as the powerful modifying effect of peers on behaviour. Appearing as a form of the 'power-geometry' that Massey describes, concerns about respectability can be seen to shape and sanction social relations in public space, as well as inform how those public spaces, and the people within them are perceived and valued. It is 'what the neighbours say' about urban localities and people within them, through narratives of morality and respectability, that shape the boundaries of agency and acceptable behaviour.

As in Punarvaspur, "residents are under constant surveillance of household members, relatives, and community to assess whether they are conforming to conventional standards of respectable behaviour or not" (Vera-Sanso 1995, 156), with the semi-domestic *gali* serving as an arena for the daily struggle over meaning. "Here it is that the active manipulation of discourses regarding the proper behaviour of contrasting subject positions is used to gain control over meaning;" (Vera-Sanso 1994, 42). But, importantly, as Vera-Sanso notes, while it may be women who are most often the subject of judgements of respectability and morality, it is with a silent contrast to their men. This brings a tactical edge to these mores.

> "Women's submission to these roles [of 'good' Tamil wife and mother] is
> required not just to control women, but to control men. Indeed, men and

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[10] As one woman working for a feminist orientated NGO argued, she and other women had learned much about what their rights were in the home since joining the organisation and she felt that these ideals could make women's lives better. But, she noted, many ideas had to be left at the front door, and the housework still had to be done, otherwise often husbands and the men of the household would object to them going out to do such work. Negotiation was needed.

women strategically utilised these discourses to control each other and, in the case of women, to expand their sphere of action." (Vera-Sanso 2000,115).

The tactical deployment of discourses of morality and respectability, can be deployed both internally to the household, and with the sanction of external public opprobrium. What Vera-Sanso's account insightfully draws attention to is that this can apply to both genders. The threat of working outside the house, risks the reputation of the household, and can be deployed by women against feckless or drunkard husbands, implicitly imputing their masculinity through their ability to provide. But this may also backfire; the loss of a household's reputation can impact on its ability to get its children married, to obtain housing on rent, or credit from money lenders[11], or see husbands withdraw their contributions to the household entirely (2000, 123).

In Punarvaspur, assessments of 'morality' are also made and judgement circulated as sanctions imposed through gossip, particularly in the more informal semi-domestic spaces of the *gali* where private life is hard to keep out of public view. Here people may be pointed out and praised or maligned; 'this family are 'good' people', 'the neighbouring colony 'hi-fi' people', but 'they wouldn't talk to you, not like us'. Or damningly, so-and-so is a 'not good' person, for reasons as varied as neglecting their household duties for 'outside' work, having children who 'roam' around and are not 'respectful', for eating meat, having 'unclean' or 'bad' habits (eating outside, or alcoholism) etc. All of these are certainly reasons not to mix with that person, family or household, or at least to minimise interactions[12]. So, respectability and moralities represent the forming of boundaries not only of behaviour, but also of interaction, and the potential for inclusion or exclusion. This last point is crucial to recall when understanding women's movement through the neighbourhood and the degree and circumstances of their participation in NGO work which both say and reflect their negotiation of their social relations which structure their place in the public spaces of the neighbourhood.

Atreyee Sen's account of Shiv Sena women in *jhuggi* settlements in Mumbai presents a far more active picture, particularly of female agency. Free-riding in the slipstream of the powerful Shiv Sena political movement in the city, she shows how *jhuggi*

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[11] In Punarvaspur this was rumoured to work in reverse; that moneylenders would target households who owned their plot and were perceived to be in financial difficulties. Persuading them to take a loan at exorbitant interest, with the hope of being able to force them to sell their plot at knock down prices to repay their debts. One of the symptoms of financial stress was said to be women forced to leave their children alone at home, to go out to work.

[12] "To maintain their social standing, families are expected to distance themselves from those who flout social values." Vera-Sanso (2000, 121) argues, although I make a slightly different argument in Chapter 4.

settlement women redefined their identities through militancy, yet within similar moral discursive landscapes as described by Vera-Sanso in Madras, and in Punarvaspur in Delhi. It is a landscape whose mores they continue to inhabit and actively shape, even as they radically defy mainstream perceptions of submissive, secluded Hindu womanhood. Forced out of 'traditional' seclusion by the collapse of the textile mills and other heavy industry, "the Sena provided a place in which to feel partially comfortable with the other 'unwanted' urban roles that most women were forced to carry out." (2007, 29). Against this backdrop the Aghadi (women's wing) emerged as a militant Hindu femininity, reworking the values of submissive, secluded wife and homemaker in similarly muscular aggressive terms as the Sena. Younger Sena women "realised that the household was not just a domain of responsibilities, but also a domain of power… the Aghadi offered alternative social and political engagements which allowed women to gain a sense of self worth through involvement in 'social work, Hindutva'," (2007,89). In practical terms, this was effected by situating meetings near markets and water sources, allowing women to attend both. Hindu feminine respectability was reiterated through the appropriation of the rituals of '*haldi-kumkum*' (turmeric and vermillion) and *karwa chauth*[13]. Fusing a respectable Hindu wifely identity to the Sena's activities, most Aghadi women have a more pragmatic view; a "ploy 'to convince Hindu slum men that women could contribute to Hindutva if allowed to act collectively,'" (ibid.)

This is ostensibly a very different picture to that found in Vera-Sanso's descriptions of Madras, or in Punarvaspur. However, while lacking the aggressive militancy of the Shiv Sena women, all three settings illustrate the importance of understanding different kinds of morality and respectability for the construction of boundaries and female agency. These boundaries of behaviour, shaped by fears of risk to reputation and respectability, are shown by Vera-Sanso to have the potential for exclusion, as well as inclusion. This adds force to the penalties of transgressing them. Transgression can lead to falling down on the wrong side between 'self' and 'other', between 'good' people' and 'not good people'. As Sen shows, the discursive landscape of morality and respectability also provides the basis for action, such as the targeting of men who harass women, or in Punarvaspur, women, taking responsibility for the home, *gherao*-ing (surrounding/immobilising) the local water board officer to demand an adequate supply.

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[13] Performed by women, both these rituals and fasting in the case of *karwa chauth* recognise and reiterate the married status of women, being held for the long life of their husband. *Haldi-kumkum* is more predominant in Maharastra and western Indian states, than Delhi, reflecting the location of Sen's fieldwork.

Gender is the central concern of Vera-Sanso and Sen's accounts, but it is also evident in this work that caste, region and class are also central to understanding ideas about morality and respectability. They are also utilised as points of mobilisation and agency, as reasons to act in their own right, and as well as being articulated as gendered concerns. Unlike Sen's fieldsite where regional and caste identities were submerged beneath salient (and often almost over-performed) religious and gender identities, in Punarvaspur caste, region and religion are as important for discerning what 'kind' of people others are, and the kinds of social relations – or not, one should have with them, as I discuss in Chapters 4 and 5. As Fernandes observes, identity is not only highly contextual, but also articulated through other social categories (1997, 4), so that caste, class, religion and gender can all find aspects of expression through each other, including their articulation in space.

The state, civil society and development
This thesis is interested in examining how normative compulsions appear and are worked out in everyday associational life, approaching 'civil society' in descriptive rather than prescriptive terms. In particular, examining the range of associational life and how different organisations, activists and NGOs locate themselves in relation to the state and neighbourhood residents.

This section introduces two important actors often 'visible' at work in Punarvaspur. The state and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are familiar, recognisable entities in people's everyday lives in Punarvaspur. Yet how should they be conceptualised? The 'idea of the state' is sometimes indistinguishable from the 'idea of 'development' or the 'idea of India' (Khilnani 2004 [1997])? But this is often different from people's daily experience of '*sarkar'*, the government. Likewise, the definitional boundaries of NGOs are not always clear either. Potentially NGOs are all those 'organisations' not part of the government, but the term is frequently used to refer to those working as part of the development industry. In this role they often appear as a distinct organisational form, where they are a major component of the 'third sector' and 'civil society', distinct from the 'state' and 'society'. In this section I briefly discuss these terms, before suggesting that attention to 'place' and history is important for recognising their role in the shifting social relations of the neighbourhood. This more 'as it is' approach unsettles those generic, depoliticised and normative uses and expectations of these terms (particularly 'civil society') as they are often used in the contemporary development industry, opening them up to consider the power relations which structure their deployment as terms, and the social relations which make up a particular place.

In many ways the three components of the subheading, the state, civil society and development are best discussed in relation to their history as terms. As 'international development' emerged out of the international relations of decolonisation from the late 1940s, the state remained a central focus. A discussion of 'development' as a concept and 'discourses of development' as a set of policies, appears in the following chapter. Here I will simply describe development as the policies and programmes propelled by the premise that the differences and inequalities between 'Western' and the non-West or 'Southern' countries represented 'underdevelopment', and that work must be done for their subsequent 'development', which would be along similar trajectories, or towards similar goals as those valued by those often ex-colonial, now donor countries (Gardner and Lewis 1996; Crush 1995; Watts 1999). In this post-World War II context, the state and 'welfare' concerns were important to both ex-colonial, as well as new nationalist governments, whether propelled by forms of liberalism, a USSR influenced penchant for five year plans, or as in the case of India, a combination of the two. Even post-liberalisation with the opening up of India's marketplace to foreign investors in the late 1980s – early 1990s, the state remains the major and important provider of social goods including education and healthcare (Houtzager and Joshi 2007).

The 1980s and 1990s saw a corresponding decline of the confidence in state-sponsored, 'top-down' development programmes and increased funding of private, often professional, 'non-governmental organisations' (NGOs) working with the same goals, and often providing the same services. These were seen as offering 'alternative', 'radical', 'grassroots' approaches to development (Fisher 1999; Lewis 1999). While many non-governmental organisations work on non-development issues, in this thesis I will use 'NGO' as it is widely used in the development literature to refer to a non-profit making organisation (Lewis 1999, 73) which may or may not receive funding (national or international) including from the state, and which works on issues of concern to international development donor agencies. This reflects the use of the term by Anglophone employees of such organisations working in Delhi, and carries the implication of being non-political, not involved in the market, and where religious links are regarded as making them a different kind of organisation (e.g. a mosque or temple management committee). The Hindi term for such organisations, and their distinction in practice is more complex. While most 'NGOs' were termed *'sanstha'* (organisations), this also extended to smaller associations organised by residents themselves, without external funding unless (rarely) from NGOs external to the colony for service provision. The term was generally used to refer to organisations that provided, intended or purported to provide services in 'the field', here, Punarvaspur. Although a number of these 'organisations' never moved beyond the discussion stage,

it is service provision that links these organisational forms. However, for clarity and to distinguish between organisations working at different levels and scales in Punarvaspur, in this thesis I refer to organisations with external funding, 'head offices' and several sites of work as 'NGOs'. I refer to the smaller, neighbourhood-based, 'non-NGO' groups as 'organisations', reflecting their terming by Hindi speakers as '*sanstha*'. While this does not entirely reflect people's usage of the terms (as noted above), it does reflect the occasionally porous boundaries of the terms themselves, and their mobile usage. In the development industry both these organisations have been termed as 'civil society', although the usefulness and accuracy of this term is discussed below.

The slipperiness of the state as a conceptual and ethnographic subject has offered a rich field for the reengagement of political anthropology with institutions (Fuller and Benei 2001; Das and Poole 2004; Sharma and Gupta 2006), and offers some pointers as to how NGOs and 'civil society' might be engaged. Apparently self-evident, the state emerges as an indeterminate institution. Abrams (1988, 82) argues that it is the very nexus of 'state-idea' and 'state-structure' that is the location of the state's power as an ideological project. This "double effect of order and transcendence" (Das and Poole 2004, 5) captures the normative aspect of how the state *should* be, versus its transcendence of vast areas of everyday life in contemporary India, and the experiential disjuncture between the two. In places like Punarvaspur, what the role of the state 'should be', what the government 'should do' and who is responsible for this (politicians, bureaucrats, law courts, or 'culture' and people themselves), are a serious concern for residents, NGO workers and members of organisations. Most importantly, it is often a question of access not just to the development goods of the state (i.e. services of the Department of Social Welfare), but access to water, education and healthcare purportedly available to all in the city, which are contested, and for which local politicians or NGOs are enlisted to mediate on residents' behalf. The Indian state, as the legitimate source of sovereignty and force (Hansen and Stepputat 2005, 2006), but also a source of welfare and rights as citizens, remains important for its impact in people's everyday lives. The impact of the state, whether experienced directly or through the intercession of others, is all the more acutely felt, by those who remain its subjects as much as they are citizens (Chatterjee 2004), especially in places like Punarvaspur.

Much discussed in Punarvaspur is the question not just of the normative role of the state, of what it ought to do, but also questions where the boundaries between state

and society might, or 'should' lie[14]. Are actors mediating between the two simply citizens, or specialist intermediaries, and brokers (Lewis and Mosse 2006)? Or are they individuals who act out different identities (as say, bureaucrat and citizen) at different times? In many ways, "The modern state, …serves as both agent and as an arena in which other social agents pursue specific visions of growth, democracy and nationhood." (Sivaramakrishnan and Agrawal 2003, 6), evident in the approaches and mediations made by different actors and groups, trying to determine what the state 'should do', and where the boundaries of it 'ought' to lie. Examinations of the blurred interface of state/society, have often focussed on individuals, particularly individual 'citizens' pleading their case, or on characters like politicians, stressing their personal abilities to form 'connections'. A broader perspective on organisations and associational life, as here in an urban neighbourhood, adds a wider understanding of what actors' institutional backgrounds bring to these interactions, and the role of class, educational, social or religious identities. Likewise, what of the relationship not just between 'state' and individual 'citizen', but between state and organisations of various kinds? How do these organisations relate to each other in their quest for the ear of the state, or even, to what extent does the state remain the 'prize' to be 'captured'?

These issues are increasingly important following the global rise since the 1980s of 'civil society' and the 'Third Sector' as preferred actors in international development. Located, theoretically, between state and society, 'civil society' includes NGOs, but problematically in development, has been frequently used to refer solely to NGOs, often to elite associations (Howell & Pearce 2001, 7; Hearn 2001). Yet the term encompasses a wide range of organisations representing diverse interests and delivering many different services. They are often integrated into major planning documents, apparently deployed to set out and structure a specific relationship between institutional sectors (e.g. as a welfare service provider to the Indian state, Chandhoke 2005). Perhaps reflective of anthropologists' scepticism of 'civil society's' cross-cultural applicability (Hann 1996), as well as its definitional "indeterminacy" (Kaviraj & Khilnani 2002, 1) there has been only patchy engagement with the term, despite civil society's wide ranging deployment by theorists and analysts (e.g. Hann & Dunn 1996; Comaroff & Comaroff 1999; Beteille 1999; Heaton 2001).

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[14] The boundary between state and society is widely agreed by scholars to be blurred (Gupta 1995), as well as porous and highly contextual (Fuller and Harris 2001, 24). This does not necessarily mean that the state in South Asia, is somehow imperfectly modern and inadequate, subject to a 'crisis of democracy' (e.g. Khilnani 2004, 2), so much as Gupta (1995) and Parry (2000) argue, that it represents the internalisation of norms about how the modern democratic state should be. These debates over norms also surround discussions of civil society too.

But observing the debate, Jenkins notes that "Just as other cultures have developed indigenised versions of the notions of civil society, the aid community has taken this most promiscuous of ideas and fashioned it to suit its own culture and purposes" (2002, 251), often in highly normative terms of 'ought', rather than as things 'are'. Similarly observing a loss of patience or faith in the state, particularly in early 90s post-liberalisation Indian writings on civil society, Dipankar Gupta (1999, 237), warns against a romanticisation of society in general as an alternative kind of pristine sphere, free from the pollution of politics. Indeed, to suggest such a shift to such an uncontested view of civil society, is to ignore conflicts and competition between and within groups and institutions, issues of power, or the coagulation of individuals around groups of ascriptive identity, such as caste (De Neve 2005, 308), region or religion. This emphasises the need to move beyond debates about definitions to examine relations within and between actually existing organisations, especially in place like Punarvaspur, while retaining an interest in the normative framings in which these organisations explain their interests and work.

To do this, Hann offers a useful working definition of civil society as "a space between families and kin groups on the one hand, and the modern state on the other." (Hann 1996, 6). In Punarvaspur within this space there are many kinds of organisations, some national and international development NGOs, others less formally constituted, ranging from an offshoot of a social movement working on the right to information, to informal tea-drinking groups, with a desire to improve the atmosphere of the neighbourhood. Here anthropological approaches to the study of the state/society relationship open up several potential routes for engaging with the subject. Mirroring questions asked about the idea of the state, versus the experience of the state; there are tensions in Punarvaspur between what people think these organisations *should* do, and how they *experience* its actions. Similarly, what are the different 'interests' that people bring to these civil society organisations, what power relations structure them internally and externally, and how do they relate to wider international debates and discourses? In short, how are abstract relations between individual and organisational values and norms worked out, and how do they appear in everyday and associational life?

An important part of the context within which these organisations operate, is the postcolonial state. This may require them to negotiate their structure, legal status and standing, whether they are development NGOs or caste associations. In India this requires registration under the 1860 Societies Registration Act if organisations are to receive or handle funds, especially foreign funding. Here, the slipperiness of precisely what counts as a civil society organisation may be an advantage for some associations.

Some organisations find the definition of a society under the Act constrictive, finding it more satisfactory to term themselves instead as a 'people's movement, operating under a different legal personality. For others being a registered society is almost a form of accreditation and statement of seriousness of intent. So, although it has been generally accepted that NGOs, especially in the development industry are part of 'civil society', the way an organisation may negotiate the formal parameters of definition can be more tricky.

Here, social relations between fieldworkers, residents, politicians, bureaucrats and NGOs relating to the fieldsite are shaped both on a day-to-day level, but also by powerful political, cultural and economic relations in the wider city and society, ideas about appropriate forms of work and values in the locale, their other social relations (as spouse, kin, parent, religious or regional identity, etc), and experiences in the past (Massey 194, 264). This emphasises the mobility and dynamic nature of both the place, and social relations of actors within it; including civil society and the individuals that comprise it.

Associations, tactics and strategies
Through both these themes of space, places and boundaries, and ideas about morality and respectability runs the possibility of organising social relations, and of ordering the disconcertingly heterogeneous, and uncertain world of Punarvaspur. These themes are also engaged with and deployed by NGOs, at head office and field office level, by politicians and 'Residents Welfare Association' (RWA) members, and others engaged in the associational life of Punarvaspur. While useful for understanding the discursive shaping of the social landscape of the neighbourhood, these themes are not just useful for the enforcement of particular social relations, but may also be re-appropriated. Drawing on narratives of necessity women may argue the case to work outside the house, as the behaviour of residents is curtailed in their *gali*s by reputation, while spatially the neighbourhood is divided by caste, region and religion.

De Certeau (1988), seeking to understand the processes by which individuals personalise an increasingly commercialised, mass orientated world, introduces the concepts of 'strategy' and 'tactics'. These he uses to describe the iterative and unplanned way people often go about remaking or negotiating an unpromising, or banal situation, sometimes by boomeraing power relations back on themselves, or operating in the slipstream of more powerful actors. Strategy, he argues is conscious in the sense that it is a calculus of the force-power relationship, through which people consciously assess their options in the light of the power structures of a particular

situation. It assumes a 'proper' place in the world, and appears as a 'rationalisable' explanation, emerging from logical thought. Tactics by contrast are not schemes, but are fragmentary, happen without planning because they are "seized on the wing", rather than pondered as a strategy might be. (de Certeau 1988, xix). From this perspective, and as emerges in the ethnography below, it is evident that people are not simply dupes of development, but neither, for most residents are they structurally positioned to be able to radically alter their position. De Certeau's more processual approaches seem to allow a way out of static oppositional dyads, recognising agency, whilst appreciating the highly inequitable structural situation that most residents find themselves in, and the power relations, particularly gendered ones, which underlie them. Tactics allow for chances fleetingly grabbed, to voice dissent in unexpected settings as in the NGO workshop of Chapter 7, or to recognise the unusually critical viewpoint NGO work has offered (Chapter 6), even as actual change may be difficult to effect. On other occasions activities are openly admitted to be 'smart', if not cunning, as in the highly strategic building of shrines to mark the space of the colony out as occupied by particular communities (Chapter 5). Within this setting, residents' everyday lives offer up opportunities to make tactical and strategic use of a particular occurrence or setting, often through their associational lives.

Having considered a number of key concepts pertinent to this thesis, the following section introduces Punarvaspur.

The 'fieldsite'

The main location of this research was Punarvaspur, in Delhi, the capital city of India. I discuss the urbanisation of Delhi in greater detail in the subsequent chapter, but, despite not having the tradition of heavy industry found in Bombay or Calcutta, Delhi has a long history of migration to the city, particularly from across the Hindi-speaking belt of northern India, as well as Bengali speakers. In 2005 the city was projected to have a population of 15.8 million[15].

Punarvaspur itself, lies on the north eastern borders of Delhi, across the River Yamuna running north-south, bisecting the city. On the far side, from the older areas of the city, East Delhi is known as Trans-Yamuna (*Yamuna par*), 'over the river', indicative of the west-centric logic of the city, and the way the area is viewed generally. As a resettlement colony, Punarvaspur is a neighbourhood that was planned and settled by the state to remove people living without permission on public land, to this site. As such it is a 'legal', planned neighbourhood, giving residents a degree of tenure, and

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[15] *Socio-Economic Profile of Delhi 2007-8*, Planning Department, Government of Delhi (2008).

removing the threat of demolition from over the heads of its residents, who are allotted their plot on a 99 year lease. As a planned neighbourhood, it is also entitled to services and now has piped water and electricity connections, and a trunk sewerage network[16].

Set down on the border, against the large, populous and not altogether prosperous state of Uttar Pradesh, while Punarvaspur remains on the frontier of the city, the urban sprawl of Delhi has since rolled out to meet it, and over the border[17]. Yet when Punarvaspur was settled in 1976 during the Emergency, East Delhi was relatively sparsely populated and large areas were laid out as resettlement colonies. So many people were relocated in this area at this time, that when the Emergency was lifted, electoral boundaries had to be redrawn, and East Delhi became a Lok Sabha (Parliament) constituency in its own right. Since then land speculation and rising property costs elsewhere in the city, with improved connections to central Delhi have made East Delhi increasingly popular with middle class families, priced out of South Delhi. With the Commonwealth Games, to be held in East Delhi in 2010 these factors have combined to accelerate the shifting dynamics of land holding.

The pattern, layout and dimensions on the Delhi Development Authority's blueprint for Punarvaspur are characteristic of resettlement colonies (see Outline Map of Punarvaspur). The colony can be clearly seen to be made up of six similarly sized 'blocks', lettered A to F. Forming the basis of addresses, these lettered blocks also reflect the order and origin of resettlers arriving in the colony. Blocks A to C and most of D were settled in the early days of 1976 by residents mostly from 'Power House', one of the thermal power stations built on the banks of the Yamuna, near what is known today as 'ITO'. Blocks E and F were settled in the monsoon of the same year, from Yamuna Bazaar just outside the city wall to the north east of 'Old Delhi'. In 2001, at the time of the last census, some 23,700 people were officially found to be living in 3778 houses in Punarvaspur. This is almost certainly an underreporting of the neighbourhood's population, owing to the numbers of single male tenants, as well as family groups sharing sublet rooms, not always wiling to make themselves 'visible' to cadastral designs of surveyors[18].

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[16] However, owing to the cost of connections, the proportion of residents connected to these networks varies, with almost every house having an electricity connection, many having personal water connections (as opposed to shared handpumps), and a relatively small proportion having installed their own toilet.
[17] Indeed, in 2006, *The Economist* listed Ghaziabad, immediately adjacent to Punarvaspur, just over the state border, as the second fastest growing city in the world, having grown at a rate of 6.4% between 2000-5, with Faridabad to the south coming 5th (2006, 24)
[18] Data at the level of New Punarvaspur resettlement colony was obtained informally through the Delhi Government Census Office, allowing me to distinguish the colony from other surrounding colonies in the Census Block. However it was hard to tell how households had

Adjacent to Punarvaspur is Gulshan Extension, a middle class private colony, developed speculatively, plot by plot, as land prices have increased sufficiently for developers to leverage loans on the land to do so. The occupants of the flats in the new four storey buildings, built with their backs to the neighbouring resettlement colony, continue to employ Punarvaspur residents as maids and drivers, while their distrust is advertised by high boundary walls and gates locked at night. On the other side, between Gulshan Nagar and Punarvaspur in terms of income and value, is 'Jassu Colony'. Named after its developer, a local Jaat[19] ex-farmer who made his fortune selling by his land off incrementally in small parcels to householders who have built up their own houses. In between these areas are dense pockets of *jhuggi* clusters whose residents are particularly involved in *karbari* (waste) sorting and piecework. Like Punarvaspur, these places emerge from a very specific combination of different local land ownership settings and political opportunities[20].

In Punarvaspur itself, incomes relate roughly to the six residential block letters (A appears best off, followed by B, C, D, with a drop to E and F). Of Punarvaspur's permanent population, this corresponds approximately to the location of residents with government jobs, but there are substantial variations within these blocks, within *gali*s and between neighbours. In contrast to a 'private' job, a government job offers security of tenure, reliability of income – and at present, a substantially higher wage, although this was not always the case. Tarun Singh, in his mid 30s with a young family, recalled an uncle who had worked for DESU (Delhi Electricity Supply Undertaking)[21]. The uncle had tried to persuade his father to join DESU, (prior to the 1976 shift). His father had refused, saying he was getting better money working in a cloth shop in Chandni Chowk. As Tarun Singh put it, how could his father have known government wages would go up so much? By comparison in Tarun's work, singing in a *jagran* group (all night devotional hymn singing event), organising the PA system, transport, tableaux with *murti*s (idols), music and musicians themselves, he reckoned to earn Rs3000-7000/month. This depended on the season, but he considered

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been enumerated where several families lived in the same building, the numbers of migrant worker tenants or to assess how resettlement plots had been distinguished from surrounding *jhuggi* areas. Similarly it is hard to gauge underreporting and fluctuations in population since the last Census (2001), caused by changing employment structures in East Delhi. For these reasons I would be unwilling to offer an estimate of mean household size.

[19] Jaat: farming caste widespread in North India; in Delhi and Haryana particularly, with a group identity, particularly when represented in the newspapers having political interests and a reputation for a machismo.

[20] For a detailed examination of financial and political circuits which propelled land development in East Delhi in late 80s see Benjamin (1996).

[21] Former public electricity board, privatised in 2002.

that working only 7-8 nights in a month compared favourably with contemporary government jobs, often only available on a (long term) 'temporary' basis with an uncertain number of days work in the month. Government jobs are considered to have been more accessible in the early 70s, mirroring the expansion of the city. The growth of the city required more sweepers, electricity lines men and other posts, and residents with government jobs were able to benefit from regular and reliable pay to accumulate wealth, investing cash into bricks and mortar, children's education, or items such as a car which could be put out on hire.

Since then, the value of a government job has changed too; MCD *safai karamchari* ('sweeping'/drain clearing) jobs may no longer be passed automatically on to children, and the length of time which must be served as a temporary worker, sharing one's salary with the supervisor in order to obtain work on the muster roll, has got longer. By contrast a retired DESU worker told me that when he started working for DESU in 1975 he was earning Rs105/m, substantially less than the average income per earner in squatter households of Rs149/month in 1974. (Town and Country Planning Department: 1975). Retiring on Rs13,000/m, with a Rs4000/month pension, he now has a substantially better wage than most Punarvaspur residents, with a pension facility not available to most people working in 'private' jobs.

But such jobs are no longer easily obtained, nor passed down the family. Most jobs today, are in manufacturing, in the plethora of small industrial clusters in Delhi. In the absence of a tradition of heavy industry (unlike Calcutta or Bombay) these industries group together in particular neighbourhoods often known for their primary products, and consequent skill clusters, such as wire drawing and metal fabrication in Vishwas Nagar (see Benjamin 1996), garment manufacture in Gandhi Nagar, jeans and denim in Welcome, or dyeing, button-holing and finishing in Jassu Colony. Hence in Punarvaspur, residents find work as expert welders, dyers, fitters etc., or in the service sector as painters, carpenters, electricians and repair men, as drivers, in retail, or as autodrivers often renting or sharing a vehicle between brothers.

Daily wagers were earning from Rs80/day to Rs2-3000/month, slightly more for 'temporary' government workers (a status that can last years[22]). Permanent government jobs earned more (Rs 6-7000+/month) and often in the case of *safai karamchari* (sweeping) work, can be effectively sublet with someone else reporting for duty, and parallel businesses run by the job holder, running PCO booths or driving.

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[22] I met a number of men, who as sons of *safai karamcharis* had been able to access temporary posts, but had been working for between 5 to 7 years without being made 'permanent'. Now married and with young families, this was a source of increasing frustration.

With these options, or income from subletting rooms in a house, or the odd better paid job, income can cross more than Rs10,000/month. In more difficult circumstances additional income is often found pushing handcarts, selling fruit and vegetables, eatables, and other kinds of hawking.

The business of subletting accommodation in Punarvaspur is common and tenants come from both the colony itself, as well as from outside it. Some tenants from inside the colony were newly married couples where there was no more room in the groom's home, or where money was being saved to build further accommodation on the roof. On other occasions this was due to a break down in intergenerational family relations, where couples had decided to live separately (*alag*), or temporary accommodation while a household broke down an old house, to rebuild it anew. These however were the exceptions, and the majority of rooms were sublet to families moving into the neighbourhood, with a substantial proportion let to single men. As a class of resident, tenants, particularly single men, were a source of frustration to long term Punarvaspur residents. While tenants represented a valuable income to plot-owners, because these men were not supporting families in the neighbourhood, they were able to work for lower wages than long-term residents could afford to. Similarly, they could easily follow work to new factories elsewhere, leaving plot-owners behind with less work, and less rent as income. This offers an insight into the stability of Punarvaspur's population; a sizeable proportion of Punarvaspur's residents who own their houses in Punarvaspur have been resident since the resettlement or shortly afterwards, and even households who had purchased their house in the last five years, saw themselves living there for a number of years to come. By contrast, tenants were far more mobile, and while some families in the neighbourhood lived on rent for years, a considerable proportion of the population was subject to flux and a steady turnover. This meant that right up the end of my fieldwork I was meeting new residents.

In A, B, C, and D blocks, many women, and a number in E and F have, publicly at least, been withdrawn from formal labour and are housewives, although a good number still work in the surrounding middle class colonies as maids. Work in these households is more often taken in as home-based work; stitching ready-cut clothing, embroidering, packing small consumables (from microscope slides to cosmetics), threading marigold *mala* (garlands), or running up sari blouses for neighbours. A smaller number of women work outside the house, a few in factories, others in typically 'female' roles, in childcare in *anganwadi*s (crèches), for NGOs, giving tuitions, with one or two unmarried young women in office work elsewhere in the city. This is work that all are expected to give up on marriage.

Despite the relative wealth of A block, some residents stated that the large proportion (more than 50%) of Scheduled Caste (SC)[23] residents in A depressed house and rent prices. This, despite the assertions that services are better in this block, owing to the block's SC population's patronage by the neighbourhood's Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), who in a 'reserved constituency' is a Scheduled Caste member himself. Commonly referring to themselves as 'Valmiki's', many SC residents are or have had family members working as *'safai karamcharis'* or sweepers for the Metropolitan Corporation of Delhi (MCD), Delhi Jal Board (DJB), government hospitals etc., with varying degrees of permanency. Other communal clusters reflect patterns of migration and recruitment in the early 1970s when many of the ex-employees for the recently privatised electricity board, 'DESU' were Yadavs from Allahabad, while others acquired the job through friends and contacts living at 'Power House'.

By contrast in E and F block the *'kabari'* industry (ragpicking and scrap-merchanting) dominates, employing both men and women. One of the main sources of employment within Punarvaspur itself, plastics, metals, glass and paper are collected through networks of rubbish collection, ragpicking and scrap purchase in the surrounding neighbourhoods. These are then separated and fine sorted in E and F blocks, before the materials entering wholesaler networks in the city, to be sold on to large scale recycling brokers and manufacturers in West Delhi. Other residents do factory work elsewhere or run shops in the Main Market, or have non-government jobs similar to those in blocks A to D. Most houses in E and F blocks have long been sold on from the original resettlers, and incomes are generally lower with a greater proportion of daily-wage earners. Residents in E and F blocks, and similar communities in the city are widely referred to by others as 'Bengali'. This recognition of regional difference is meant as a slur, to imply that they are not only 'Muslim', but also 'illegal' cross-border migrants from Bangladesh, although most were forthright that their origins were West Bengal. In the other blocks of Punarvaspur, residents were usually keen to impress upon me the depravity of these 'Bengalis'. Maligned as meat-eaters (with some hypocrisy), and their behaviour and habits were speculated on (varying from being unclean, to prostitution), and this, ABCD residents explained was the reason for their spending such little time outside.

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[23] Proportion of the population recorded in 2001 Census as Scheduled Caste (SC), by block. Source: Delhi Government Census Office.

Block	A	B	C	D	E	F
% of population Scheduled Caste	51%	45%	39%	33%	0.1%	1.9%

It was certainly more difficult to talk to residents in E and F blocks, but this had more to do with a greater degree of engagement in the labour market by all family members, as well I suspect, with a greater wariness of outsiders, given the experience of not infrequent raids and rough treatment by the police of poor 'Bengalis' in Punarvaspur and Delhi generally. With stronger links to the *jhuggi* areas adjacent to blocks E and F through the *kabari* industry, rumours of vast amounts of concealed wealth through ill gotten gains from the *kabari* industry circulate wildly, with stories about stolen golden *murti*'s (devotional statues of gods) appearing in piles of decaying rubbish, and charred Rs100 notes raining down over the colony one day, in the fall out of an F block *jhuggi* fire. More seriously and better documented, in 1999, prior to a large round of demolitions of the adjacent *jhuggies*, prostitution was said to have been a problem, and an NGO working on 'trafficking' remains, working in the area. Without access to caste-based reservations available to the predominantly Hindu residents of blocks A to D, residents with government jobs are far fewer here, and those who have them tend to be Hindu. Without a steady, reliable and sublet-able income available for investment into businesses and houses, these blocks remain substantially poorer, with greater numbers of '*Antodya Anna Yojana*' ('poorest of the poor') ration cards.

A walk through Punarvaspur
Starting from the market, this section offers a brief walk through Punarvaspur, offering an impression of the neighbourhood as a space, and a sense of some of the other social relations which come together to make it a place, going on around those which I foreground in the following chapters.

In the main markets of Punarvaspur, goods arrive by three-wheeled auto or cycle rickshaw; undyed jeans for buttonhole stitching and later dyeing in the adjacent Jassu Colony, cotton flocking for *razai* blankets, boxes of pomegranates or sugar cane with damp hessian wrapped mint for juice, depending on the season. The amount of manufacturing and repair work is less in Punarvaspur than in other resettlement colonies, and what industry there is takes place in those residential blocks with fewer government jobs; mostly E and F. On the corner, behind a small autorickshaw stand, a *mandir* (temple) is under slow construction in weathered concrete, mostly serving women from the neighbouring Gulshan Extension, which looms several stories over one side of the main street. The difference between colonies is marked in scale of plot, height of buildings, perimeter walls and tall gates. Nonetheless, as the longer established settlement, Punarvaspur's Main Market draws customers from both colonies, and with a weekly *haat* (market) it provides a busy hub for commercial life. Past dress fabric, steelware, *kirana* (general grocery) shops, 'fancy' stores for school bags and bindis, eating 'hotels', a dentist and a *shaddi* (marriage) band, customers are

drawn into the main fruit and vegetable markets, as well as more contentious meat and fish stalls. Here too are some of the signboards for some of the NGOs working in Punarvaspur, advertising their presence, activities and head office addresses.

From here, Blocks B and C lie parallel with the Main Road, divided by 'Middle Street', perpendicular to A block (see map). Externally appearing more prosperous than E and F blocks, all blocks contain sharp disparities of income between households, but in these blocks there are no storage areas for *kabari* on the ground floor and more houses rise to three levels. Most houses cover their entire 3 x 7 metre plots, running in back to back terraces down a *gali*, in contrast to the more open, surrounding, private colonies. Standing at right angles to the street, the potholed tarmac of the street gives way to patched concrete in the *gali*, and a telescoped view down the 26 houses on each side of the lane. Although similar, there is the non-uniformity of self-built houses, where rooms and floors have accreted as people have saved money and time. The outsides of houses vary with the plaster and turquoise blue/green whitewash characteristic of low-income settlements, unfaced brick or glazed tiles, according to a mix of means and taste. The perspective is punctuated by an occasional upended handcart, parked bicycles, a tree or bougainvillea creeper shading people sitting outside, but with a width of 3m, space remains at a premium.

Ledges and steps outside front doors project out over the gutters that run down each side of the street. On these women sit working or doing chores, children are dandled by fathers and neighbours stop and comment and chatter adding to the sociable, if surveilled nature of *galis*. Depending on the season and busyness of the lane, an elderly resident might be asleep on a *charpoy* (rope-strung bed) in reach of family or close neighbours, while vegetable sellers, *kabari-wale*, and other vendors make their way up and down the *gali* with a particular cry or sound to alert people to their coming. Children's games carry them up and down the *gali*, occasionally bursting out into the street, past refuse on the corner where the sweeper has left it. Depending on the time of day and affluence of residents of that *gali*, the pavement may reverberate through one's feet to the thrum of water pumps sucking out a thin supply, or the clank and clatter of hand pumps and buckets. Somewhere else insistent bursts of buzz and rattle betray an industrial sewing machine at work out of sight. Clutters of bicycles and a couple of handcarts are parked outside houses and the occasional motorbike marks affluence acquired or at least aspired to.

Along the 'Back Road', skirting the outside of the colony, the ends of *gali*s abut the street. Here there are a number of small *mandir*s (temples), *jhuggi* structures, and several blocks of community toilets. There are no official house plots here, but this is a

liminal space along the edge of the colony. Unseen at the back of the colony and only partially visible from the quiet road from the bus depot, in this space 'beyond' the official colony, some residents have creatively claimed and 'captured' spaces for their own ends and uses, building *jhuggi*es to put out on rent, *mandirs* for worship and rooms for storage.

Siting a strategically located ethnography

The outline and description of Punarvaspur above, serves to set the scene and offer some background to Punarvaspur as the location for this research. As an established locale of 30 years, Punarvaspur is immersed in a thick web of different kinds of social relations accreted over time, making it a strategic site (Marcus 1995) from which to examine these social relations and their development over this period. Thirty years is sufficiently recent that many residents recall the resettlement and can offer good accounts of the period afterwards. In this way Punarvaspur's emergence as a 'place' can be traced both within and beyond the formal confines of the neighbourhood, through the social relations of residents, civil society organisations, local politics and the state. This allows an understanding of Punarvaspur's insertion in the 'power-geometry' (Massey 1994) of the wider networks and dynamics of the contemporary city. As a resettlement colony Punarvaspur is also a planned neighbourhood, making it possible to explore the production of social space filtered through ideological and technical knowledge contained in blueprints and policy trajectories, as Lefebvre describes 'representations of space'. But more unusually, Punarvaspur offers the opportunity to trace the relatively understudied shift from planned 'space' as it is further shaped, contested and negotiated as 'spatial practice' through actors' engagement in the actual 'representational space' of the neighbourhood in everyday life, from 'space' into 'place'.

The next section sets out my methodology for this thesis.

Methodology
Research trajectory

Fieldwork was conducted in Delhi between the ends of January 2004 and September 2005, which included 6 months of language training carried out in conjunction with early fieldwork in the city. My main interest was to look at the politics and practices of 'civil society organisations' in an urban context. I had initially planned to do this through the lens of environmental politics in the city, as earlier library and newspaper research had suggested that civil society organisations appeared to be attempting to restructure the space of the city through environmental activism, to exclude the urban poor. Existing literature on developing world environmentalism, particularly in India,

had focused on ecology and natural resource management in rural settings (e.g. Sivaramakrishnan 1999; Rangan 2000; Gadgil and Guha 1992). By contrast, the imbrication of urban space into these debates questioned earlier accounts of environmentalism that emphasised the subaltern nature of social movements and peasant resistance (Scott 1985; Guha 2000; Arnold and Guha 1997; Baviskar 1997). On the contrary Amita Baviskar described this shift as "bourgeois environmentalism" (2003). However, arriving in Delhi in the spring of 2004, two potential topics for investigation appeared to have either been resolved, or become quiescent[24]. The third possibility, a campaign to 'clean the Yamuna River' had been left diffuse in my plans, and I followed supervisory advice to 'see what was there'.

In March 2004, as I started to get to know activists and NGOs in Delhi, events in the city began to reframe this last option. Under the guise of a long running court case to 'Clean the Yamuna [River]', the then Union Tourism Minister aburptly ordered the demolition of all 'unauthorised structures' on the banks of the river. At the time, this was one of the largest *jhuggi* demolition programmes in Delhi since the Emergency (1975-77), and saw the demolition of an estimated 350,000[25] people's homes from the 'Yamuna Pushta' in the following month and a half. In my early networking with NGOs, I found myself invited variously to press conferences and meetings in central Delhi institutions. It became clear that activists saw these demolitions as politically motivated; 'slums' and 'the urban poor' were not part of the 'India Shining' image required in the run up to the May 2004 General Election. Not only were these settlements in the middle of the city, but in the small amount of English media coverage that these demolitions received, the emphasis was on their 'encroachment' of public land, preventing the building of parks on the proposed site, and the 'cleaning and greening' of the city. Thus far these themes fitted with my research proposal. But interestingly, and more alarmingly for NGO activists who had been working in these areas, was their sense of shock at their lack of ability to broker mediations (and hopefully amelioration) with politicians or bureaucrats in the 'Slum and JJ Wing' of the local Delhi government. One meeting I attended descended into a gloomy discussion of this, questioning the point of activism at all. Yet, seen through the lens of the restructuring of space and place in the city, with an interest in 'civil society organisations', a resettlement colony presented a potentially interesting place from

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[24] The first had been to look at the impact of the compulsory conversion of all public transport licensed vehicles to run on compressed natural gas (CNG) in 2002. The second was to explore the campaign to remove all 'non-conforming' factories from Delhi, but appeared to have stalled for the longer term in the courts. Both threatened to have serious livelihoods impacts, against the backdrop of the high profile (and largely Anglophone) Delhi Government 'Clean Delhi, Green Delhi' campaign.

[25] See Baviskar 2004, Gopalakrishnan 2004.

which to examine the intersection of NGOs, politics, 'development', and state urban planning[26]. How, after such upheaval, did a resettlement colony become a place, and in the context of these kinds of actors, what kind of 'place' did it become?

As an established neighbourhood, Punarvaspur offered many of the perspectives this study required. As an older colony, it had a longer and denser history of place-making and of relations between individuals and institutions through the neighbourhood and across the city. It would also be easier to carry out research in, an activist sagely advised me, not only because there would be a greater sense of change over time, but also residents were likely to have settled jobs, so more have the time to talk to me. In the end, I arrived at Punarvaspur accompanying a participatory survey being run jointly by two NGOs as a 'training' exercise.

My arrival in Punarvaspur with the NGO survey team proved instructive, even as the survey being carried out tended to street theatre. It emerged that the locale had been heavily researched by NGOs over the years, with, residents felt, very little to show for promises made to them by successive survey teams. Consequently, when I began my own fieldwork, I was careful to ensure that everyone I spoke to knew that despite being a white European, I was not from an NGO, did not have access to funding, and could promise no tangible outcome of my research. Explaining that I was a student attached to Delhi University, I framed my interests as being in the history and experiences of residents in the neighbourhood. This not only helped explain my lack of a survey schedule, but also gave me leeway to ask questions NGO surveys do not. For some residents, the experience of narrating their own lives and knowledge of Delhi and the colony evidently produced a sense of pleasure and satisfaction at what they had achieved, in spite of everything. For others, as I discuss in chapter 3, the experience was much more painful.

Methods and methodology
Fieldwork in Punarvaspur was based on ethnographic methods, predominantly a combination of participant observation and semi-structured interviews. This was supplemented with more formal interviews, as well as the collection of secondary literature. The emergent data was collected in the form of typed-up field notes and interviews, original documents and photocopied materials.

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[26] Despite the environmental arguments advanced, both the 'non-conforming factories' and Yamuna-Pushta demolitions cases were framed legally, as planning violations, in contravention of the Delhi Master Plan.

These materials are analysed in this thesis through several qualitative methodologies, offering insights into different aspects of the social interaction of interest. The relatively undirected, 'naturalistic' nature of participant observation lends itself to conventional ethnographic analysis, where richly contextualised 'vignettes' are deployed in a case study style, as examples. This forms the basis of Chapters 4 and 5, examining the effect and deployment of the '*mahaul*' (atmosphere/environment) of the neighbourhood on and by residents. Secondary literature provides a formal historical background to the policy of resettlement and the restructuring of urban space in Delhi, while participant observation and semi-structured interviews provide residents' own accounts of their experience and negotiation of day to day life in the neighbourhood (Chapters 3, 4 and 5). Examining 'life' stories, and later (Chapter 6) the 'career' stories (Plummer 2001a; b; Arnold & Blackburn 2004) of some residents, opens up an insight into the way people have navigated their way through their relationship with others living in Punarvaspur. This illustrates the interaction of the particular experiences of individuals over a period of time, within wider social structures. But at the same time as these stories are historical sources, their performances are also social acts in their own right, as residents' positioning of themselves within them reflects the continuing reverberations of history in the present, and their positions within the colony. The proceedings of an NGO workshop in the final ethnographic chapter represents an ethnographic 'event'. Not 'historical' as those 'critical events' dealt with by Das (1995, 6) and Tarlo (2003, 7), nor as directed as a 'go-along' (a kind of participant observation transect walk, see Kusenbach 2003), the workshop offered an unusual forum for many of the of the main actors (residents, NGO fieldworker-residents, government bureaucrats, NGO head office staff etc) seeking to negotiate and deploy development within the spaces of Punarvaspur, to interact on a public stage. Together, these different methodological approaches offer perspectives with which to capture the dynamics of social life and the articulation of urban space in Punarvaspur and beyond.

In addition I collected notes on conversations and meetings with NGOs, in their 'field offices' in Punarvaspur, and followed up with interviews with staff in 'head offices'. In addition, I spoke to some of the NGOs partner organisations working elsewhere in Delhi, with a programme interest in Punarvaspur, as well as with NGOs who had worked in Punarvaspur in the recent, and more distant past.

Participant observation
Participant observation most often took the form of slow afternoons of chat and gossip in *galis* (lanes). In this kind of setting, participant observation was more often with groups of women than men, as the *gali* often functions as a kind of 'semi-domestic' space, and much of everyday life takes place outside in it. This made it an appropriate

setting for me (as for the other women residents) to sit and chatter in, as household tasks like vegetable preparation, clothing alterations, or small jobs sticking *bindis* onto cards, embroidering sequins onto garments were carried out. It was a good way to get to know people, and informal conversations were often be precursors to longer semi-formal interviews, when time (and neighbours) could be set aside. Finding space and time for more formal discussions with women was not always easy or successful. As Gorringe also (2005, 43) found, semi-structured interviews often became multi-person conversations, which although no longer so directed by me, often provided interesting insights into what residents themselves found important and interesting about a topic (rather than what I would have thought to ask).

When I spoke to men the gendered nature of conversation and sociality gave these exchanges a different dynamic. As an unmarried woman, my interactions with men tended to be more formal, and closer to discussion, than the chatter and conversations I had with women of all ages. Often further educated, and with greater experience of external, official interactions, conversation with men quickly became invitations to more formal interviews, whereas women frequently required more persuading of the value of what they had to say. The majority of men in Punarvaspur, worked outside of the neighbourhood, so I spoke to many men in the evenings, on their days off, on Sundays[27] and holidays. These men were often government workers, as well as residents whose small businesses were based in the neighbourhood, labourers or daily-wage workers who had not found work that day, as well as with elderly retirees, or men out of work in tea stalls. The hardest group to speak to were those men who worked in factories; many worked extremely long hours in hard conditions, often nightshifts and frequently some distance away (some as far away as Gurgaon, a 5 hour round-trip by bus). Consequently, this group is least well represented in the voices here, as they were also the group least present in the public spaces of the neighbourhood. Many slept on their days off, and for single male tenants the absence of kin and long-term links with the neighbourhood made the semi-domestic space of the lane uncomfortable. These men tended to take themselves off into other spaces in the city. Those I did speak to often positioned themselves in more broadly stretched networks of social relations in the city, where Punarvaspur was only one node, amongst a network of relationships in relation to their work, its prospects and their colleagues. Nonetheless, in the course of this work I took care to repeatedly spend time in every lane at different times, to ensure I spoke to a good cross-section of residents, as well as often going back to catch up with people.

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[27] Saturdays remain a workday for many people.

Amongst these, a number of people represent what have come be described in anthropological lore as 'key informants' (Pelto and Pelto 1978), who are worth describing here, as a snap shot of many of the Punarvaspur residents I worked with. Reflecting the practical fact that I met them at different stages during the process of fieldwork, their different perspectives were more or less important at different stages. Nonetheless, I continued to meet with all of them over the course of the fieldwork, and they often provided valuable updates on events in the neighbourhood, and reactions to them, and often a valuable sounding board against which to test early interpretations.

One of the first people I met in Punarvaspur was RK Chaudhry, a 68 year old Rajput man, who as the head of his household lived with his wife, two adult sons, one of whom was married, with his wife and two small children. RK Chaudhry had been born in Delhi, and grown up in and around Paharganj, his parents having originally come from Alwar in Rajasthan, his father working for what became in the post-Independence period, a well known construction company. RK Chaudhry himself had spent the first half of his working life in the Delhi Cotton Mills factory until 1976, when his back and hand were injured in an accident. In the upheaval of the Emergency, he was unable to use his trades union contacts to remain there, later finding work as a linesman with DESU (Delhi Electricity Supply Undertaking), like many men in Punarvaspur. When DESU was privatised in 2002 he had opted for the 'voluntary retirement scheme', adding to one of his son's intermittent income as a plasterer. With a strong interest in politics, he had been a trades unionist in the mill and a 'Leftist', before becoming a Congress supporter and political mediator in when he was resettled in Punarvaspur. Describing himself as an honest man (as, quite unbidden, his neighbours and other acquaintances did too), he ended up on the wrong side of his fellow DESU workers for refusing to take bribes, and so never progressed up the hierarchy. He was similarly frustrated by his loss of position as a (general caste) political mediator in Punarvaspur when the constituency became 'reserved' for Scheduled Castes in 1992, describing the (Scheduled Caste) member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) as corrupt for courting different parties in pursuit an electoral ticket. Despite increasingly poor health, his response to this was to keep an eye on the quality of government works carried out in the colony (road resurfacing, water supply repairs). Consequently, he was frequently cited by fellow residents as someone I should speak to in Punarvaspur for his knowledge and experience of the colony, often putting me right on my observations of politics and the state.

Asaf Ali is a Muslim man in his from Hardoi in Uttar Pradesh, coming to Punarvaspur during the resettlement with his parents, age 17, after lived at different places in Delhi. Now in his late 40s, he is married with two children, although his parents are now

dead. He had attended the classes of an educational NGO at the site prior to the resettlement. His father had been a daily-wage earner, earning a precarious living selling meals from a handcart near Old Delhi railway station. His father had never managed to cultivate very good contacts with either other hawkers near the station, nor the police constable whose beat it was, and had had had his handcart impounded more often that most, often with the loss of his utensils as well. Despite this, Asaf Ali had made it to 10th standard at school, and a close school friend had put him in touch with the opportunity to become a 'tempo' (light goods vehicle) driver. His job as a driver took him all over Delhi, mostly delivering vegetable from the Azadpur wholesale market to neighbourhood markets. This gave him an interesting view on the city and its changing infrastructure, particularly the Metro. He often commented on the broad strips of land purchased by the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation either side of the tracks, often entailing the demolition of sizable *jhuggi* clusters, asserting that this was part of a wider land grab by the company for potential commercial development. He was scornful of the MLA and local politics in general, asserting that participants were in it for their own enrichment, rather than 'getting the work of the people done'. Nonetheless, he was an enthusiastic supporter of the protest taken out shortly before Ramadan, demanding the improvement of the drains in front of the mosque he attended. Similarly, I often met his two sons on their way two and from Koran reading classes, and he emphasised the importance of education to be able to know what was going on in the world and avoid tricksters.

Like Asaf Ali, Umrao is interested in education as the potential for improving children's chances of getting on in spite of the neighbourhood, although living in opposite ends of the neighbourhood, with relationships to different NGOs, they have not encountered each other. Now in her early 50s, Umrao was pregnant with her fifth child when her husband disappeared, travelling for work to Hyderabad. Although her inlaws encouraged her to move back to Agra to live with them she refused, lest he return. For a few years she made ends meet by taking in sewing. Encountering an NGO (Saheli Samiti) she became a fieldworker, ultimately taking on a kind of barefoot lawyer role, advising women of their legal rights. Finding education was her passion, she decided that despite her 10th standard education at marriage, she would complete her own education, eventually getting a bachelors degree in education and Urdu. She emphasises that all her daughters are educated towards a jobs such that they can support themselves. These days she no longer works for the NGO, instead running her own small primary school from her tiny paper-stuffed office with the support of contacts and colleagues in other NGOs across the city. An authoritative woman, Umrao is highly self-reflextive and thoughtful in her observations and arguments, perhaps a reaction to the range of roles and subject positions in which she has found

herself over the years. Concerned herself with the conflicting tensions of being an NGOs fieldworker, resident, and a married but effectively single woman, her observations were always careful and reflective, making her especially interesting and valuable to talk to.

Anju's perspective is a different one. A Jaat woman just into her 20s with two small children under the age of 5, she finds herself unexpectedly in charge of the running of the household for her husband and his father, her mother-in-law having died suddenly the preceding year. She grew up in Rae Bareli District and was married at 15, but had not joined her husband in Delhi until she had finished her 12ᵗʰ Standard. She had made good friends with the other women in her lane (also Jaats) despite being teased for being terribly above herself for her position in the household. Through these relationships she had started to take in embroidery and sewing as most of the other women in the lane did from a local subcontractor, partly for some extra money, but also because, she said, that she enjoyed it. My being a non-Hindu, Anju often made it her part to fill me on everyday domestic household practices, as well as everyday life in the lane.

Vikram operates in the far more male political networks in Punarvaspur. A Valmiki in his 30s, he is the secretary of the Residents Welfare Association (RWA) in Punarvaspur, is affiliated to the local Member of the Legislative Assembly (also a Valmiki in this 'reserved consituency'), and staunch Congress supporter. Claiming to teach the *tabla* (a musical instrument), other residents described him as the MLA's man, doing the MLA's business for him, and it was evident that he made it his business to know the goings on of the neighbourhood. Approaching me to find out my interest in the neighbourhood, he made sure in pedagogic tones that I understood the importance, value and voting procedures of the RWA, as well as its proximity to the Delhi Congress Party, introducing me to the MLA and other RWA members. Nonetheless, he also introduced me to people he thought might be useful, including those like Asaf Ali and Mr Nayyer, who didn't necessarily share his politics. Some residents viewed him as a suspect, 'not good person', questioning his real employment. Nonetheless, keen that I should get the 'right' version, his tendency to occasionally collar me to tell me this, gave me a sense of local political preoccupations, and the intersection between 'organisations' and politics.

As subsequent chapters show, the above are examples of typical residents in Punarvaspur across a range of contexts. Casual conversations often led people to

introduce me others they considered to be useful to me[28], and to set up longer 'semi-structured' interviews. While 'life story' material can be drawn from a range of sources (biographies, photographs, letters and documents) (Plummer 2001a, 396), mine comes from the informal interactions of participant observation, elaborated on in semi-structured interviews (Arnold and Blackburn 2004, 12). Plummer notes that 'life history' material lends itself to being treated in two different ways; as a "resource" for what the story tells the reader, but also taking the story itself as the subject. Here it is how the story is composed and told by the teller, in a particular context that becomes important (Plummer 2001a, 399; 2001b, 158). So "Although talk is somehow seen as trivial ('mere talk), it has increasingly been recognised as the primary medium through which social interaction takes place. In households and in more 'public' settings, families and friends assemble their activities through talk." (Silverman 2001: 821)

In the stories that people tell, individual experience can be located within wider structures and events that shape people's lives and their interactions with each other. This is significant in the Indian context, given apparently culturally specific understandings of personhood, and ongoing academic debate over the degree of suffusion of the individual into society (e.g. Dumont and Marriott vs Mines 1994)[29]. So how should 'life stories' be understood? For Arnold and Blackburn, this is a bit of a red herring, arguing instead that "For Indians, as for anyone else, life histories are a narrative strategy for the representation of a person's social experience…life histories present those individual lives within a network of wider social relationships." (Arnold and Blackburn 2004, 22). Hence, understood within their ethnographic context these 'stories' provide rich material through which to understand both the events as they are told, but also the way in which people situate themselves in relation to their stories, and the assertions and differentiations that people deploy within them.

Often enquiring about the 'history' of the neighbourhood, I generally asked people about their experience of living in Punarvaspur, of how they came to live in the neighbourhood, how they felt about it at the time, and now, how things have changed, also allowing people to talk about their lives in general. From here I was usually able to follow up relationships with family, neighbours, as well as NGOs, politicians and bureaucrats as the neighbourhood had come up.

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[28] Atkinson and Flint's (2001) promote the use of 'snowballing' to study excluded and stigmatised people. Rather, I found that people tended to introduce me to important figures in the neighbourhood, especially those with past or present political connections.

[29] The 'collectivity' of Indian society was emphasised in Orientalist, colonial era texts, but also in post-Independence work notably by Marriott and Dumont. This has been questioned in Mattison Mines' work, where he emphasises individuality and agency. Both Dirks (2001) and Inden (1990) critiqued these ideas for their valorisation of Indian society over the individual (Arnold and Blackburn 2004, 3).

I mostly wrote notes openly as I found that a tape recorder was quickly defeated by the high level of background noise, the details of discussions drowned out by ceiling fans, neighbour's music, televisions, pressure cookers, children and the general high volume of close living. On some occasions it seemed intrusive to write down verbatim what had been said at that moment, at other times I was prompted 'Aren't you going to write that down? There should be everything correct in your studies.' This kind of interaction did not produce word for word accounts, but notes and jottings depending on the speed of the interaction. These were then expanded as necessary immediately afterwards and later quickly word-processed in full.

In addition to collecting notes from participant observation, and detailed and more directed semi-structured interviews, I also collected a range of additional data. Although I attempted conducting a survey, I found this served to alienate me more than anything else, or to lapse instead into further long conversations. Given the numbers of NGOs working in the neighbourhood, I was lucky that many were so generous with their own (if fragmented) data. Ration card data was also made available to me by the Delhi Right to Information group. I visited all the field offices of NGOs active in Punarvaspur, most of them several times. These were followed up with visits to the head offices of organisations, which were mostly not based in Punarvaspur. In the course of these visits, I interviewed field staff and head office staff, and collected life and organisational histories. In addition to reading and keeping a clippings file of several daily newspapers, I also conducted archival research in the Nehru Memorial Library. Here I looked at newspaper references to resettlement policy, the place of the urban poor in the city, and events relating to Punarvaspur and surrounding colonies. I was frustrated in my repeated attempts to gain access to records relating specifically to Punarvaspur. I was able to obtain a blueprint for the colony from an MCD planning office, and to speak briefly to planners there, but neither the MCD nor the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) who have both had responsibility for the colony through the 'Slum and JJ Wing' would admit to the existence of such records. Discussing the issue with Right to Information (RTI) activists[30], they reasoned that as the subject of so many successful (and embarrassing) RTI applications, the MCD had become extremely sensitive to the power of information. Further, given the high likelihood of these files containing similar evidence of plot issues in exchange for sterilisation certificates, as Emma Tarlo (2003)

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[30] As a non-Indian citizen, I am ineligible to make RTI applications. Additionally, at the time, the DDA, as a 'central' government body, was beyond the purview of the Delhi RTI Act 2000. The national RTI Act was not introduced until October 2005 when I had left the field.

had found and recently published, access to these files was perhaps even more unlikely.

I worked with three research assistants over the course of my fieldwork, all fellow female Delhi University postgraduate students of a similar age to me, helping me with translation in the early part of my fieldwork. In this respect, aside from race and nationality, the most salient aspects of our respective identities were shared, as female, unmarried, middle class students. In terms of impact, this latter aspect of our identities was extremely useful, rendering us unlikely to be harmful, but with an extraordinary licence to 'roam around the city', asking questions, in pursuit of a commonly understood goal of education. Our more 'backgrounded' identities as a nominal Christian and Hindus did not seem to present a problem either, but nor was it cause for any particular solidarity with the few Christian scheduled caste families I met. Potentially the most contentious identity was caste in a neighbourhood with a substantial scheduled caste population. Of the three research assistants I worked with all were correctly assumed to be general caste. On occasions when the day to day experience of caste identities came up as a topic of conversation (most often emerging with women as their work as household maids and cleaners), my research assistants' ability to draw on their own family members' attitudes and experiences often provided a useful counterpoint for drawing out how caste/class interactions had changed over generations, within and beyond the colony; an observation I was in no position to make. Working as a pair reduced the pressure and intensity of focus on an individual in a one-to-one interview by expanding it to something more like a three way conversation. The greatest impact of research assistance however, was that it bolstered my identity as a student, making my presence more credible, diluting my alien-ness as a young western woman on her own. In addition, as a student, my work towards the gaining of a degree, rather than for a wage, as for NGO workers, was more sympathetically viewed. While not necessarily an asset for girls in Punarvaspur, education is recognised as valuable on the middle class marriage market, and despite my protestations to the contrary, it was assumed that my work was a precursor to this.

The flip side of my identity as an unmarried young woman was that I was also subject to the surveillance mechanisms that operate effectively to constrain behaviour in the neighbourhood[31]. I was regularly informed who I had been observed talking to, and often that I shouldn't talk to them as they were 'not good people'. While in the early stages of my fieldwork my Hindi was not good enough to live in the neighbourhood,

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[31] This sometimes extended beyond Punarvaspur too, being informed one day I'd been seen wearing jeans (and not a *salwar kameez*) in Connaught Place in central Delhi, when I'd taken the day off to go to the bank and do other bits of admin.

as it improved it was from the fear that my mobility would be curtailed through too close an association with certain groups in the neighbourhood, that I elected not to live there. This is something that a number of female anthropologists have encountered in the course of urban fieldwork, making the pragmatic decision to locate themselves outside of their neighbourhood of work (Donner 1999, Vera-Sanso 1994) for similar reasons.

Like Donner (1999) and Vera-Sanso (1994), I also found that the distance, as well as flexibility afforded me broader perspective of Punarvaspur in the city, in combination with the depth of focus on the neighbourhood. Although I did not live in the colony, I was there on an almost daily basis, across most days of the week, over holidays, and different times of day. In fact this gave me greater flexibility to talk to people across the colony, and an excuse to 'catch up', in a way I suspect would not have been available to me, had I been resident there. On other days I had appointments with NGOs, sitting in on workshops (frequently meeting women residents of Punarvaspur in their capacities as fieldworkers), tracing out the same relationships that people in Punarvaspur have made with institutions and people beyond the neighbourhood. This gave me a stronger understanding of the connectedness of a place like Punarvaspur to other locales in the city, through a range of different relationships. As importantly, talking to people as I moved round the city, in conversations with fellow bus passengers, shopkeepers, my own landlord and neighbours, I gained a good sense of how other residents of Delhi perceived resettlement colonies, and their views on Delhi and its development.

Residents' perceptions of my presence in the neighbourhood varied: in such an over-researched setting with long exposure to NGO surveys, people were rarely shy about telling me to get lost if they didn't feel like talking; likewise, my presence in the neighbourhood was perplexing when I was still around after the two week span of the average survey project. While I would some times be introduced to someone I 'ought to talk to' with a description of my research better than I understood it myself at the time, throughout my fieldwork I continued to meet new people, and from time to time would overhear speculative conversations in the street, wondering what I was doing (did I work for the CBI? (Central Bureau of Investigation, i.e. police). As noted above, unlike many village settings, much of the population of a neighbourhood like Punarvaspur, is both fluid and only fleetingly present, as people frequently move in and out, take tenancies, sell up or buy into the locale.

Outline of Chapters

In Chapter 2, 'Making Delhi Like Paris', that follows, I examine the history of planning and the place of the urban poor in Delhi, tracing policies of resettlement and the reconfiguration of space in the city from 1857, through Independence to the present day. I introduce Lefebvre's concept of representational space to understand the role of abstract and conceptual representations of space to understand the reordering of urban space in Delhi's modern history.

In the next chapter (3) I examine the people's accounts of the resettlement and their arrival in Punarvaspur as a means by which they work to 'emplot' themselves into the fabric of the neighbourhood. Reading the telling of these stories as a form of spatial practice, I argue that residents work to locate and negotiate their own place in the city.

The role of 'spatial practices' in modifying the abstract representation of space set out on the blueprint of the colony emerges more concretely in Chapters 4 and 5. I examine idea of the '*mahaul*' ('environment'/'atmosphere') of the neighbourhood and how it is understood to act on people for better or for worse, and the effect people can have on it. Through this I explore the ways people manage interactions and draw boundaries between each other to assert differences of caste, class, and respectability through gender, in this mixed and heterogeneous urban setting. In Chapter 5, boundary-making as an assertion of difference and respectability remain important spatial practices. General caste residents in particular seek to order and negotiate uncertain caste relations in the space of the neighbourhood. For others, particularly Valmikis, as low caste residents in a reserved constituency, a relatively secure identity and indifference to the *mahaul* of the neighbourhood has allowed them to potentially transform their localised cultural capital as the politically dominant caste in the neighbourhood into monetary capital more easily. This has given them a somewhat different relationship to boundary making, seeing space instead as a potential source of income.

In Chapter 6 "Boys wouldn't have the patience for this kind of work", I look at the career histories of a number of NGO fieldworkers who are also residents of the colony. Mostly women, they offer a critical insight into the ways in which they as residents must negotiate across the moral terrain of the neighbourhood, mediating and translating ideas about development between their employers, the NGO, and their neighbours, the 'targets' of NGO programmes. In the final Chapter (7), I follow some of these resident fieldworkers, out of Punarvaspur, into the chilled seminar rooms of an NGO consortium's 'end of project workshop'. This offers an unusual insight into the

operation, interaction and debate within and between different NGO workers as they negotiate the changing terrain of development discourses in Delhi, as the role of the state and NGOs are queried and challenged.

<div style="text-align: right; font-size: 2em;">2</div>

'MAKING DELHI LIKE PARIS':
Histories of planning, resettlement and stories about development in the city.

'They want to make Delhi like Paris' I was often told. This strikingly specific phrase was repeated to me so often that I started to note not just what people were saying as they used it, but when it was used, and to ask about the phrase itself. Most often I heard it in Punarvaspur as an explanation, or sometimes acerbic comment on the *jhuggi* demolitions that had settled the place. Sometimes this phrase was a wry and occasionally bitter comment on the difficulty of hanging on to even poorly paid, highly temporised work, in the long drawn out battle to remove all 'non-conforming' or polluting industries from Delhi. Through closure or relocation, the loss of densely packed small workshops and factories in the surrounding area, which had specialised in garment manufacture, dyeing, wire drawing and metal fabrication, further threatened to reconfigure the wider area's economic landscape. For Punarvaspur this would be a double loss of both jobs and income from seasonally mobile tenants. At other times, the phrase was part of wider grumbles about inflation, the cost of living, or the continuing rounds of resettlement in the city. In conversations in Hindi, the phrase was often used to refer to new 'modern' malls or infrastructure developments coming up in the city and whether or not the speaker felt themselves to be included by them. Sometimes the phrase pointed to the shiny elevated Metro trains, speeding past stationary buses through Shahdara's rooftop skeins of washing and water tanks. The phrase also appeared as an activist's slogan, ramming home the inequalities of the contemporary city and the indifferent state to an already acquiescent audience. As it was used, the phrase seemed to invoke a range of ideas about Delhi, conjuring an image of the wider city, simultaneously referring to its past and future, and often the speaker's place within it.

'Making Delhi like Paris' is an arresting, if slightly dated phrase when spoken in English[32], provoking an unexpected comparison between the two cities. Whilst it made me think of the incongruous figure of Baron Haussman, subduing seditious quarters of Paris also by demolition and 'rationalised' rebuilding, what did it mean to

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[32] In the English language press the demand is now to make the city 'world class'. This seems to follow the Bombay First–McKinsey report (2003) *Vision Mumbai – Transforming Mumbai into a world-class city.* The contemporary equivalent in Bombay is 'to make Bombay like Shanghai'.

contemporary Delhiites? Some people I spoke to ascribed the phrase to Jagmohan, Vice-Chair of the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) in the 1970s. In Punarvaspur he is better known as the maligned associate of the Emergency demolitions and right hand man of Sanjay Gandhi. Other people attributed the phrase to Sanjay Gandhi himself – also referring to resettlement and the painful excesses of Emergency, before his death in 1980. Others suggested it had been said by Jagmohan in the late 1990s or early 2000s. By this time he was a BJP MP for the smart New Delhi constituency, and his 2004 election material had unrepentantly drawn on the Emergency as qualification for the cleaning and greening of the post-liberalisation capital.

In the contemporary period it is easy to read the statement that 'They want to make Delhi like Paris' as part of a wider bourgeois appropriation of the city, often achieved through a language of environmentalism (Baviskar 2003). Nonetheless, it is necessary to step back and consider the wider history and emergence of planning, particularly the categorisation of 'the poor' and how they come to be known in the city through the execution of policy and plans by the developmental state.

This chapter examines historical documents and accounts of urbanisation to understand the reordering of urban space in Delhi's modern history. In their formal, ordered, often technical conceptualisations of space, these documents and accounts are examples of what Lefebvre calls 'representations of space' (1991, 33; 41). This aspect of the production of space deals with theoretical and schematic conceptualisations of space arising from professional and expert frameworks of knowledge. As such, these documents and accounts represent the dominant conceptualisations of space in society. Emerging through the interpretation of data about poverty, modernity, risk to health and crime in the city, these conceptualisations are aggregated under the heading of 'development'. In this way, these 'representations of space' produce the city itself through the way it is imagined, surveyed and produced on plans.

Yet there is rarely a single policy or programme, and each is likely to be informed by multiple and contested ideas. While one may overshadow others, the existence of other policies and programmes, and their associated plans and interpretations, are evidence of different ways of seeing the city. To understand how these representations of space, emerge, interact and literally have concrete effect, this chapter examines the conceptualisations that underpin the planning documents and depictions of development in Delhi. Specifically, I look at how the production of knowledge about the city has been shaped by colonial, nationalist, and international ideas and imaginations of the city, which in turn have informed its planning. These have informed both epistemology (defining what makes Punarvaspur and such areas

'slums', and so a problem) and practice (having decided how such areas should be recognised, deciding what action should be taken[33]).

Discourses of Development

How are these different conceptualisations of the city and its space negotiated? This question sits within the wider field of understanding how dominant forms of knowledge and their conceptualisation have shaped international development[34].

'Development' is "an incredibly powerful semantic constellation" (Esteva 1992: 8, in Sivaramakrishnan and Agrawal 2003: 3) and can be understood as partly emerging from mid-twentieth century global narratives of modernity and the creation of 'welfare' or 'developmental' states. Enhanced by the linear perspective offered by history and the 'Master Plans' and 'Development Authorities' created across India in the 1950s, it is tempting to see the development of Delhi within these frames. Yet while Independence and Partition provided a cataclysmic disjuncture between colonial India and the new republic, particularly in Delhi, there are also a number of strong continuities to be considered between the colonial period and that immediately after Independence.

Discourses of development have been much critiqued in the last 20 years, with an 'anti-development' discourse appearing in the early 1990s (e.g. Ferguson 1994, Escobar 1995, Cooper and Packard 1997, Crush 1995, Sachs 1992, Gardner and Lewis 1996) as a 'radical critique' of development (Sivaramakrishnan and Agrawal 2003, 25,43). This highlighted how the need for development had been constructed as a problem of poverty through cases of 'failure' and incapability caused by some form of deficiency

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[33] This concern informs my decision to avoid using the word 'slum' in this thesis, to describe neighbourhoods like Punarvaspur, or their residents as 'slum dwellers', except where the term is used by others. 'Slum' in English (and often 'basti' in Hindi) was frequently used in NGO and policy circles to describe all kinds of low income neighbourhoods alike. Like Gilbert (2007) I am perturbed by its apparent resuscitation in recent UN Habitat and World Bank documents (2000; 2003), not least for its pejorative connotations and association with public health and security hazards. As such the term often serves to licence certain often highly discriminatory actions against the neighbourhood and its residents. "What makes the word 'slum' dangerous is the series of negative associations that the term conjures up, the false hopes that a campaign against slums raises and the mischief that unscrupulous politicians, developers and planners may do with the term." (2007, 701).

[34] Lefebvre suggests that Foucault is 'casual' in referring to space, failing to explain how the gap between the theoretical realm of epistemology and discourse and the practical is bridged. (Lefebvre 1991, 3-4). For Lefebvre, it is this bridge, or the interaction between representational space and spatial practice, that is important. Subject and object are not incommensurable, instead "Lefebvre introduces into social theory an idea of social space which is not preformed or static, but produced by the energies of social interaction." (Smethurst 2000, 51). Nonetheless, Foucault's concept of discourse, as it has been debated within the anthropology of development literature is useful here.

(such as a lack of education, shortage of resources, low levels of living standards etc.) and accordingly produced the need for help or intervention (Corbridge et al. 2005, 47). Questioning the very possibility of the practice of development itself, the anti-development discourse usefully denaturalises any 'inevitability' of development or modernisation. However, these 'anti-' or 'post-development' critiques have also tended to overemphasise and oversimplify the operation of 'development', flattening differences, and neglecting heterogeneous interests at work in development planning, policy and practice. This has produced an equally misrepresentative and monolithic discourse, similar to that critiqued. Thus, while the terminology used has changed, 'development' continues to be practiced and demanded by states, agencies and recipients.

The need for a more holistic understanding of this debate can be seen in the negotiations between planners and commissions in early and mid-twentieth century Delhi. While propelled by different government objectives and from different sides of Independence, these planners and commissions often came to similar conclusions. However, to fully understand the debate, it is necessary to consider how these objectives interact with other channels. In Punarvaspur, women's demands to the water board for a better quality supply might be mediated through both an NGO 'teaching' health and hygiene to teenage girls, through the elected representative (MLA[35]) with an eye on his electorate, or via the protests of a group of women from an affected lane. These women might mediate their complaint through either the MLA or an NGO, or take it to the office themselves. So as Shivaramakrishnan and Agrawal note "struggles around development in India do not neatly oppose modernity to community, but reveal complex coalitions between cosmopolitan members of international organisations and local social movements" (2003: 21 fn73).

By examining the histories of plans and policies, and the life stories of residents of places like Punarvaspur, different framings and approaches to 'squatters' and the policy of resettlement emerge. While "the idea of strategies without authors is particularly dissatisfying in the context of development. Without a relationship with authors, it becomes particularly difficult to connect strategies with effects." (Sivaramakrishnan and Agrawal 2003, 43-4). By tracing them back through time, it is possible to see how certain 'discourses' materialise, but also to see how they have shifted, changed and become more or less prominent through different political contexts. As phrases like 'they want to make Delhi like Paris' circulate, their meanings change with the context of time and teller, moving them between wider urban

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[35] Member of the Legislative Assembly

development discourses and what they might mean to different people in different settings.

Furthermore, as 'representations of space' are given form in official plans for resettlement colonies, they are also modified by residents 'spatial practices' living and moving through them, disaggregating any singular meanings to spaces that planners may have intended. In this way, the grand concerns of Master or Five Year Plans, of making Delhi like Paris become knit into, and modified by, even in slight, shifting and flimsy form, the concerns of everyday life. Consequently, as Ferguson reminds us (1999, 17) even planning documents like the 1960 Delhi Master Plan are "not simply a historical and ethnographic record but…an historical and ethnographic artefact": they are very much 'live' as they continue to impact on people's lives.

This chapter examines the ways the ordering of space into areas of appropriate location for different kinds of people and how the relationships between different groups in the city are inscribed in its spaces. In particular, I examine how a resettlement colony like Punarvaspur, and its residents have become such a quintessential site for development, and what the planning histories of Delhi can tell us about the place of 'the urban poor' in historical and contemporary cities more generally.

Planning the city: pre-independence
"The city occupies an ambivalent place in the Indian nationalist imagination" writes Gyan Prakash (2002: 3), and few people are more ambivalently placed in that, and present imaginations of the Indian city, than the residents of *jhuggi* settlements. Tracing the place of 'the urban poor' and emergence of the 'problem of slums', the continuities of colonial planning persistent across the pre- and post-Independence divide in the trajectory of urban planning in Delhi, even as the imperatives of governance become those of the new 'developmental' state in the de-colonising world. In the course of this it is possible to see both shifts and continuities in language, policy and opinion between accounts of how to deal with the rapidly expanding city; what to do about 'congestion', noxious trades and the place of rural migrants in the city.

But where to situate this desire to 'make Delhi like Paris'? How to read it? As a modernizing impulse? If so, whence from? What is the history to the desires this statement seems to usher in?

At the time of the uprising in 1857, Delhi was still a centre of Mughal political power and a major regional trading hub, but not as it had been in previous centuries. The introverted court was increasingly controlled by British colonial interests, who saw the

uprising as just the opportunity to remove the Mughal emperor and take official control of the state (Dalrymple 2007). As much as a third of the city was laid to waste in the process. Large parts of the pre-uprising elite were banished into enforced destitution, and trade and previous linkages of patronage and support were shattered and dispersed. Acute anxieties about the populace of the recently subdued city, its origins and trustworthiness, haunted its officials. "After the Revolt, officials at Delhi were not only anxious to strain out the loyalist element, but were also obsessed by a fear of the more anonymous poorer sections. A common stereotype in late 19th century officialese in Britain and India was of the 'criminal and dangerous classes'." writes Narayani Gupta (1981:79). This insecurity was felt more acutely by residents who remained within the city's walls after the 'kuchabandi' system of gating off one neighbourhood (*mohalla*) from another was banned, and the holes punched in the defensive city walls by railway construction increased fears about the ease of the incursion of strangers (ibid.:80).

By the 1870s, the city gradually recovered, despite the radical reordering of space through demolitions by the new colonial state in vicious reprisal for 1857. The shifting and expansion of markets inside and outside the city walls as the economy recovered saw the creation of a new merchant elite and with them - new commercial locales. By the 1880s and onwards, with the expansion of housing and workplaces no longer so tightly confined, new commercial opportunities and a burgeoning land and property market appeared. Textile mills[36], small compared to the scale of those in Bombay and Calcutta, were set up, as were a number of small scale manufacturing workshops. At the same time regionally significant wholesale markets entrenched their position by the extension of the railways to and beyond Delhi, attracting raw and finished materials from across Northern India and the Punjab. Yet, the concerns of the city's elites of the 1860s persisted into the early years of the 20th century, fearing the threat that large numbers of the footloose labouring migrant poor might offer. By the interwar years, "The vast expansion of the ranks of the labouring poor in the towns [of North India]…generated grave concern amongst the urban propertied classes and local administrators alike" (Nandini Gooptu 2001:66), but increasingly, not just for reasons of property and health, to the image of the city itself. Concerns included issues of 'congestion', fears about population density, scarce resources of housing, sanitation,

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[36] The best known of the mills was Delhi Cotton Mills which ran from the 1890s (Gupta 1981: 62) until the early 1980s when, as RK Chaudhry, who had worked there as a young man even after the relocation to Punarvaspur, wistfully described, the mill closed amidst a flurry of strikes and industrial unrest. Denis Vidal (2000) further describes and explains the place of Delhi as a centre for wholesale markets, and their functioning, describing in detail the grain market at Naya Bazaar.

and the potential for 'nuisance' from workshops and assorted 'traditional' and 'noxious' trades (Sharan 2006),

As symptoms of barely regulated haphazardness and disarray, these concerns became major institutional ones when, in 1911, the shifting of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi was announced by George V. A temporary capital was sited at Civil Lines to the north of Shahjehanabad, while a new capital was to be laid out to the south. Villages were swept away before new geometrically ordered avenues and parks were drawn out on a monumental scale, with public and private buildings to house new ministries and ministers. Civil servants were to be housed in homes built to repetitive and calculated conventions of dimension for optimum ventilation[37], and ordered by size appropriate to rank and grade, to produce a setting of "rationality and functional zoning of the modern." (Legg 2006a: 192). Although there was a radical division of space and style, the heavy traffic of people, goods, power and commerce blurred the boundaries between the two, which were both largely governed as one. The 'old' city's shortcomings were increasingly made to stand in contrast to the new, modern city and the failure to recognise the traffic between the two continued to be reproduced through concerns about 'traditional', 'community' and later 'backward' ways of living in later rounds of restructuring and planning.

The interwar years in Delhi combined the construction of the new colonial capital with shifts in local policies towards the urban poor, marked by heightened class differences. "The vigorous town improvement measures and local taxation policies impinged more directly and extensively on the economic activities and housing and settlement patterns of the poor." (Gooptu 2001:109). This aggravated a sense of insecurity and competition for the scarce resources of the city. As early as the 1930s, it became clear that planning for the new capital had been far from adequate, when there was found to be insufficient housing, even for imperial government's officers, and little regulation of private development elsewhere in city (Legg 2006a: 192). As with later major

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[37] "The grand imperial city was about government and power, order and control, about an idealised 'modern' life as visualised by British architects, drawing on 'garden city' ideals of 'light and air', as well as notions of 'efficiency', health and moral uprightness prevalent at home. The city made no room for the humdrum daily life… The common subjects of the empire crowded into the old city or spilled out into fast growing enclaves." (Hosagrahar 2005: 147) The impulse to grade and order population by housing continued; areas like South Daryaganj aimed at a wealthy Indian elite offered named single use rooms, modeled on European dwelling patterns. Those aimed at a poorer population in less desirable locations, less far down the path to a European model of modernity were provided dense multi-use rooms and shared toilet blocks. (ibid: 160-161)

development projects[38], large numbers of people from Delhi's hinterland migrated to take advantage of labouring work on the building sites. Together with a booming small industries and workshops sector, this increased the pressure on housing and services. Most problematically for officials was the exuberant mixing of living and workspaces through systems of subdivisions and negotiations with neighbours. This made it even more difficult to control and regulate construction, building modification and use (Hosagrahar 2005: 152).

In 1938 a 'Report on the Relief of Congestion in Delhi' by AP Hume, commissioned by the central government, brought the subject to a head. Hume was appointed in charge of the newly formed Delhi Improvement Trust (DIT). This built on previous concerns about the city, evinced by both an Indian elite and the colonial government. Grounded in the idioms of town planning and design from both India and metropole Britain, it was framed in terms of 'public health' and 'nuisance', and ordered by growing conventions of regulation. From these traditions, the DIT went on to develop a specific epistemology for understanding the nature and condition of neighbourhoods through the frameworks of demographics and public health in terms of congestion, density of population, and quantifiable services. This process produced and entrenched norms that have continued to underpin planning policy as regards to the designation and treatment of 'slums' and 'slum dwellers' into the postcolonial period.

Focusing on congestion, the report, taking a norm of 50 square feet per person, used census data to calculate overcrowding in the city's wards. "This data was presented as an 'intensity map' of population density, which it was the proclaimed aim of the DIT to 'level out'. This effectively meant getting people out of the walled city and the surrounding slum areas." (Legg 2006a:193). To conduct this 'levelling out', the DIT gained the powers to "acquire land, relocate people, and undertake construction as well as the fiscal instruments and autonomy to raise funds" (Hosagrahar 2005: 157). The DIT reported:

> "If the city is to be brought on lines more compatible with public health it is evident that a major portion of the city will have to be pulled down which is not a practicable proposition. All that would perhaps be possible to do is to

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[38] As demonstrated for the 1982 Asiad Games in Delhi (PUDR 1982), and anecdotally in conversations about arrival in the city, with residents both in Punarvaspur and elsewhere. Construction has offered a toehold of daily wage labour for new arrivals in Delhi; I met people who had worked in roads gangs, on the Nizamuddin bridge, and at ITO on the Delhi government offices there in the 1960s and 1970s. Others had found work during the cooperative association apartment building boom in 1980s East Delhi, after being evicted from their previous dwellings working at the exhibition grounds at Pragati Maidan for the 1982 Asiad Games. Some people had been able to convert this to more stable employment and dwelling in the city; others at the demolition of their own homes, found themselves forced to return to villages, or to other transient sites in Delhi.

clear out slums from highly congested areas or to drive one or two roads
through the city and thus enforce a section of the public to move out of the city
to settle down in new bastis [enclave or settlement] to be built outside the city
wall." (DIT Report in Hosagrahar 2005: 157)

Conceptualising the nature and needs of the population in terms of idealised or typical densities, the report produced a topography of 'traditional' and 'modern' (i.e. non-'slum'-like) ways of living. These reproduced the perceptions of the colonial planners; not just of how people lived, but in their recommendations, and in tones of the coming era of 'development', how they should live. Legg argues "The DIT shared with the NDDC [New Delhi Development Committee] an entrenched tradition of thought that reified distribution and devalued local custom and social relations. This tradition was consonant with first, an orientalist inheritance that dichotomised and essentialised the colonial world into the rational West and the irrational East." Additionally, "it embodied a modernist rationale that imagined the realm of serious solutions to be that of science and technology, not humans and habitations." (Legg 2006a:194). It was an epistemology concerned to delineate households by walls (for better calculation of densities), institutionalising the norms of the autonomous nuclear family and the privacy of the domestic home. This dismissed more communal styles of living, like Old Delhi's extended family *katras,* emphasising public health and administrative units, rather than social and cooperative associations. These issues formed the basis for the nationalist critique of the colonial state, unconcerned with Indian tradition. Nevertheless, the techniques, forms and styles of data used, saw the Trust's primary anxieties about 'slums', population and congestion, carried over into the postcolonial period too (ibid.).

The DIT, as a source of Delhi-specific policy was crucial to the "discursive definition of the poor as a social problem and as a separate social class, sharing undesirable habits and practices and suffering from moral deficit and backwardness'." (Gooptu 2001, 109). This Gooptu ironically notes, had much to do with the "deterioration and instability of residential settlements, which arose from Improvement Trust[39] policies themselves, [which] went a long way to reinforcing the negative stereotypical image of the poor as rootless and underdeveloped." (ibid.) All of these anxieties continued to influence planning in the post-Independence period.

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[39] Although Gooptu's work refers to Improvement Trusts of United Provinces (to become Uttar Pradesh) towns, it is regionally and politically applicable to Delhi, with many migrant to the city hailing from UP, both before and after Independence.

Continuities and new influences: post-independence planning

The housing shortage continued. In the five years following 1938, the DIT succeeded in building 242 houses, with just 104 of them occupied (Hosagrahar 2005: 175). Hosagrahar points out that "residents for their part, however, were not passive recipients of these 'civilising projects'. As they struggled to find a place for themselves in the tumult of economic and political change, citizens responded variously… Those who could took advantage of the new opportunities to make financial gains through investment in real estate." (2005:177)

Following the turmoil of Independence, traumas of Partition and vast influx of refugees into the city, Delhi's population[40] was transformed and vastly increased, making the question of planning, housing and slums acute in the capital of newly independent India. Like many committees and departments, the DIT simply continued[41] in existence right through the fracture of independence, until it too came under the same kind of scrutiny as originally initiated by AP Hume. This time GD Birla's Delhi Improvement Trust Enquiry Committee (1951), recommended its reform.

> "Bad environment affects us all alike; we are choked, each one of us…by the meanness and squalor which stretch their tentacles upwards from the lives of our less than fortunate fellow citizens." (GD Birla in Sharan 2006:4086)

The language no longer referred implicitly to 'subjects', but explicitly addressed 'citizens'. However, the anxiety over the effects of a 'bad environment' and the general tone had changed little since 1857. The Committee noted that housing congestion spread not just TB, but also "juvenile delinquence", observing "Where honest toil can produce nothing but squalor there needs to be no wonder that unsocial tempers rise" (Birla Committee Report, in Sharan 2006: 4908). Whilst declaring its disdain for politics and faith in scientific rational planning (ibid), the committee, at the same time retained, a moral element. Whereas the 'honest toiler' might have been a worthy recipient, other members of the 'urban poor' were increasingly defined in subsequent documents and court cases as 'squatters' and 'encroachers'; as people out of place.

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[40] Rising from 5.22 lakhs in 1941 to 9.15 lakhs in 1951. (BSS 1956: 215)

[41] Legg (2006a:186) notes that "Many points of continuity were simply matters of practicality. Various projects and committees overran the 1947 divide, while the Indian Civil Service was retained in an adapted form." As did much of the colonial state apparatus, some like the military and police reappearing in renewed and strengthened form, or in the continued existence of 'emergency powers' in the Constitution. It was these 'Viceroy's'/'President's' powers which allowed Mrs Gandhi to suspend constitutional and democratic rights which produced the fear, acquiescence and compulsions which underpinned many of the actions taken under the Emergency, including mass demolitions and resettlement, which other wise would have been more politically difficult.

In the first decade of independence, the solution was to be found in the Ministry of Health, which found a surprising, if telling, affinity with town planning. Having set up a 'Town Planning Organisation', in 1956 Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, minister for both health and local government, invited Albert Mayer and the American philanthropic institution, the Ford Foundation to help set out an 'Interim General Plan for Greater Delhi'. This was to be a comprehensive regional and urban master plan, which was to include centralisation of coordination, supervision, and planning powers (TPO 1956: 2), setting out a vision for a zoned city, with areas for housing, industry and leisure.

An ambivalent city and the developmental state

> *"Here we stand in Delhi City, symbol of old India and the new. It is not the narrow lanes and houses of old Delhi or the wide space and rather pretentious buildings of New Delhi that count, but the spirit of this ancient city. For Delhi has been an epitome of India's history with its succession of glory and disaster, and with its great capacity to absorb many cultures, and yet remain itself."*

> Jawaharlal Nehru
>
> Epigraph
>
> Delhi Master Plan (1958: 1)

Despite Nehru's words above, the nationalist relationship to cities was not straightforward, with a number of different impulses embodied in competing visions of how to plan Delhi in the 1950s. As the seat of government and the ex-colonial state, Delhi was a site of power: contested for what it had represented and questioned for what it should be. The antithesis of an essential village India, it was where 'authentic' vernacular identities and rural moorings were eroded and lost. Gandhi's antipathy to the city as a site of colonisation and its misplaced modernity is well known. Shades of this can be seen in the continued valorisation of the village as the location of 'real', unadulterated and authentic India. This India was marked by self-rule, or perhaps (assumed) self-reliance, forms of *panchayati* government and the dominance of rural and agricultural policy, or the veneration of handicrafts[42], with few specifically urban orientated policies in the Five Year Plans of the immediate post-Independence period[43]. For the most part Five Year Plans concentrated on reducing the rate of urban

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[42] 'Ethnic' household items and clothing have a curious relationship as items of distinction to the middle class consumer in the city. 'Handicrafts', 'cottage industries', and especially *khadi* are protected by legislation as particularly 'authentic', 'traditional' and 'Indian' are sold by 'emporia' in cities, offering a means for the urban consumer to make particular and occasionally political statements about themselves. This seems illustrative of yet another way in which ideas about authenticity and nationalism are complicatedly woven through ideas about 'rural life' and 'the village', versus 'the city'. See Greenough (1995) and Tarlo (1996).

[43] In parallel, representative of perhaps a kind of 'nationalist sociology' Mathur suggests that the burgeoning of village studies in the 1950s should be recognised as a kind of optimism as

growth and emphasising rural development at the expense of urban infrastructure even when cities continued to grow (Jaquemin 1999:63). Yet "Nehru's dominating nationalist ambition" as Khilnani describes it was "to recreate the city for its own purposes: to make it not only the symbol of a new sovereignty, but an effective regime to drive India into the modern world." (2004 [1997], 110). Likewise, railing against the Brahmin Gandhi, Ambedkar could not have been more scathing of such a romanticised approach to the village: "The love of intellectual Indians for the village community is of course infinite if not pathetic… What is the village if not a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow mindedness and communalism?" (in Khilnani 2004 [1997], 128). These widely divergent attitudes to the city versus the rural offer an insight into nationalist perceptions of the city, and particularly the perceived effect of the city on the individual, and so on society more widely.

Yet across the divide of Independence, residents of squatter colonies and subsequent resettlement colonies were assumed (and often were) rural migrants, appearing increasingly inappropriate, or at least inauthentic, city dwellers; as people out of place. The question of 'kinds' of people and their location in the city became more pressing to planners in considering Master Planning, 'slums' and resettlement policies in the postcolonial period.

This ambivalence towards poor rural migrants in the city was reflected in the 'Interim General Plan for Greater Delhi' drawn up by the Town Planning Organisation (TPO) which concludes that:

> "Our cities today are congested; living conditions have deteriorated greatly, and employment opportunities have tended to grow more and more scarce. …but the fear is that it has tended to induce an unhealthy change in the demographic structure of our rural society. Such consequences of this process cannot be viewed with any equanimity and we were left with the view that they were so damaging because the process had gone on with out any direction or planning, in a spontaneous and uncontrolled manner. Can we so manoeuvre that urbanisation occurs in a manner consistent with planned social and economic development?" (TPO 1956: 98)

These national debates were taking place in the wider geopolitical setting of decolonisation, and the emergence of notions of 'development' and 'underdevelopment'. The developmental state bloomed with plans and planning, and the emergence of an international 'development orthodoxy' (Cooper and Packard 1997,2). Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Five Year Plans, regional plans, industrial plans, and plans for agriculture, represented experiments with various combinations of

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"part of a larger postwar framework of developmentalism, in which anthropological knowledge about 'traditional culture' was formulated in the interests of modernisation." (2000: 92)

Soviet inspired socialist planning, and American aided techniques to simultaneously enhance capitalist modes of production. These informed the drawing up of the Delhi Master Plan for 1958 – a document that is essentially a drawn out and ongoing debate over what and how development should be in the city. Informed as they are also by pre-histories of nationalism, and contemporary concerns, the debate of the first and subsequent Delhi Master Plans can be read as wrangles over different kinds of nationalist imaginations of the city and what it represents.

"Development had come to bear the weight of a new leadership's quest for legitimacy." (Cooper and Packard 1997: 11), and planning was embraced by the new nationalist government with some urgency. In 1956, the welfare of new citizens, especially those in the capital's designated slums and refugee camps, seemed of most concern. In the foreword to the Bharat Sevak Samaj's (BSS) "Report on the Slums of Old Delhi", which he also funded, Nehru wrote:

> "For the last few years I have been deeply interested in the slums of Delhi. Every time I have visited them, I return with a certain feeling of numbness and an urgent desire to have something done to remove these slums."

Prefacing this to say that:

> "The problem is not merely of old slums but of the creation of new slums. It is obvious that we shall never solve it unless we stop completely the formation of new slums." (Nehru in BSS 1958: 7)

But while all could now agree that the 'slums' of the capital city were a problem (whether of social justice for new citizens, of public health and environmental risk, or of the city's image), how this was to be solved, indeed how the subject was to be studied in the first place, was disputed.

Headed by Brij Kishan Chandiwala, the BSS had been established in 1952 and began conducting surveys of Old Delhi in 1955. In 1956, Nehru was escorted around the BSS sites[44], as patron, or at least funder. Noting Chandiwala as an "eminent Gandhian", Prashad cites Nehru in a confidential letter to several ministries, following this visit saying, "it is our bounden duty to take this matter [the condition of slums] in hand positively and effectively." (in Prashad 2000: 151). The BSS study drew in Nehru, but also the Delhi School of Social Work, the Delhi School of Economics and Aruna Asaf Ali, shortly to become the Mayor of the Delhi Corporation (local government).

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[44] "Early efforts were directed towards arousing public interest and interesting the official agencies concerned in the cause of slum dwellers. Here again, we achieved gratifying success thanks to the Prime Ministers' visit to the slums in April, 1956 which we had the privilege to arrange." Writes Chandiwala in his preface (BSS 1956: 9), suggesting that similar webs of contacts, networking, and cultural capital/class were necessary then as now between people who would probably now be seen as 'activists', politicians and the bureaucracy.

Enlisting the help of these institutions, the BSS Report pitched itself differently to the approach of the Improvement Trusts before it; "it is imperative that we discard the old methods followed by the Improvement Trusts, which in any case have proved utter failures… we must adopt what may be called a 'human approach'." (BSS 1956:33). This was to be based on 'socio-economic' surveys to produce a non-confrontational approach in which the "formulation and implementation of the programme" would involve the "active participation of slum dwellers" (1956: 35) directly against the previous approaches of the Improvement Trusts. The Improvement Trusts, the BSS pointed out, had based their calculations on the census returns of wards in the old city to produce average measures of congestion, risking classing the entire old city as a 'slum', rather than considering what a slum was to mean in more experiential terms (expressed literally, by escorting Nehru on his tour), and hence where they were located (1956:218).

The different methods employed by the BSS produced, unsurprisingly, different results, concluding that overcrowding and congestion was only reason enough to move away from a 'congested' area for 3% of families (1956:183). The BSS surmised: "[I]t appears slum dwellers had preferred suffering a little more congestion to being cold to social ties", explaining this through the importance of "belonging to the same caste, same sub-caste or same native village." (1956:72). In this approach, the BSS reflected the sociological input and interests of a 'nationalist sociology' (Dirks 2001) concerned particularly with caste and community.

The BSS approach had been to see individuals in economic, family and social relationships, located within a setting, and understood as part of a household and wider economy. This represented a different strain of social science ontology to that of more quantitatively normative planners' apprehension of 1950s Delhi. However, while the BSS preferred to use categories of caste and ideas about the influence of natal villages to understand slum dwellers through the lens of 'culture', the question of slums was being approached through very different methods being drawn up elsewhere in the city.

In many ways, the BSS can be seen as an early NGO. Its approach as a coalition of middle class intellectuals and others to utilise their connections with well placed, sympathetic politicians (here Nehru), to 'represent' and demand the 'participation' of 'the poor' in city planning, can still be seen today. Being less well placed in the structures of influence, the BSS's 'human-centred' approach lost out to the cadastral impulses of the Master Planners, more stably located within the Ministries. Its position, vulnerable to changes in the political weather, was as uncomfortably reliant as today's

activist organisations are, on combinations of political patronage and funding to be able to operate and get their perspective across. Although shades of this more sociological approach can be seen later (e.g. in the Town and County Planning Organisation's report later in this chapter), it is evident it rarely wins out over the technologically 'impartial' approaches of planners.

In contrast the approach of the TPO, which now with the addition of Ford Foundation planners from America had become the Provisional Delhi Development Authority[45], had a very different epistemological perspective and history. The American philanthropic foundation had set up its regional headquarters in Delhi in February 1952. At the behest of Nehru and Aruna Asaf Ali, it had engaged specialist American town planners in the development of the Provisional Delhi Master Plan, as part of a wider 'technology transfer' programme. Sharan notes that while the American planners had similar ambitions to Indian nationalists in promoting "civic citizenship", they found Indian slums perplexingly different from the ones they knew at home, where 'slums' could be quantified and conceived as particular kinds of material lack. In India, "[M]ore than the 'aggregate of physical social surroundings'. They [slums] were a 'way of life', …peopled by persons who were 'apathetic or even antagonistic to local authorities' and 'lacking community consciousness.'" (Sharan 2006: 4908). Seeing 'slums as a way of life', perhaps mediated by the value found in social links between people (as opposed to being explicable through simple lack of resources) was evidently both puzzling and disturbing to the American planners. Their solution was the partial use of case study areas that could then come to stand as demonstration models, producing "integration through improvement" (ibid.). The wider city was to be structured through a practice of allocating resources through zoning. "Delhi, the argument went, was 'an almost pure example of the need for the concept, development and execution of a plan for the metropolitan region', and within this metropolitan region two broad environmental concerns were outlined: slums and industrial location." (ibid.)

While the ordering of areas to be purified by zoning according to "predominant land use function" (DMP 1958:60) sought to banish the perennial anxiety about the risk of pollution and effects of the environment, the process was to be far more vexed in practice and was the subject of Lok Sabha debates over its equity and practicability (Sharan 2006, 4908).

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[45] This was shortly instituted permanently on through the Delhi Development Authority Act in 1960.

The persistence of zoning from the Provisional Master Plan, into the first and subsequent Delhi Master Plans, despite the qualms of the Lok Sabha, perhaps also suggests an overlap of interests between the ideology of zoning in the style of the American city, and the perennial concerns about mixing, purity and pollution that is the source of so much concern in the troublingly heterogeneous Indian city. In this respect, zoning has been highly successful in separating out people, largely by class based on income, but also through community and profession[46]. This has, in effect, allowed a spatial ordering of the city at a 'human-centred' level quite unavailable to residents of Punarvaspur, other resettlement colonies and 'slums'.

Squatters or citizens?

In the nationalist period it became easier to see the moral edge of policies addressing planning, and particularly 'slums' and slum dwellers as part of wider nationalist rationale of producing 'civic citizens' for the new republic. However, this was tempered by a cynicism about their suitability to become 'proper' citizens and uncertainty whether 'slums' might be better tackled as a population welfare problem. Put another way, these policies questioned whether slum dwellers, who were increasingly being seen less as denizens of the old city but rather as recent rural migrants (and so people out of place), should be deserving, and so eligible for, the slim resources of newly independent India. By not really being adequate citizens of 'civil society', as Chatterjee (2004) suggests, it was harder for 'slum dwellers' to argue for a claim to a right to space in the city, than together represent themselves as a population, with a claim to welfare and be represented as political society. "Colonial technologies had targeted the population through policies that constructed the social surface through which future negotiations would take place." Legg argues (2006b: 711). For the DIT, congestion was the 'social surface' through which residents of the old city were understood as a mass of population. This was a mode of understanding which also continued throughout the work of the DDA on the DMP where the setting and need for action is drawn at the outset:

> "The Delhi citizen or the visitor to Delhi daily sees and deeply feels the need for intelligent planning and action. He experiences the delays and tensions and hazards of chaotic traffic. He sees the miserable hovels of Jamuna Bazar and a dozen other squatter colonies, the incredible overcrowding, the lack of sanitation in the old city," (DMP 1960: i)

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[46] The separating out of neighbourhoods can be seen clearly in 'society' built blocks of flats in middle class areas of East Delhi. Here residents' societies often exercise control over who moves in, occupation is often defined by occupation ('Press Apartments', Lawyers Apartments' etc), or caste (e.g. http://www.mybuildingsociety.net/ Accessed 9.9.06)

It is the 'citizen' or 'visitor' to Delhi who is the imagined subject in the paragraph, the viewer and implicit judge of the city in the text of the DMP and their experiential movement through Delhi is of an individual subject looking out onto the object, a mass population constructed as a problem.

These are not the networks of the 'human approach' of the BSS, more the cadastral view from above described by Scott (1998), as the population is visualised through large A2 fold out maps, diagrams, measures of density and topography. In the process of producing this visualisation, a distance is also created between planner and people quite literally viewed from above. This is bridged as people are routinely apprehended as a 'population' through census, survey and statistical analysis of indicators (numbers of family members, those in employment, as well as measure of congestion etc.), laying groundwork for governance less by right as citizens, as by population through 'political society'[47].

By the conclusion of the Delhi Master Plan, the drive for 'urban renewal' had come to require the "setting up of counter magnets to control in-migration and to absorb village-like industries which may be displaced from rural areas." (DMP 1960: 182). Encompassing the influence of the Slum Act 1956[48], by paragraph 53 the DMP undertook to "embark on a programme of eliminating the non-conforming land uses which intensify blight and slum conditions to protect residential neighbourhoods from undesirable influences." (DMP 1960: 182). This view and the emphasis on 'density' continued from the DIT. As Legg argues, "the product of a mode of vision that privileged theory over practice" represented a move "towards the dehumanising language of modern planning" (2006b: 202), albeit by the late 1950s framed in the modernist language of the period, and the Nehruvian vision of progress. This disconcertion at the presence of slums as 'undesirable influences' or rural dwellers in the city was not limited to planners' concerns about people out of place, but also continued into popular depictions, as Sharan shows in a cutting from the Hindustan Times in 1960:

> "Too many people now settled in Delhi…are by their very nature and instincts rural dwellers …if Delhi is to be planned into a well integrated city, and to be maintained as such, it needs inhabitants with a primarily urban psychology." (in Sharan 2006: 4910)

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[47] See Chatterjee 2005 on the colonial origins of 'political' and 'civil society'.
[48] The Slum Act (1956) designates areas as slums and state responsibility for their demolition by setting standards for the conditions of dwellings or buildings, rather than dealing with their legality, or the treatment of their occupants.

The first DMP represented both fractures and continuities across the divide of Independence. Building largely on the colonial idiom of congestion as the problem of too many people in too little space, failing to conduct themselves with adequate attention to European norms and styles of light and ventilation, congestion continued to be seen as a problem in the post-Independence period. However, in the new republic, slums represented not only a problem of congestion, but also an area made up of residents who were also citizens with rights, enshrined in a new constitution. The new constitution's legitimacy, and that of the state, was being grounded in the development and welfare of its citizens, including slum dwellers. Rural in-migration potentially threatened this legitimacy, upsetting the balance between villages and agriculture as an appropriate locale for a rural peasantry, as opposed to the city of limited housing and resources.

More to the point, the emergence of 'squatter' colonies or 'encroachers' in the interstitial spaces of the growing city threatened the ordering of the city's space, mixing it with others of unknown caste or and certainly different class background, undermining the 'urban psychology' of the city with rural ways. The anxieties, described in terms of 'nuisance' and pollution (or the threat to public health), could now through planning be moved and ordered. "'Nuisance' and pollution were thus to be located elsewhere, spatially and socially, and the discourse of planning acquired its significance from its confidence in managing these separations." (Sharan 2006: 4910). The same blurring of rural and urban also risked tarnishing the idea of the postcolonial city imagined popularly and by planners, as the site of the modernising drive of the developmental state, and here too planning offered the means to purify and order these problematically clouded categories.

Planning after the Master Plan
The publication of the Delhi Master Plan and setting of norms for resettlement did not see the closure of the debate over how rural migrants to the city should be seen by planners, policymakers or bureaucrats. In subsequent years, one insight into this came from the large 400 plus page report of a survey entitled *Jhuggi Jhonpri Settlements in Delhi. A Sociological Study of Low Income Migrant Communities*" (1975). Conducted by the 'Sociology Division' of the Town and Country Planning Department (TCPO), a division of the Delhi, rather than national government, the report was published in April 1975. This was on the cusp of the Emergency, which was to occur a mere two months later, which saw nearly as many houses and other structures demolished and households resettled in the subsequent 18 months as had been in the previous 13 years.

This included, 8 months later, the demolition of *jhuggis* at Power House[49] on the banks of the Yamuna, and the settling of Punarvaspur.

Part of the Ministry for Works and Housing, the TCPO, was not part of the DDA, which had been in charge of drawing up and detailing the Master Plan. The reason for the TCPO's report's was not clear, although given the comprehensiveness of the study, the data would certainly have been useful for in the planning of subsequent resettlement drives. Its scale was impressive, based on a house-to-house survey in 1974-5 of some 21,000 families in 103 sample squatter settlements across Delhi. The sheer scale and ambition of the survey, is emphasised by the two large A1 sized maps illustrating the distribution of squatter settlements. Additional sketch maps of five settlements offer a planner's eye view, with each *jhuggi* marked out on a lane, along with handpumps, water taps, electricity poles, temples, *gurudwaras*, *masjids*, primary schools, shops, ditches, ponds, drains, dispensaries and latrines.

The tone of the report remained that of the developmental state and surprisingly upbeat nearly 20 years after Independence. Squatter settlements were framed as "part of the process of the emergence of new social groups consequent to the change in the social structures of cities… These settlements are then to be seen as part of the social process of urbanisation in a developing country like India," (TCPO 1975:2), listing India amongst other newly independent mostly non-aligned nations. Throughout, the survey was grounded in the assumptions of modernisation theory: of social change and the transformation and progression of rural migrants to city dwellers.

The report distanced itself from accounts of the traditional Indian city, which it cast as feudal, or culturally based in religion (e.g. pilgrimage towns), as well as the British colonial city that was "no less hierarchical" in its statically defined division of labour, the survey concluded that "The result was that the rural migrants remained largely untouched by the modernisation process and apathetic to civic affairs." (TCPO 1975: 10).

In contrast to the 1960 Delhi Master Plan, where migrants appeared as insufficiently modern, bringing village ways and tradition to the city, the TCPO report consciously pitched its account of Delhi and 'squatter settlements' as transformative places of modernity. It insisted that,

> "Since independence, the development based on social, economic and technological modernisation has been greatly accelerated through planned efforts. The cities irrespective of their size provided the suitable environment

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[49] The informal name for Indraprastha Thermal Power Plant.

for technology, activities and processes associated with economic growth and social change….the contemporary city reflects the process of transition from underdevelopment to development and from tradition to modernity," (TCPO 1975:11)

adding later that:

"Despite the persistence of traditional cultural values and institutions among the migrants, the totality of the urban social situation induces among them many cultural norms and material conditions which are modernising. The squatter settlements though not desirable, are functional to the modernisation of the millions of rural immigrants in the city in its present pattern of development." (TCPO 1975: 22)

Yet for all the emphasis on the 'acculturation' of squatters to the modern ways of the city, residents were depicted as hybrid entities. Hence they were progressively modern in the city, but sustained, beneficially in the view of the authors, by traditional links of solidarity. The social organisation of squatter settlements brought the efficiency of the traditional layout of the village to the *jhuggi* settlements, making the most of the public space outside houses, as spaces where links of shared castes, region and religion were sustained and maintained, and so continued to function as a 'safety net', the authors approvingly noted.

Caste organisations and *pradhans* or local leaders were seen to act as points of organisation and connection with the functions of the modern state, as mechanisms of dispute resolution and the means of better incorporation into the city. Squatter settlements appeared as sites of homogenous, self-regulating communities, strongly reminiscent of villages in layout and operation, but which in co-migration to the city, have come together for the greater good. (TCPO 1975: 56-63). This is similar to Gooptu's observation that, "In reports and studies on urban labour in 1930s much emphasis was laid on socialising the poor into new urban ways, while at the same time attempting to preserve forms of 'traditional' community life based on caste or kinship, with the hope that this would help to nurture social stability and inculcate moral values." (Gooptu 2001: 68)

The report positioned itself as reflecting resident's concerns; it worried about the detrimental exposure to the environment of squatter settlements, arguing that residents were not acquiescently accepting of the conditions, but "highly dissatisfied and therefore have the fullest realisation of what makes a liveable environment." (TCPO 1975: 196). It feared that prolonged exposure to it risked squatters' dehumanisation.

The survey was evidently written in response to other arguments in circulation at the time. Migrants were depicted as both rational and entrepreneurial in sizing up the opportunities Delhi offered them, and hence modern in their outlook. However, even as squatter settlements stood as sites of transformation, they still required standards of development. The last part of the report turned from its more ethnographically orientated observations of the entrepreneurial adaptability of squatters to modern city living, such as trends for the adoption by young men in squatter settlements of the hairstyles of middle class youth (perhaps a marker of adaptability to modernity and the city, or perhaps just of fashion and aspiration (TCPO 1975)) toward the problems and processes of calculating recommendations of plot size, access to water sources and numbers of hand pumps. In this reversion of style, reminiscent of other planning documents and reports, the agency of residents disappeared to be replaced by the need to articulate conclusions in the language of other government departments in terms of costs, number, quantifiable change, prediction and the possible investment of 'sweat equity' as part of the building programmes of new sites.

Decreasing entitlements and fixing documents

The TCPO survey confirmed that the question of (or even 'role' for) 'slums' and their inhabitants' place in the city continued to be contested, within the bureaucracy as well as outside it. Alongside this came a gap between what was found by researchers and planners, and what was put into practice. In this gap both planners' and popular images' idioms and imaginations of how postcolonial Delhi should be, met the concrete practicalities of a resettlement colony. Here, stories contained in large, folio-sized, hard-bound planning documents were only a flimsy means to order reality, only doing so when backed up by the municipality's demolition team's crowbar and bulldozer. Simultaneously, well handled limp and leathery slips of paper, receipts and *parchi*s became documents which fixed occasionally flexible details of an individual's date of arrival in the city, age and native place, and with it established eligibility or ineligibility for resettlement, plot size and site. Sometimes these were inscribed with far more intimate details[50].

Resettlement schemes had been covered by a number of pieces of legislation, with the DMP the largest in terms of the scale of its organisation of space. In the same year (1958), the 'Jhuggi Jhonpri Removal Scheme' (JJRS) was also approved. Its implementation was assigned to the MCD in 1960 and the first resettlement to

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[50] One woman's receipt formally recognising her connection to the electricity supply in 1981, to my shock, noted, in the only Hindi words on the slip, that she had received the plot in exchange for being sterilised. It was unclear why this fact should be relevant some 5 years after the event.

Seelampur, also in East Delhi, were carried out in the same year. The Environmental Improvement Scheme saw resettlement included in the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79). In June-July 1960 a survey of *jhuggi* dwellers in Delhi was conducted, which was in effect a register of those present in the city at the time, such that only those covered by the survey would be eligible for the alternative accommodation under the scheme. All others unable to prove their presence, living the city before that date were found to be 'ineligible' for resettlement in subsequent rounds, and evicted. This approach of eligibility and ineligibility has been used since but has proved extremely difficult to enact with both eligible and ineligible people living mixed up together. Qualifying documents are hard to come by, and harder to verify, making the practicalities of wholesale demolition difficult to carry out. Additionally, over time, the size and allocations of plots under these schemes has been substantially reduced[51].

Between 1938 and 1960, responsibility for slum clearance shifted from the DIT to the DDA until, with the advent of the Delhi Master Plan and directives for the JJRS, it was shifted to the MCD in 1960. For the next 10 years, responsibility for the 'Slum and JJ[52] Wing' ping-ponged back and forth between the two institutions, subject to the pull and counter-pull of politics internal to them and between them. Particularly attractive to both were the rich pickings of large scale contracting and land deals available which seemed to be a badly kept secret.

The 'Slum and JJ Wing' returned to the DDA in 1974, and back to the MCD in April 1978, where it has remained since. By the time of the Emergency some 18 colonies had been settled on the outskirts of the city. By the end of the Emergency, when elections were declared in March-April 1977, some 1,41,820 people had had their homes demolished and some 16 new colonies had been settled. (Mishra and Gupta 1981, 16). Today, there are some 44 resettlement colonies, up to 30km from the site of their demolition. As entitlements have been reduced since the first round of resettlements in 1960, so 'slum dwellers' as residents of 'squatter colonies' or ex-residents in resettlement colonies, have been increasingly unfavourably viewed as a source of criminality and risk.

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[51] Initial plans for tenements in 1960 were deferred, and then reduced to plots of 80 square yards, to include a tap, latrine, concrete plinths and self-built houses (termed 'sweat-equity' (TCPO 1976)). This was then reduced further to a simple 21m^2 plot (3m by 7m) of unbroken ground, under a 99 year lease at the time of the resettlement in 1976 (Mishra and Gupta 1981:14-27). The number of demolitions and resettlements reduced substantially in the following years following the Emergency, but were not halted entirely in the 1980s, picking up again under political pressure in the 1990s. Presently, plots of 18 m^2 are allotted for for the next 10 years, on a 'share' payment of Rs7000, with permission to build a structure on the land. It is unclear what will happen after that.
[52] *Jhuggi-jhonpri*

The short period after the Emergency of the Janata Party government, before the re-election of Mrs Gandhi in 1980, saw an efflorescence of books and articles all striving to mark and 'remember' the Emergency, demanding that should it 'never-again' happen. This period of 'remembering' that Emma Tarlo (2003) describes, while short, saw the gathering, sorting and ordering of events, experiences and the outcomes of the Emergency set down in books and articles, chronicling injustices from imprisonment under MISA[53], to the then present condition of resettlement colonies. Some of these were by journalists, recently unmuzzled by censorship (and often contrite for their lack of coverage and protest during the Emergency itself), others are the work of nascent NGOs, researchers and students dispatched to collect and record data, particularly statistics. Driven in part, perhaps by the assertions of people like Sanjay Gandhi during the Emergency itself when extravagant claims had been made about the high standard of facilities in resettlement colonies[54], or subsequently in Jagmohan's book, 'Island of Truth' (1978), many of the books of the post-Emergency period, presented narratives of events, such as those of journalists (Dayal and Bose 1977; Henderson 1977). Others marshalled their authority not by 'being there', but through the careful presentation of tables detailing services (or more often their absence), and household data: numbers of hand-pumps, community toilet seats, household income before and after resettlement, distance from work, number of children, distance from site of resettlement, of buses, distance of schools availability of healthcare, illnesses in the household etc. These latter accounts tended to be written by social scientists working for institutions or in university departments, such as Mishra and Gupta's account (1981). Setting out a brief synopsis of events in Delhi, they devote most of their book to the careful demonstration in tables and statistical hypotheses of the upheaval and damage done to resettlers' livelihoods. These books and reports, in the aftermath of the Emergency set the tone for much of the writing about 'slums' and (often interchangeably), resettlement colonies. In their approach and style of presentation, they reflected the style of work and emphasis of NGOs working on the subject in subsequent years.

Partially driven by this period of 'remembering' and acting, the post-Emergency period also saw the growth in number of 'non-governmental organisations' which specialised in working in areas like resettlement colonies. For some, this was a

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[53] The Maintenance of Internal Security Act which had been amended in 1974 to allow 'pre-emptive' detention. (Chandra 2003: 21)
[54] These included well publicised claims about the provision of TV rooms for residents, including one marked on the blueprint for Punarvaspur. Residents noted that the building had always belonged to the government, but had mostly been occupied by an NGO. To put the grandness of Sanjay Gandhi's claim in context, national programming was not introduced until 1982, along with colour transmissions, in time for the 1982 Asiad Games in Delhi.

continuation of work they had been doing prior to the Emergency. Some had shifted with those in the demolished areas to the new resettlement colonies and faced the same struggles as residents to keep things going, while others, in contrast, expanded their work into these areas. While the Emergency had caused some to step back from 'activist' type work, for others it was a crystallisation of their involvement[55].

The flourish of remembering and publishing on the topic abruptly came to an end with the re-election of Indira Gandhi in 1980. Events[56] in the 1980s and 1990s saw the rise of NGOs as service providers supplementing, or substituting barely existent state services in areas like resettlement colonies. Nor did resettlement as a policy entirely cease during the 1980s, with the demolition of settlements in areas where the Delhi Government Secretariat was to come up, and the creation of colonies such as Sundernagri, also in East Delhi. However, as the Additional Commissioner of the MCD's Slum and JJ Wing in the 1980s, Manjit Singh argued in an interview it was not so much that the policy was unpopular making it politically difficult to execute after the Emergency, despite his consistent criticism of 'they' to apparently mean 'activists' and politicians who had attacked the excesses of the Emergency resettlement policy in the 1980s. Instead, he emphasised it was the lack of political will to bring together funding and planning for the creation of further resettlement colonies. It was only in the 1990s when Delhi's political landscape changed once more to see the same party at national and Delhi level, that 'people', according to Manjit Singh, began to be concerned about 'encroachers' again, this time in the guise of environmental threat. Since the start of this decade there have been regular rounds of mass demolitions in Delhi, with reduced eligibility for resettlement, on smaller plots, and the creation of a number of new resettlement colonies on the now much more distant outskirts of present day Delhi.

From 'public interest' to 'pickpockets': resettlement and the law
Other stories are told in the law courts, which have also seen a steady shift in the legal standing and recognition of the rights of slum dwellers since the 1980s. The early 1980s saw the creation of a new kind of legal standing that became known as 'public interest

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[55] See Chapter 6.

[56] Large areas of east and north Delhi, mainly the new resettlement colonies (particularly Jehangirpuri, Seelampur, and Nand Nagri) were deeply flooded when pressure on a barrage to the north of the city broke through (or was released) during the monsoon of 1978, anti-Sikh pogroms saw widespread violence and destruction of property following the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984. In 1988 a large scale outbreak of cholera in east Delhi ensured that resettlement colonies remained in the headlines as the sites of disastrous events in the city, maintained by smaller ones of fires, murders and assaults.

litigation' (PIL[57]) by Justices Bhagwati and Krishna Iyer out of a concern at damage to the rule of law during the Emergency. PIL allowed a third party to bring a case in the 'public interest' on behalf of those who might be too disadvantaged to do so (Dembowski 2001, 58; Divan and Rosencranz 2001, 139). Under these auspices, in the *Olga Tellis* case[58], the Supreme Court ruled that pavement dwellers which the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) sought to remove, had the right to a livelihood there, as part of the right to life under the Constitution. Since then, the concept of 'public interest' has been enthusiastically taken up and the definition of third party 'interest' substantially broadened, particularly in the domain of 'nuisance', which now appears as environmental law. By 2000 the perception, both legally and popularly, and standing of 'slum dwellers' had changed radically so that in *Almitra H Patel v. Union of India*[59] it was possible for Kirpal J to rule in a case about environmental pollution in Delhi that:

> "The promise of free land, at the taxpayers cost, in place of a *jhuggi*, is a proposal which attracts more land grabbers. Rewarding an encroacher on public land with and free alternate site is like giving a reward to a pickpocket."

While *Olga Tellis* rejected BMC's arbitrary approach, it is notable that the court also rejected the creation of any right to resettlement which, although subsequent to the creation of Punarvaspur, has had significant effects (and subsequent rulings) down the years, with the slum dweller as the loser, argues Ramanathan (2004: 4). Read in the easy slide made between 'slum dweller' and resettlement colony resident as ex-'slum dwellers', the image of criminality as an association with a particular kind of living and place – as encroachers emerges and been sustained. While the greatest difference between the two cases is the casting of slum dwellers largely as passive victims in *Olga Tellis* to more calculating agents by the time of *Almitra Patel*, the general effect in the presentation of people living in the liminal and marginal spaces of the city is the same.

In this way, through planning documents, law reports, and after the event accounts of the Emergency, from the ashes and debris of the violence of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots (Das 1996) or 1992 Babri Masjid bloodshed, outbreaks of disease or flooding reported in newspapers, and most of all through surveys, evaluations, trends and indicators for projects in areas designated as 'slums', resettlement colonies, designated by their

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[57] Third parties were originally envisaged to be 'concerned citizens' representing the poor, unable otherwise to access justice. However, with the development of case law, the requirements for 'standing' and what the public interest can be construed to be, has become much wider.

[58] Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation & Ors. Etc. 10th July 1985. (http://www.elaw.org/resources/text.asp?ID=1104 Accessed: 10th August 2007)

[59] Almitra H. Patel v Union of India, WP 888/1996 (15th February 2000) (http://www.elaw.org/resources/text.asp?ID=1032 Accessed: 10th August 2007)

stories and histories, come to be known to the outside world. In the same way, places like Punarvaspur are perceived, interpreted, assessed and planned for, as places of problems, suitable targets in need of development.

"My brother washed Sanjay Gandhi's car" and other information
While the Emergency may well have represented a sharp break and fracture of the trust of the small, but growing, middle classes in due process and the rule of law, perhaps most shocking was the realisation of the fragility of democracy. Yet in many ways the Emergency also saw a set of continuities, just as Independence had. Increasing prosperity in the 1980s, into the 1990s, culminating in an arm-twisted liberalisation of India's markets by the IMF in 1992, saw an increased turn away from a reliance on state industries. But while the opening up of the Indian market to external consumer goods has continued apace, the reliance on government services for health and education remains strong in places like Punarvaspur. While the Emergency may have shaken faith in the government, the following decades saw a wider loss of faith in the state as an instrument of 'development' and the rise of the 'Third Sector' and NGOs based on a broader belief in 'civil society', even as the need for state services in places like Punarvaspur remained.

Yet the picture is inevitably muddier than this, as is clear in Punarvaspur residents' accounts of their experiences as 'slum-dwellers', and the possibilities and constraints this has offered over the years. Making and remaking their lives in the city, the individual accounts of residents, emphasises their agency and fractures the homogenous, depersonalised accounts offered in the documents examined above.

None of this is to claim that conditions of resettlement colonies have not been extremely difficult to live in. The stories that residents of Punarvaspur themselves tell of the history of the place are largely punctuated by dates marking the arrival of services, (streetlighting, saving for legitimate personal connections, of fights over water in *gali*s, handpumps and connections into the house). Not infrequently they are also marked by tales of huge fires that have swept through highly flammable makeshift homes of plastic, bamboo matting in the early days sometimes with the losses of whole families, sometimes neighbours and worse, of children.

Still, the image of the 'slum' has been, and continues to be a powerful one. It is an image which can see constituents come together to organise themselves as a block to be of value to an elected representative, as well as determine the kinds of resources which flow through an organisation, and ultimately, if only to a degree into the

neighbourhood. The image of a resettlement colony as a 'slum' continues to inform popular imaginations about what such a place is like, how to consider people who come from it (as is evident in the law reports above), and how they and the place should be viewed and treated.

Pausing for tea one day to write up a conversation I had just had previously, I ended up discussing a spate of recent petty thefts in both Gulshan Extension, just over the road, and Punarvaspur itself with Krishna, a charismatic and articulate man in his early 30s who worked for an NGO elsewhere in the city. He pointed out that "if there are some anti-social elements here, then the whole colony gets a bad name." He explained that even if an incident happens in the neighbouring Gulshan Extension, the press will report the story as happening in Punarvaspur, because that is the name of the local police *thanna*[60]. He further explained that as police *thanna*s are built to cover expanding areas of the burgeoning city, they are often named after the older colony in the vicinity – and most frequently that of an adjacent resettlement colony or occasionally 'unauthorised colony'[61]. As a result crimes reported in the press are attributed to the area named by the *thanna*, so that the recent thefts in Gulshan Extension, over the way, appeared in the papers as in Punarvaspur, because of the name of the *thanna*. So, as he said, Punarvaspur and other areas become known as areas of crime and criminals – becoming known as *'badnami'*[62] colonies. The 'resettlement colony' tag is used both as explanation and description for how or why things are, as much by residents about the place, as non-residents.

But discussions in teashops and between neighbours, and the telling of stories were not always negative, nor the associations with 'squatter' colonies. As erstwhile residents of 'squatter' colonies in Delhi, people I spoke to in Punarvaspur had various approaches and interpretations of the policy of demolition and resettlement. A number of the older men located their own stories of their place within a wider narrative of the development of the city. Now in their late 50s and 60s, many still worked, when and as they could, often as painters and carpenters, gathering at labour *mandi*s (markets) in search of a day's work pushing a handcart selling vegetables, or on days when there was no work, playing cards in the street with friends and contemporaries from neighbouring *gali*s.

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[60] *thanna* – in this case police station and it's local district. It is not unusual for the *thanna* in an area to be named for a resettlement colony if there is one in its range.
[61] For instance the Sangam Vihar *thanna* in southernmost Delhi.
[62] *badnami* – literally bad named.

These men recalled coming to Delhi and narrated their experiences. Often living with extended family members or people from the same village or region, they narrated how they had come to live (mostly at Power House), as from other sites previously cleared, as well as how they had come to know of the impending demolitions at Power House itself. Bhola Ram, now in his 60s recalled how his parents as early settlers had had a large plot at Power House, large enough that they had kept a number of buffaloes on the site and had sold the milk at a profit[63]. Gradually, as plots came up, he reasoned that "people felt it was a good place to be, and so more and more people came to the place". Many people came as groups of brothers, prospecting opportunities in the city, particularly from Rajasthan, and around Jaipur, where drought at that time had made living difficult. Some people built their own *jhuggies* at Power House itself, as the possibility of owning a *jhuggi* was better than spending so much money on rent. Alternatively, they might have been able to sublet the quarters that went with their work, putting their money into a *jhuggi*. Power House was popular with people working in or constructing government offices as buildings at ITO (another power station) came up. For some it was an opportunity to settle and stop moving round the city, after seasons of working on road gangs, living in temporary roadside shelters (and occasionally in the very piping they were trenching in). The construction of the Nizamuddin bridge over the Yamuna offered slightly more stable work, allowing some women to build up domestic cleaning jobs in near by affluent houses. A number of people who had worked for the railways claimed that Power House was somewhere 'Railways' had told them they could put something up. Other families took to the place as they switched to working on the construction of private houses coming up across South Delhi. In conversation along lanes, in tea shops and in 'hotels' catering as eating places to single men, skills, trades, contacts and contracts were exchanged, learnt, swapped and dropped.

Amidst narratives of arrival and the struggle for a place in the city, people had their own theories about squatter settlements in the city, and demolitions. One or two I met had had their *jhuggies* demolished several times over as the same slivers of land have continued to offer people coming to Delhi a toehold. These areas, particularly along the riverbank represented a liminal space which, subject to the vagaries of the height of the Yamuna, offered the space to put up a *jhuggi*. Others reclaimed fly-ash dumps from the adjacent power stations to live on, remaking the area into more habitable land. For some, especially those involved in construction, there was a sense of being in some small way part of the building of the city. Bhanu, a forceful Rajasthani woman had come to Delhi from drought stricken Udaipur District, with her husband in the late

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[63] He also recounted their losses, as these buffaloes, banned from the new resettlement colony, had all had to be slaughtered at the time of the demolitions.

1960s to work in road gangs. She, like others, could narrate her way around sites in the city by the places they'd worked, until landing at the Power House *jhuggi* settlement, where she had got a job cleaning in Bengali Market. Similarly, one man spoke of returning to Delhi from UP over the Yamuna bridge from visiting his family in Allahabad District. Seeing the buildings he had been working on at ITO poking up into the sky, he recalled his pride: "We people built this city" he said with pleasure, even as other's surmised that the squatter colonies at Power House had been demolished "because 'they' did not like the sight."

Other residents had 'investments' in squatter colonies elsewhere in Delhi. Brij, in his mid-30s, came to Punarvaspur as a small child with his parents. Having spare income as a State Bank employee, he had put up a *jhuggi* near Duala Kuan in South West Delhi, on his route to his workplace on the Delhi-Gurgaon border. He had let it out for free to a couple on the grounds that the structure and papers remained his, and any plot resulting from any resettlement would be in his name. In 2004 the *jhuggi* was demolished and with the documents, he could to prove that he had been in the city since before 1991, and was therefore 'eligible' able to claim a plot in a resettlement colony in the very north of Delhi. "But why would you want a plot there? There's nothing there." I asked. "It's an *investment;* this place was all *jangal*, and look at it now," he gestured to the three storeys above us.

Others have similar stories, of plots purchased from neighbours leaving, or explained as the best way to put up an extension or a floor on your house without attracting the attention of the DDA or municipality, and the 'taxes' this would inevitably incur. Hence people use different tactics and strategies, putting money into their houses as they could afford it, putting down their own concrete roots in the city, as best they could. In these narratives, residents of Punarvaspur emphasise their own agency in carving place in the city for themselves, and how they have come to occupy it. Threading the city through their life histories, these residents have not only been acted on by the city, but importantly, in contrast to the predominant narrative in the documents discussed here, these are stories of their role in the making and forming of the city too. For those with the resources to survive the resettlement, particularly older men in steady jobs at the time, resettlement has been an advantageous happening, investing their earnings into their house, life and families in the city.

However, it is perhaps also worth noting, that the speakers most confident in these accounts are mostly male, and all older. Whether this is to do with steadily reducing work possibilities, with poor rights and poor remuneration in a flexible labour market for today's younger men (always fewer in evidence in the colony, even on Sundays), or

the linearity of older (mostly) men looking back over their lives, the strength of agency in these older men's accounts of making their place in the city is striking. These depictions sharply contrast with the depersonalised, 'massified' appearance of 'populations' in the DMP: both as 'slum dwellers' are depicted and in their apparent passivity to change. This quite neglects the gradual bricolage of materials and money by which people had pulled their lives together around up to that point.

Yet despite all these narratives of agency and possibility in the capital city, for residents, histories of eviction, demolition and resettlement remain sources of anxiety. Even as the origin of the phrase 'they want to make Delhi like Paris' is speculated upon, the implication behind it, of the undesirability of the urban poor in the city, remains. Repeated attempts have been made to enforce the zoning regulations of the DMP in the city requiring the separation of residential and industrial areas. In 1996, MC Mehta[64] brought to the attention of the court, what has become a famous case demanding the improvement of the city's environment by the sealing of 'non-conforming industries'[65], producing judgements, government orders, and further, ongoing court cases contesting this. Subsequent cases demanding the removal of squatters from the banks of the Yamuna once more leave some residents feeling nervous. For Punarvaspur residents, the evictions at Yamuna Pushta (2004) and Nangla Machi (2006) appear as history repeating itself, as other families are evicted from almost the same place as they themselves had lived.

Pragmatically, it is the threat to the small industries of east Delhi in and around Shahdara that is far more immediate. This threatens precarious livelihoods in an economy already over stocked with temporary migrants, whose labour is cheaper than their own. As industries threaten to move across the border into UP and adjacent Ghaziabad and Shaibabad they threaten to take both work and tenants with them. Many have already left, and residents in Punarvaspur have seen a drop in the numbers of tenants looking for board in small rooms in people's houses, further reducing household income. For a number of residents this was just further evidence of the state's attempts to remove poor people from the city, often repeating the inverted version of Indira Gandhi's slogan '*Garibi Hatao*' (remove poverty) as '*garib hatao*', (remove the poor). Against this backdrop of growing competition for scarce jobs, living on increasingly valuable land has persuaded many people of their continued vulnerability in the city, even to their future eviction in the face of the extension of the

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[64] M.C. Mehta v. Union Of India And Ors 1996. 8th July 1996. (http://www.nlsenlaw.org/air-noise/case-laws/supreme-court/m-c-mehta-v-union-of-india-and-ors-1996/) Accessed: 16th February 2010)
[65] I.e. industries in zones meant for residential purposes.

Delhi Metro line to the eastern border. After all people conclude, 'they want to make Delhi like Paris.'

Conclusion: Histories of planning and stories of development in Delhi

In this chapter, I have shown how somewhere like Punarvaspur and its residents are created as a quintessential site for development, illustrating the consequences of this for its relationship with the rest of the city. With the employment of 'modern' 'rational' planning and 'development' methods, planners and others have tried to apprehend the city and its residents through 'scientific' epistemologies of surveys and mapping. In examining these, I have shown the intersections between these epistemologies, and the ordering and politics of space and relationships between different groups in the city.

Exploring the 'stories of development' contained in planning documents, reports, clippings, case law and the stories of residents themselves, the ways in which different spaces and people become associated with each other in the city, emerge.

Similarly strands of knowledge may be recognised (or not) depending on who or where they emerge from. The most successful are told from the most powerful settings, like those of the Ford Foundation and DMP, as opposed to those less well positioned like Brij Kishan Chandiwala of Bharat Sevak Samaj, or the TCPO, whose different approaches, come to shape the ways in which the city is understood and operates. Yet, as press cuttings and other accounts suggest, anxieties about the risk to public (and hence also to personal) health of 'slums' and congestion, also tapped into wider concerns about morality. These concerns re-emerge in the contemporary period as a politics of the 'new middle class' with anxieties about the environment, pollution and crime (Fernandes 2006). This continues to shape both the way in which neighbourhoods such as Punarvaspur are understood, even as they are also still constructed through perennial surveys, producing lists and tables of hand-pumps and access to sanitation, education and healthcare, indicators of lack, poverty and apparently a potential deficit of morality. Locales like Punarvaspur are seen as concentrations of people who appear increasingly out of place, not so much any more as unsocialised non-urban dwellers, but as inappropriate in a 'world class' city.

Against this backdrop, Vidal et al write "As Delhi's own history amply demonstrates, there is often only a fine line to be drawn between the desire to create a totalizing image of the city and the confusion of that image with reality - hence the various attempts made by those in power to make the capital correspond with their desired image and to suppress those which do not conform." (Vidal, Tarlo and Dupont 2000,

15). As the newly recaptured city in 1857, new capital city after 1911, the capital of the newly independent republic in 1947, and of a newly bullish India in the present, Delhi and the other 'metro' cities are increasingly powerful sites for the inscribing of images and imaginations of themselves. As Janaki Nair writes of Hansens's work in Mumbai, cities offer sites for an "attempt at understanding the range of possibilities for self definition offered by the new urban industrial setting," as well as moving on, she says, from a preoccupation with 'continuity and change. (2007, 8). Yet arguably, some study of continuity and change remains necessary in order to understand the context in which identities and the politics of space and place are being fashioned. Particularly in Punarvaspur, to understand the constitution of a resettlement colony as a powerfully symbolic site across which the messy impreciseness of urban politics is played out; between residents, NGOs, government officials, local politicians etc, draws at different levels on ideas about the neighbourhood, city, national and even international imagery. In this way, the very space of the colony as it is situated in the history of the city itself, is constituted by and constitutive of a potent site for the politics of development.

This emphasises the need to disaggregate the idea of a singular 'development discourse' (Grillo and Stirrat 1997, 11), and to consider the range of different stories told by plans, planners, researcher's accounts, by one-time-*jhuggi* residents, and resettlement colony residents themselves, in their various contexts. Similarly, it's necessary to move beyond the dyads of 'tradition'-'modernity; 'rural'-'urban'; 'subject'-'citizen'; etc., or perennial anxieties about 'congestion', 'public health', 'noxious trades' and 'pollution', and their subject, 'slums' and 'the urban poor', to make them more unstable, and see how they are blurred between themselves. In other words what are the pre-existing understandings and stories that continue to shape the questions which are asked, and modes of analysis employed in a situation, such as that of what a city is like, and how it should be understood? As Dirks writes of his analysis of the use of census data and colonial forms of knowledge in the construction and operation of categories of caste, these "point to the necessarily contingent and necessarily compromised character of all social science knowledge, especially in social science contexts" (2001, 254). Hence Dirks' argument that Srinivas' approach to Sanskritisation continues to consolidate the relationship between social ideologies and sociological analyses, is also analogous here. Here too, different social science categories are at work in the process of planning, which also sets the terms on which the city should be apprehended. As categories of knowledge formed in both the colonial and postcolonial setting they operated simultaneously guiding the way in which the city was to be understood and the process of going about determining what are to be considered

slums, and what are not. The outcome subsequently saw the reordering of space as the city is literally structured around them.

Sharan suggests that "the constellation of issues and practices that are bundled together as 'environmentalism', around which strategies and tactics are then organised, shift through time." (2006: 4905). These shifts also chronicle the changing relationships of governance and citizenship. As plans are formulated, so they draw on data collected through questions asked and informed by prevailing concerns of the period. Not least in Delhi by concerns of legibility and governance, and uncertainties about the adequacy of 'slum dwellers' to be civic citizens, rather than subjects, or in the postcolonial period as 'populations' debatably worthy as recipients of welfare.

As the socio-historical roots of planners' 'representations of space' in the modern history of Delhi are traced out, it can be seen that the conceptual terms of Lefebvre's trialectic is neither fixed, static, nor uniform. In the following chapters I explore how the 'representations of space' described above are modified by the spatial practices of residents as they are played out across the topography of Punarvaspur. In Chapter 3, I show how residents have sought to 'emplace' themselves within the neighbourhood through 'narratives of arrival as a form of spatial practices, but one that is underpinned by the ambivalence of contemporary relations to the place.

Ashis Nandy writes "The slum is an entity which territorializes the transition from village to city, from East to West, and from the popular-as-the-folk to the popular-as-the-massified. The slum is where the margins of the lower middle class consciousness are finally defined." (Nandy 1998: 6) In this way 'the slum' – as resettlement colonies are generally seen too, represents the territorialisation of social relations (or the lack, or refusal of them) within the city, which underpin the ordering of space in the city, as Delhi is desired to be like Paris.

FIGURE 1: Sites from which Punarvaspur residents were settled in 1976

TOWN DWELLERS

...es of the urban life of Delhi which may not be pleasing. Both, multi-storeyed ...ngs and slums grow side by side. The view is of Indraprastha Estate
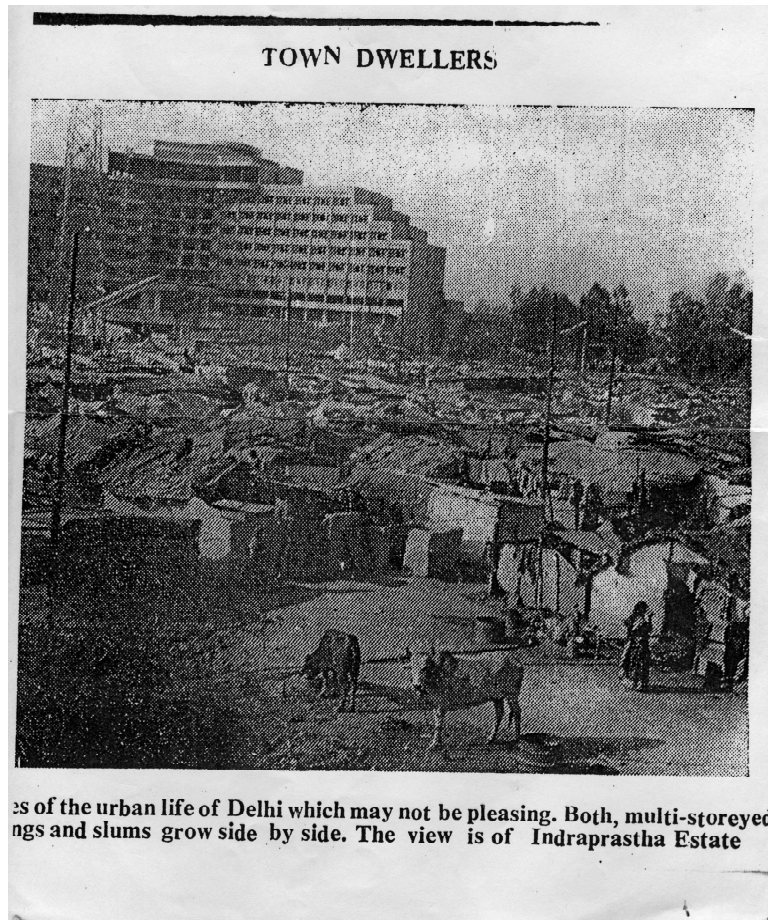
Left: "Town Dwellers" from 1981 Census. Visible in the background is the newly built Delhi Government Secretariat, in the foreground *jhuggies* from in the area known by residents as 'Power House'. Indraprasthra Power House is directly behind the photographer.

Below: "Yamuna Bazar" shortly after the demolitions of 2004. The sign marks the land as belonging to the DDA. Residents of E and F blocks were resettled from here in 1976.

3

"INDIRA BUILT THIS PLACE"
Narratives of 'emplacement' and the settling of Punarvaspur

"Indira ne basaya. Ye East Delhi hai – Indira ne East Delhi basaya."[66]
(Chauhan Lal, 30.3.05)

Ask how people came to live in Punarvaspur and it is common for the story to leap ahead a pace or two, to be told "*Indira ne basaya*", 'Indira settled [this place]'. Yet this is often immediately contradicted as someone else adds, "We were thrown out of Delhi". These were striking statements for a number of reasons. People were 'resettled' to Punarvaspur following the demolition of their *jhuggie*s in the centre of the city, onto plots of 3m x 7m of dust. This was in 1976 at the height of the Emergency. So why would anyone say Indira Gandhi had built the place – when having declared the Emergency – surely she had been responsible for demolishing these peoples' previous homes? And why are these stories of demolition and desolation still being told by residents sitting on the front steps of today's brick houses – more than 30 years on? Especially when Mrs Gandhi herself has been dead for 25 years? The stories sit uneasily and contrarily juxtaposed together either in conversation or interpretation. Yet the regularity with which they came up seemed to stand for the sense of ambivalence running through the Punarvaspur's residents accounts of their sense of the opportunities and life chances in the resettlement colony.

One way to interpret these stories is as 'narratives'. This methodological approach focuses on the telling of stories as a social act, as much as the content. In this way narrative can be seen as a form of 'spatial practice' (Lefebvre 1991). It is through such 'spatial practices' that residents and other actors in the neighbourhood work to modify and negotiate the abstract 'representations of space' (Lefebvre 1991) that underpin the plans and social science epistemologies, described in the previous chapter. The everyday interaction of such spatial relations produces the very space of Punarvaspur and its location in the city as a potent site for the politics of development.

This chapter argues that understanding narratives as a form of spatial practice can be seen as a one of the ways in which residents seek not so much 'emplotment' (Mattingly

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[66] "Indira settled [this place]. This is East Delhi, Indira settled East Delhi."

1998), as a means to 'emplace' themselves and their experiences of upheaval and insecurity, into the space of the neighbourhood. The chapter examines residents' narratives of arrival in the city, the resettlement and their struggle to survive afterwards, in an effort to understand the profoundly ambivalent relationships residents have with the neighbourhood, and their reflections on their sense of place in the city today and in the future.

Narration and place

"Narratives are first and foremost stories," Gardner[67] writes (2002: 2), and narrations are processes of 're-membering' and 're-collecting', bringing fragments of memories and stories together as narratives (Stewart 1996, 20). In the accounts below, events do not appear simply as objects, but their telling, on the front steps of peoples houses, in the semi-public spaces of lanes "re-presents [them] in order to re-member and provoke." (Stewart 1996, 20). These 're-presented' remembrances amongst family and neighbours induce reactions from their 'audience' as people add to and contradict different recollections of stories; narrators and interlocutors positioning and repositioning themselves in the stories they tell and in the time, space and act of telling them. Agency is redistributed through the story as actions are explained as motivated by the threat of violence, opportunities arising, and the need for food and shelter.

The way in which people coalesce fragments of event and action into narrative sense, makes narrative an important source for understanding social life, and perhaps explains why narrative approaches have been useful to grasp the complexities of human experience at moments of upheaval and suffering[68]. This may go some way to explain why it was stories of the founding of Punarvaspur, in the often chaotic, sometimes brutal experience of resettlement and the early days of the colony, which were most easily elicited and frequent topics of my early conversations with residents.

Drawing on memory in telling these stories, narrative "mediates between an inner world of thought-feeling and an outer world of observable actions and states of affairs" note Mattingly and Garo (2000: 1), raising the question of what people do with narrative. Yet inner-feelings rendered verbal are also representations. Katy Gardner points out of elderly Bengali informants in London, "I do not know what the elders remembered, only what they chose to tell" (2002, 31). Furthermore, stories are told

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[67] Gardner defines narratives in simple terms as "conscious and structured accounts of events across time." (2002: 31)

[68] Increasingly widely used as a methodological tool, narrative has been particularly effectively deployed in medical anthropology: Mattingly (1998), Good (1994), Kleinman (1998), Mattingly & Garro (2000).

publicly, addressed to, as well as invoking and involving other people, and entwining those present into their telling. Therefore narrative as a mode of understanding is not reliant on veracity, so much as what the presentation and depiction of these events can tell the researcher about the experiences of the teller, how they are meaningful to them and those who may also be present. "Narratives are not told in a vacuum. So, who hears one's story and how that person reacts are key to both the form that the story takes and the results that it has." (Gardner 2002, 33).

Mattingly and Garo take this further: "Narratives shape action just as actions shape stories told about them, and…stories suggest the course of future actions as well as giving form to past experience." (Mattingly 2000:17). They draws on Austin's concept of a 'perlocutionary' act in language to show that it is "the rhetorical power of words to persuade and influence the listener" in which "the audience plays an active role in the creation of meaning" (2000, 11). Consequently narrative may also attempt to 'emplot' or enfold the speaker and listener into a particular set of events or dispositions through the narrative (Mattingly 1998, 20). This may be with the desire to produce a certain kind of action or desired outcome, as in the case of Mattingly's study of occupational therapists and the illness and healing experiences of their patients. Yet as she also points out, these are far from complete or certain outcomes, and narratives may appear more as negotiations with the interlocutor, or even just assertions[69]. Consequently, it is important to emphasise, as Gardener (2002) does, the multiple, shifting nature of accounts, particularly their location within place and prevailing power relations.

People speak from particular places, which themselves emerge from a specific nexus and interaction of social relations (Massey 1994, 154). The interrelations of region, caste, religion or occupation amongst people gathered at a precise moment may affect the stories they tell amongst others and the narratives they draw on, emphasise or downplay. This dynamic, relational and specific understanding of narrative, including a 'politics of hearing' (Gardner 2002, 33) as much as of speaking, draws together Massey's point that "places are processes, too" with Mattingly's concept of emplotment, to understand the work of these narratives as 'emplacement'.

In a neighbourhood, based on a definition of right to residence as being eligible for resettlement there, and residents therefore having been through the experience of resettlement, narratives that situate the narrator within this experience, serve to

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[69] I share Gardner's (2002, 33) unease about where these narrative plots in Mattingly's account apparently spring from, or the directive strength of 'emplotment'.

'emplace' them with a form of legitimacy into the history of the locale[70]. Nonetheless, at the same time, this is an emplacement that by locating people as residents of a resettlement colony also situates them within wider discourses circulating in the city questioning the eligibility/suitability of 'the urban poor' in terms of 'encroachment', illegality, and implicit criminality[71]. Consequently the emplotment of narratives of emplacement requires care and tacit negotiation in order to come out on the right side. "Even the most apparently innocuous story is loaded with political meaning; for stories do not simply entertain or convey experience, they also comment upon it, and hence help to change it." (Gardner 2002, 2), so that narratives of emplacement open up to residents a means, even if very minor, of negotiating a place within the city, and colony itself.

A place of stories

In many ways Punarvaspur is a place woven through by narratives; both as the subject of them and, more often, as the setting. Laid out in grid fashion, the wider, more public and anonymous commercial streets (*sarak*) bound the blocks, linked through by narrower (3m wide), semi-domestic, neighbourly and relationship-'thick' *gali*s (lanes). Stewart describes the texture and traffic of social life in rural West Virginia as composed of "thickets of storied sociability" (Stewart 1996, 6), often told, "just settin'" (1996, 17). Similarly, in Punarvaspur stories flow as both value and '*time pass*[72]', being often pleasurable to tell in themselves, but also the way information, news and comment is relayed, being paseed up and down lanes and acquaintances are renewed.

Not all conversations need be public though. They could be moved inside houses, or up onto rooftops, where more seclusion was available. Down in the lane, conversations were often multi-voiced, and the polyphonous, often contradictory, additions to conversations are worth noting, if only to recognise these accounts as more collaborative efforts, rather than the more common idea of a singly authored narrative. Often they were punctuated by complaints about the electricity supply, or punctuated by scrambles at the arrival or water in the pipes, or someone passing with a good bargain on a handcart.

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[70] I.e. Narrative also carries some 'illocutionary' force too, i.e. where the speech act is doing something such as 'I name this child…' or 'we were resettled here'.

[71] Cf Kirpal J's infamous judgement *Almitra H Patel v. Union of India* (2000), discussed in the last chapter.

[72] The use of the English phrase '*time pass*' in Hindi and English, is literally that, a way to pass time, but generally having a connotation of leisure and the pleasurable passing of time.

Narratives of fear, the 'jungle' and possibility of transformation

Amongst the first settlers from Power House were the Karki family, originally from Nepal. Prior to the meeting described below, I had met Veena (40s) in her role as a 'fieldworker' for 'Saheli Samiti', a Delhi NGO of long standing in Punarvaspur. This time she is not working, but sitting outside her house, and we are soon joined in the *gali* by her sister-in-law, her mother and several neighbours, under a dingily dark, but dry, late monsoon sky. The way they describe their experience of the resettlement and the early days of the colony, was similar to many other descriptions, comments, or simply references to the resettlement I heard.

"We came from Power House in Indira Gandhi's time," Veena explained. Her father had been in the army. On leaving the army he joined DESU's fire brigade at Indraprasthra Power House, and they came to live at ITO. "When we shifted, it was jungle all around. It was completely empty." "There was nothing but grass," adds her sister-in-law, gesturing up to the level of her neck. Veena explains that some 10 to 12 families who had been neighbours in their *gali* at Power House were also shifted with them, each given one plot per family. After their arrival, she notes, the DDA who were responsible for the shift and initially for the colony, prescribed how they should build their house. She recalls that it took her family several months to start to build a dwelling, and a further three or four months before they had a *pakka* room in which to live. She thinks there was supposed to be a plan that people were to build their houses to, with a room and kitchen space, but with no toilet nor main drainage as they were supposed to use the community toilet blocks. The community toilets however were not only filthy, but had a reputation for 'peeping toms', and as somewhere where men molested women. Consequently, she says, women preferred to 'go outside' into the 'jungle' scrub then surrounding Punarvaspur, adding that it was only 15 years ago that people started to make changes to their houses well beyond the plan, adding floors above and toilets. "It's an unauthorised colony," adds her sister-in-law apparently in comment to this, continuing, "the government can pick us up and move us anytime."

Continuing with the story, Veena says that the area Punarvaspur was chalked out onto was said to have been a cremation ground, and she remembers cremations continuing on the outskirts of the colony after the resettlement. Adding, that catching the early bus to school, back at ITO, she recalls seeing bodies set on the pyre, "And the smell as well, it was impossible to sit outside like this". A neighbour from a few doors down, passing by on her way from the market interjects "-- It was a *kabristan* (Muslim graveyard). When people dug the foundations for their houses, they found human bones. They just used to come out of the soil. Word would go round and people would come from all around to see." Veena concludes that the cremation ground was eventually moved

to the west of the colony, although she doesn't remember when this was or how it was done, "perhaps people went to see HKL Bhagat? – he was MP [for East Delhi at the time]."

I tentatively ask what people had felt about the resettlement and am surprised by the replies. Veena's opposite neighbour from across the *gali* joins in, "People here came from less good places; at ITO the kitchen and everything was not separate, so this [relative lack here] was not a problem. People were pleased, she [Indira Gandhi] picked us up off the road and gave us somewhere to be [live]." This is not the view of a later resident, an older woman, who comes down the stairs of the house next to Veena's where she and her husband rent a room on the first floor, to join us. They are from the Punjab originally, but lived in Gulshan Nagar[73] until seven years ago. Comparing Punarvaspur to her previous residence she says wistfully that "In that place you could sit comfortably with good people" but not being drawn to say why she moved, the mood of the conversation shifts. Reetu, another Nepali neighbour who has been settling herself on one of the steps in the course of this discussion, adds that Punarvaspur seemed very strange to her when after her marriage she moved from her village in Nepal to ITO in Delhi, to join her husband working there. In her village she said, "people were the same," whereas "here people are all mixed up; there are SC and ST people[74]. When we came we had to live with other castes," and complains of the abusive language[75]. Veena's sister-in-law came from Yamuna Vihar[76] when she married in the early 1980s, picks up on this: "I asked my parents, why are you getting me married here, when you have lived in a house with toilets etc.?" She says she was put off by the idea of living in a resettlement colony, as she says that she had seen Seelampur, an earlier resettlement colony near her parents home. She says that she didn't have a very good 'picture' of such places, considering them rowdy, somewhere the '*mahaul*[77]' was not good. However, her parents had told her the boy was good, and she says that although Punarvaspur was in some ways the same as Seelampur, as she had feared, she considers that she now adapted.

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[73] Gulshan Nagar is a large DDA (government) built complex of privately owned flats of varying types, from one room Janata ['people's'] flats to "Middle Income Group" multi-room flats.

[74] Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe.

[75] *Gaali*: abusive language, swearing. It's in these terms that comments with a casteist edge tended to be made by non-SC people. They were usually inferences of uncivilised behaviour and relative inferiority. Status, particularly class, was often marked in reverse, complimenting about people who spoke 'nicely' or in a 'good' or 'sweet' manner.

[76] Yamuna Vihar is also in East Delhi, but more a prosperous 'private' colony in comparison to Punarvaspur which was predominantly *jhuggi* housing at the time.

[77] *Mahaul*: meaning both physical environment and surroundings, as well as feeling about a place, its atmosphere. This is explored in the next two chapters.

Veena tries to turn the conversation, "The *mahaul* is changing," she says, "good families also live here. Water and electricity is less [regular in supply], so some people are moving out, but some families are buying in also, because it is cheaper here." The Punjabi woman retorts, "There are good people living here, but given the choice, why would people live here?" The conversation pauses as Veena's mother returns home. In her 70s, she is as outgoing and confident as her daughter. As various neighbours depart back to their houses or to the vegetable market, she settles herself between her daughter and daughter-in-law on the steps and launches into her story. She says that although she first came to Delhi from Dehra Dun with her husband who had been in the army some 50 years ago, she has moved many times since, and had lived all over the hills, in Shimla and later in Kashmir. She explains that by the time they came back to Delhi she had children and they found somewhere to live in Gandhi Nagar. This proved too expensive, so they shifted to renting a *jhuggi* at ITO where her husband joined DESU's fire brigade. "They shifted us here in trucks, and put us down in this place," adding in almost dismissive tones that she had shifted many times before.

In comparison to Punavaspur, she says that ITO was filthy and that there was dirt everywhere; from the river and in fly-ash from the power station, so that clean clothes would be dirty before they were dry. When she arrived, she said that she liked Punarvaspur better. Veena reminds her that when they arrived, they had to go to South Punarvaspur (the older neighbouring resettlement colony) for water, there were big rocks in the road, and that plots were just soil and grass. Her mother fires back that she herself had liked it, even though it was jungle then. Given Veena's earlier description, I ask whether she had found it scary living in this place. "What to fear?!" she retorts, "I came with my husband and children, what was there to be scared of?"

In speaking of "Indira Gandhi's time" Veena is referring to a time period that for her and everyone else around needs little further elaboration in Punarvaspur, referring as it does to the particular political context of the Emergency. Repeatedly, in narratives of arrival, periods after Mrs Gandhi's return to office in 1980 tended to be referred to specifically. The in the context of the resettlement colony, the phrase 'Indira Gandhi's time' is used to make only oblique reference to the Emergency. To refer to the Emergency directly serves to 'emplot' the speaker's agency (or the lack of it) in a framework of constraint, as a kind of explanation for the subject of the story's compliance. That 'it was the Emergency' tells how people found themselves in Punarvaspur in spite of anger or fear at events, even as a reply to a question about what people felt and thought about their experience of resettlement. This statement is also an allusion to the forcible eviction, destruction of homes and an atmosphere of insecurity, sometimes reinforced by the rhetorical question, 'What could we do?'

Several people refer to the demolitions and early days of the colony as a time of '*aatank*' (terror), of fear and apprehension. Yet in the conversation above, participants are also positioning themselves in relation to time; where they have come from, their perceptions of improvement and what they would accept now. They are in effect negotiating to 'emplace' themselves in their present social relations, with 'proper' behaviour and sense of status.

'They threw us out of Delhi'

Bhram Lal is a Jaat man in his late 60s. Dressed in a grey *kurta pajama*, his hands are blackened by bicycle grease from his cycle-rickshaw and bicycle repair work when I meet him. He lurches up to me early one evening, it turns out slightly drunk, and demands to know what I want and why I'm sitting at the end of his *gali* talking to his son. He is not much mollified when I say I am interested in what it was like when people arrived in Punarvaspur.

> "When we arrived it was barren land; we were thrown out of Delhi! The poor, government doesn't try to solve their problems, they removed them [the poor]. Indira Gandhi said 'Remove poverty – but they removed the poor! This was the government. They pushed us into the jungle - wherever they [the poor] are – throw them away!"

The reason he gives for the resettlement, like many others I spoke to, was not one anyone in Punarvaspur I met disputes; 'the poor' were not wanted in 'Delhi', and Punarvaspur, was not (at the time) seen as Delhi. In a common reversal of Indira Gandhi's slogan '*Garib hatao*' ('Remove poverty'), he depicts the image of an elite Delhi as an outcome.

As discussed in the previous chapter, residents often used the similar statement 'they want to make Delhi like Paris' to situate themselves on the receiving end of an amorphous 'they', which was radically reshaping the city in which they were not to be part. At the time of my fieldwork, large scale demolitions of *jhuggies* were once again taking place on the same Yamuna bank areas that had been cleared to form Punarvaspur and other resettlement colonies during the Emergency[78]. Simultaneously the long threatened closure of 'non-conforming factories' seemed probable and the statement was often deployed as a comment on both the past and present place of 'the poor' in the city. Falling numbers of government jobs, privatisation, and the increased

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[78] That these demolitions were again taking place under the direction of Jagmohan, widely seen as responsible for the earlier demolitions during the Emergency heightened the comparison further. This was both in conversation with Punarvaspur residents, but also amongst NGO workers I spoke to, who linking him to the then BJP government (associated with the perceivedly elite orientated 'India Shining' advertising campaign) found this further cause for suspicion.

temporisation of remaining jobs exacerbated residents' sense of insecurity, to constraint to possibilities of self-improvement. Deployed to explain this, the statement *'Garib hatao'* added the sense of being slowly pushed out of the city.

In this way residents narrate themselves, ambivalently and uncertainly into the present, as well as past, colony. Punarvaspur is not Delhi, the opportunities the city had presented seem suddenly remote. It is 'emplaced' in a constellation of social and structural locations on the periphery of Delhi, Punarvaspur's *'jangal'* bound border location in these early days, underpinned by a sense of uncertainty and fear of social disintegration. This is evidenced by tales of bodies found dumped in the scrub by women venturing out into the relative privacy of the scrubland, first thing in the morning, and of men robbed of their wages as they left the bus stand at the end of the route. Deployed in tandem with assertions of being 'thrown out of Delhi', here at the borders, in these narratives, fear and uncertainty come to be embodied in these tales of marginality and lack of agency, addressed both to the past, and to the fear of a jobless, or resettled future[79].

"Indira settled this place"

Against this backdrop it can be hard to understand why anyone ever stayed in Punarvaspur, or any other resettlement colony. Objecting to my interpretation of this, a common retort was: "Here we had land, why would you leave?" This is an important point, for disturbing as the early settlement was, for households with sustainable jobs, many survived to be relatively well placed in the present day, so it is worth also paying attention to the sometimes contradictory and ambivalent ways in which residents locate themselves in these accounts, and in relation to the colony itself.

Despite the negative reputation of the resettlement, as Veena's neighbour says, "People were pleased, she [Indira Gandhi] picked us up off the road and gave us somewhere to be [live]." A number of people argued that it was because Indira Gandhi was 'with the poor' or 'felt for the poor' that she had resettled people. Other people claimed that she had bought the land out of her own money and hence the difficulties that people had faced at the resettlement were the result government *'chamchas'* ('yes-men') around her, thwarting her efforts. Some went as far to describe her in divine terms akin to *Bharat Mata* [Mother India], and attributing to her the lowering of the Yamuna floodwaters which inundated the new resettlement colonies in North and East Delhi in 1978,

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[79] With what were perceived as declining prospects for well paid permanent jobs, and an awareness of the rising land values of East Delhi, these stories of the past were often invoked in narratives about the future, and a fear of social disintegration.

explaining that she had performed *puja* from the Loha Pul[80], throwing gold into the river.

Divine attributes aside, it is noticeable that even amidst the struggles of the resettlement and brutalities of the Emergency, Indira Gandhi generally remains beyond reproach[81]. In this respect, these accounts of Indira Gandhi, and similarly HKL Bhagat, (MP of the newly formed East Delhi constituency), appear in these narratives about the resettlement, to both perform and elaborate a narrative of patronage and allegiance, an important means of negotiating access to services. Land and property are also close to the heart of this performance of allegiance, and might be offered as an explanation of Indira Gandhi's status. Land is the medium that people struggled to control, both at Power House and on arrival at Punarvaspur. It is a medium in which residents invest both money and meaning for access to the possibilities that living in the city offers. Land is a space from which to live and work, but as also from which relationships are forged with others, both within and beyond the neighbourhood. As Sukhdev Singh[82], baby daughter on his knee, explains frustratedly of his parents in the house behind him; "They have eaten the Congress Party's salt," explaining the debt his father especially had felt to the Congress Party in the rest of his life, for the plot he had been resettled to. "So," he explains, "they will not vote for another party". In this respect, the narrative depiction of party figures granting boons is almost a performance of allegiance in itself, these glowing accounts making the relationships visible, even if in Sukhdev Singh's view it is an unreciprocated exchange, sitting uncomfortably with the struggle to survive and remake life in the colony.

However, the height of the stakes at which people were playing, and costs to themselves that people were prepared to settle on in this struggle for land and space becomes disturbingly clear in the next section.

The cost of a plot: forced bargains, constraints and possibilities
Whether people stayed or left after the resettlement, had much to do with the calculation as to how best to utilise their resources. Should they sell, extracting what value there was from the plot which had just been allotted and shift back to a *jhuggi*

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[80] An colonial era road and rail iron bridge; the main river crossing to New Delhi at the time.
[81] This phenomena has also been noted by Tarlo (2003) and Appadurai (1990). However, such lyonisation did not extend to Indira Gandhi's son, Sanjay. One woman claimed Indira had had him killed when he died in a plane crash, for the good of the country, she alleged. In contrast to his mother, he was often implicated in many of the extremes of the period, aligned with the amorphous 'they' of the state, the politicians and bureaucrats responsible for 'eating' that which is meant for 'the poor'.
[82] Son of Raj Singh, introduced in the Methodology section.

closer to a place of work (risky at the time of Emergency), or stay? Some residents at Power House, who had accommodation tied to their employment, put up a *jhuggi* at Punarvaspur and lived there, while others let their *jhuggi* out on rent, or oscillated between their work accommodation, and the resettlement colony. For the majority, who could sustain living at Punarvaspur, their prime reason to stay, as they explained it with hindsight from a relatively prosperous present, was that they had just been allotted land; they had in effect been grudgingly been given leave to stay in the city. "There was land here, so why leave?" Veena's neighbour argued. Equally as a number of people pointed out, "how could people know then that this land would become worth so much?" and more to the point, since "there is nothing in the village – where else would we go?"

However, for some residents, the price of this chance to remain in the city was considerable. Aside from the socio-economic and religious differences between ABCD, and E and F blocks, the date and site of the demolition produced radically different experiences of resettlement, as well as spaces in the colony today. I spoke to fewer residents who had been part of the resettlement in these blocks, as far fewer remained. But of those who did arrive in Punarvaspur to E and F blocks in the second wave of resettlement that year, most mentioned sterilisation (*nasbandi*). This is in sharp contrast to ABCD blocks of the preceding phase of resettlement, where cases of sterilisation were rarely mentioned, and then in pejorative terms[83]. I was surprised how easily the topic was broached by in E and F residents to whom it had happened, and how often residents of other blocks and outside of Punarvaspur assumed it had happened to all residents of E and F blocks, sometimes extending this to the whole of Punarvaspur. This, despite the widespread social and religious disapproval at the unnaturalness of the procedure, and stigma with which infertility – and *nasbandi* is viewed. The different requirements to obtain a plot between in ABCD blocks and E and F can perhaps be explained by the increasing pace of Emergency decrees in the six months between the two rounds of resettlement. On 15th May 1976, (after the first round of resettlement to Punarvaspur), the "Provisions for the General Public" order was issued, declaring that eligibility for a plot (and many other public services), would now be on the production of a sterilisation certificate[84].

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[83] ABCD residents sometimes referred to E and F as the '*nasbandi* blocks' ('*nasbandi ki block hai*').

[84] "Allotment of houses, flats, tenements, shops and plots in all income groups…will only be made to 'eligible persons' or eligible couples…An ineligible person can become eligible on production of the sterilisation in respect of him/her or his wife or her husband from the prescribed authority,"(Dayal and Bose 1977: 132, Appendices).

I meet Dilruba, a Muslim woman in her late 50s, originally from UP, living in E block. For Dilruba, *nasbandi* was a "forced bargain"[85] (*zabardasti sauda*). As part of the Emergency, there was a widespread crackdown on informal trades, including hawkers and handcart vendors from the streets in order to 'beautify' the city. She explains that her husband's work on the street as a rickshaw puller in Old Delhi made him vulnerable to the risk of being picked up by the police for plying his trade. Terrifying rumours circulated, she says, of what would happen if you were picked up by the police, so fearful, and despite rickshaw-pulling being their only source of income, she and her husband thought it wiser to stay off the streets for a several days. "It was the Emergency, there was no work." But, she continues, after several days of sitting at home, their three children were hungry and he had to go out to work. When he didn't come home, she says, she too went out to look for him, eventually being told to go and ask at the much feared Tihar Jail, where she found her husband. Not knowing what to do, she explains that she was pushed from person to person to beg for her husband's release and was eventually told she should go and see two women, Ruksana and Fatima.

"I remember their names very clearly," she says angrily. They said to her "Get *nasbandi* done [and] your man [husband] will be released". They took her to Lady Irwin hospital, did the operation, she got the papers and her husband was released. He was very angry with her, she says, but what else could she have done? She explains that with the papers it was possible for them to claim a plot in Punarvaspur and at the height of the monsoon they arrived with nothing more than some *chettai* (woven bamboo matting) a *charpoy* and a few pots, pans etc. Only gradually, they built up their plot, increment by increment as some money came in. But today, she says, fixing me with bright and, I realise, tear-filled eyes and angry stare, her husband has died along with her daughter and one of her sons, leaving her with only her remaining son. "If he dies – what will I do?" That is why she says she was lucky, and it is necessary to have at least two sons. Her neighbour puts her head through the ragged curtain over the door to collect Dilruba, to leave for Thursday evening prayers at Feroz Kotla Shah's *dargarh*[86]. Catching the end of the conversation, she directs a torrent of abuse and

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[85] Emma Tarlo (2003) has similar findings; however, my purpose here is to understand what people do with these narratives in relation to their emplacement in the colony, rather than to contest her interpretation.

[86] A few weeks later, when I meet Dilurba again, it transpires her visit to the *dargarh* had been offer prayers at this saint's shrine, for her brother Muzaffarnagar (UP) who has leukaemia. He had come to Delhi for treatment in Safdarjang Hospital, but to no avail. Invited in for some water and to sit under the fan for a while, I was shocked and sobered to find her one room nearly empty. Missing was the bed which had dominated it previously, as was her nephew's small VCD rental library, operated from the window before. All this had been sold to go towards the costs of her brother's medical care. Practically all of value that remained was her

innuendo about Sanjay Gandhi at us. Here again it is striking how even in this situation Indira Ghandi remains unassailable, untouched by the fall out and effects of resettlement and the darker side of the Emergency.

In D block, Sultani, also a Muslim woman in her early 50s, has taken a different route to Punarvaspur. She explained that she and her husband had had their *jhuggi* in South Delhi demolished and taken been to a site in West Delhi. From others they heard that 'they were giving land here' in Punarvaspur. Just as they knew the *jhuggies* would be broken, Sultani explains, so they knew it would be possible to get land here. She and her husband asked the DDA[87] clerk there if they could move from one resettlement colony to another. They were told they that could, but that one of them would have to get the 'operation' [i.e. sterilisation] done. So, she said, her husband did. Arriving in Punarvaspur in December 1976 (nearly a year after the first settlements), they found a plot they thought they could live on and they 'sat on it'. By the end of 1976, the empty and abandoned plots seemed to have been filled. This, according to Sultani was due to a lively trade in plots underway by people from within Punarvaspur, elsewhere in Delhi, and across the border from UP, 'capturing' plots.

As Sultani describes it, there was little formal, or higher supervision in Punarvaspur. In its location on the border of the city it is possible to see Punarvaspur as being beyond the view of the bureaucracy in many ways, while simultaneously, from Sultani's description, the site of much bureaucratic activity, with a small DDA 'office' where a '*patwari*' kept (and varied) accounts of allocations. At this moment of flux and uncertainty, the fixity of documents, gained in some cases through indelible physical changes, allowed people to move, as they would not otherwise have been able to, as people reordered themselves in and out of blocks they liked, or away from neighbours of a different caste or religion they did not. While some people felt confident enough to do this, people like Sukhdev Singh's father and others feared the DDA sufficiently not to dare, passing up the opportunity to take up a double plot[88].

For Brahmin woman Lakshmi, and her daughter Anita who narrated the story, without sterilisation, Lakshmi could not have found somewhere to live any other way.

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sewing machine, and some half made 'suits' (*salwar kameez*) neighbours had given her to sew. It is important to remember, against all the talk about land as wealth and a means to remain in the city, that the lack of margin for bad luck or error in some households is thin, with nothing to return to in some putative village, as planners and the press both so often assume.

[87] Delhi Development Authority; at that time in charge of the Slum and JJ Wing, and responsible for resettlement colonies.

[88] This can also be seen from the other side in Emma Tarlo's piecing together of the fragmented papery accounts of these negotiations within the records and files of the nearby Welcome resettlement colony (2003, Chapters 4 and 5).

Originally from Andhra Pradesh, Lakshmi's husband had abandoned her to live with another woman, after she had their fourth daughter (and no son). Working at the nearby LNJP Government Hospital, there was nowhere she and her four young girls could live, while earning Rs2/day. She was quite clear that she would have no more children, and when the possibility of gaining a plot to live on by getting sterilised came up, she took it, being allotted a plot in F block of far away Punarvaspur. As Anita asked, what else could her mother have done? She had four young girls, sleeping on the pavements, they could be abducted or worse at anytime – so she did what she could, she had the operation and they moved.

These last two stories attempt to reverse, or at least attempt to counteract, in the emplotment of their narrative, the dominant image of both the highly stigmatised act of sterilisation, but also that of the Emergency and the experience of the resettlement. Introducing this quite calculating modifier about value and land seems through a kind of post hoc calculation to shift the narrative. In this new emplotment the narrator's decision is reappraised in the light of contemporary relative wealth and stability to become, with the appreciation in value of the plot, a choice. In effect it reclaims the ability to act and perhaps even, to make an active exchange in an otherwise very unattractive situation. In doing so, they appear to be an attempting to emplot and return some kind of agency to what are often predominantly passive accounts or depictions of residents as victims of the Emergency. By disaggregating the 'massified' accounts of resettlement generally recounted and emphasising the individual circumstances of decisions taken and the opportunities and possibilities that people extracted from the situation. Presenting these experiences as decisions taken, an element of agency is retained, even if the stakes are high.

Presented and rationalised as a 'forced deal' for both Dilruba and Sultani this cost of the 'Operation' appears as a total exchanges with the state, a complete payment. In this 'emplotment' of events, the exchange was total, and story to be considered complete: there were no outstanding dues on their part. Consequently, for both women, in the present day, there was a strong sense of injustice – of default or reneging by the state over the current state of affairs, increasing costs of living (especially utilities) and uncertainty. For these women especially, their right to their plot and subsidised utilities was grounded in the totality and completeness of the exchange and high cost at which it had been obtained.

The relationship with the state

These narratives bring 'the idea of the state' back into the picture, not simply as the weighty application of force and power or through mediating local leaders and 'big men' (*pradhans*), as it generally appears in Punarvaspur. Instead, the state is engaged, not necessarily in a practical sense, but through its 'emplotment' in these narratives, as a more abstract actor, which these residents situate themselves and their engagements with it, in relation to.

By investing in this site, living in its spaces-made-places, and *jhuggies*-made-dwellings, Punarvaspur residents frequently re-emphasised what they have made of the colony since its settlement. While once "it was all jungle", residents in their next sentence will also point out "but look, today, there are three storeys and every house has a *garhi*.[89]" As residents describe the building up of their plots as something done little by little, as people saved the money, or a son's first salary, time is also framed not just by politician's rule, but by the arrival of water and electricity in the colony, and the active transformation of the locale, making the place seem like somewhere they could live. In this way, in their shared experience of demolition residents describe their investment into the colony and the social relations there, but also in the case of the *nasbandi* narratives, of having made the best of a forced bargain with the state.

This relationship of the state with resettlers has implicitly been confirmed through historically lower rates in resettlement colonies for services (from bus passes to water bills), than for other citizens, or not paid at all. However, with increasing wealth in the city, political and commercial pressure from the new 'discoms[90]' and older state utilities, there are increasing attempts to incorporate all residents into their revenue streams, some for the first time. Added to these extra charges, are the post-privatisation electricity meters installed indiscriminately by the new 'discoms', widely agreed by residents to run much faster than the old ones. These recent changes have set the scene for a feeling of increasing disenfranchisement from the city by residents of resettlement colonies, who increasingly wonder if they won't be displaced again from a city that "wants to remove the poor" in Bhram Lal's words.

If the majority of residents in Punarvaspur had put their fears and fortunes into the bricks and mortar of the place, for Dilruba, Sultani and others, the degree and meaning of their investment is much greater than that money invested in the concrete of their homes. While her neighbour stands in the doorway waiting for her, Dilruba's anger carrying over from the past in her narrative, arrived abruptly at the present.

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[89] *Ghari* – vehicle; from bike to car, but most often in Punarvaspur, bike.
[90] 'Discoms' – i.e. electricity distribution companies of privatised services.

" We built this [house] – and now – __listen__ – they are asking for tax; electricity tax, water
tax! Why are they asking?! – The 'Operation' was done – nasbandi was done – and a plot
was given. Now why are they asking for tax?!"

Framing utility bills as taxes – unwarranted taxes at that – seems to speak of fractured
agreements and being out manoeuvred in the 'emplotment' of the narrative by the
state, as further costs are demanded on an agreement which should be considered
closed. With the death of her husband and son, her brother's leukaemia, her
constellation of socio-spatial relations in which her narratives and sense of place are
embedded, seem to be coming undone. Having done the state's bidding at high
personal cost, 'they' again seem to have broken the deal.

Conclusion
Overall, the predominant framing of the resettlement and the Emergency, in the press
and popular accounts, is through lists of facilities lacking, and the dehumanizing
effects of demolition and relocation (Tarlo 2003; e.g. Dayal and Bose 1977, 119). These
are often depictions of passivity, things done to the resettled, or of frustrations on the
part of the authors – of being unable to prevent things. Yet it is evident in the accounts
above, that the Emergency itself emerges as a period of not just upheaval and brutality,
but of ambivalence and uncertainty, and even in some accounts a perverse kind of
opportunity too.

Cheryl Mattingly describes 'emplotment' as the enfolding and negotiation of speaker
and listener into a particular set of events or dispositions through narrative (1998,
Mattingly and Garo 2000). In this chapter I have used narrative, not to uncover
'resistance', or evidence of subaltern agency, but to try to understand what and how
people do with narratives about resettlement. Mattingly's encounters with
occupational therapists involve subtle negotiations and persuasions between very
damaged people and their therapists, towards, from the therapists side at least, clear
outcomes; the patient's rehabilitation. However, in Punarvaspur, the outcomes of what
people do with narrative are less determined and less directed. Many of the
interactions observed here, particularly in the example of Veena and her neighbours,
can be seen in terms of emplotment, as neighbours position themselves in
contemporary social relations through narratives set in the past – of the resettlement.
In these they can also be seen positioning themselves in terms of being respectable
wives/mothers/daughters-in-law, of making the best of a bad situation (Veena's
mother), of not being an SC or ST person (Reetu), of their sense of standards having

risen since then, etc. But particularly this is done in relation to Punarvaspur, the place. This becomes important in the following chapters where I consider how people engage and employ other spatial practices to negotiate their own sense of place in the neighbourhood.

The processual nature of place, made up of a dynamic network of social relations (Massey 1994), is important for understanding Punarvaspur as a resettlement colony, and central to the subject of these narratives, and site of their telling. Understood as dynamically situated, these narratives of 'emplacement' illustrate the emplotment of these difficult social relations in Punarvaspur, as a very particular place. Framed and reframed differently in different narratives, residents situate their experiences in the past, as 'thrown out of the city', as ambivalently located, and as active participants in what was at best a forced deal. Simultaneously these are also engagements with the present, as respectable neighbours, and comment on the uncertainties of jobs and livelihoods in the future. So that present day anxieties continue to animate both the articulation and performance of residents' narratives of emplacement, locating and negotiating their own 'place' in the city.

4

'MAHAUL': Part I :
Negotiating social relations and place

"Reading, writing, will make you a nawab,
Playing, pleasing yourself will make you bad"
'Amma' (Promilla).

The state of the '*mahaul'* is a common concern in Punarvaspur and is often offered as an explanation for, or statement about, the quality of a place or people both by residents and those regarding it from outside. In English, *mahaul* is often flatly translated as 'environment', usually understood to mean physical environment. But '*mahaul'* can also be used to mean 'atmosphere', a sense or feeling about a place; to see the *mahaul* of a place may be to see the situation there. As such people refer to the *mahaul* directly but also use the term to refer indirectly to people or things that are considered to shape that *mahaul*.

In this chapter, I explore the way in which Punarvaspur residents relate themselves and others to place, deploying their location in their relationships with other people. This offers an insight into the way in which the lived, experienced, and often symbolic 'representational space' of a locale is contested and negotiated through 'spatial practices' and competing 'representations of space' (Lefebvre 1991). In particular, the spatial practices through which people's negotiation of social relations are inscribed into space, shape the meaning of that space in an ongoing process. Therefore, someone's assessment of the *mahaul* of a place is often an idiom for the evaluation of potential relationships with the people there. An assessment of the *mahaul* forms the basis for assumptions about identity and comment about status and reputation. This is important in urban settings where neighbours and acquaintances may be fleeting and other evidence for verifying that people are whom they say they are may be hard to come by. The way in which people 'read' and negotiate their relationships to others within a place is a reminder that the production of place is a continuous process made up of intersecting relationships (Massey 1994). How people locate each other in space links social and material relationships to form a 'geometry of power' relations (Massey 1994). This provides the basis for boundary-making through assertions of similarity and differences of identity, often by reference to a person's location in space. Such assertions serve to structure interrelations between urban spaces, between 'public' and

'private', at different scales, between lane, neighbourhood or city, and the negotiation of status. It is this that I explore in this chapter.

In the following sections, I describe the day-to-day practices by which the spaces of the neighbourhood are marked. This includes shifting perceptions of 'inside' and 'outside', as they are marked in people's interactions with each other, along axes of identity such as gender, age and relatedness. In the following ethnography, residents articulate their differences by reference to the position of others in relation to the *mahaul* of the neighbourhood. The penultimate section offers an exception to prove the rule, discussing one group who appear to disregard the effect of the *mahaul*. These different spatial practices, taken together with an increasing concern for access to the social and symbolic capital (cf Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; 119) of education and seclusion of women, suggest that assertions of class perhaps offer general caste residents a means to negotiate status in Punarvaspur, where direct reference to caste is difficult. As discussed in the previous chapter, the verbal articulation of difference as a spatial practice is one of the few means available to people through which difference can be drawn in the close spaces of the neighbourhood.

In the next chapter, I go on to explore the physical drawing of boundaries as a potentially political act, and the emergence of the neighbourhood as a political field charged by the bio-moral effects of the *mahaul*.

'Conduct', 'substance' and 'bio-morality'
Why might the *mahaul* of a place be thought to have an effect on people? One way of understanding the effect of the *mahaul* of a place on people is through ethno-sociological work on South Asia (particularly Marriott 1990; Daniel 1984), which highlights a 'bio-moral' understanding of personhood. Related to Dumont's work (1980) on purity, pollution and hierarchy, Marriott (1990), Schneider (1968) and other Chicago 'ethno-sociologists' argue that vernacular concepts should be taken as analytic categories to examine the shifting of substance between persons and place. They argue that the Western Cartesian tradition is based on a 'dualistic' split between a (moral) mind and a (biological) body composed of a fixed immutable 'substance'. In contrast, they suggest, in South Asia the vernacular conception of personhood is not based on this divide, but instead is seen as unified, as 'monistic' and 'dividual' (Marriott 1990). In this view the 'substance' of both mind and body is interchangeably affected by a person's interactions with others. This includes the effects of interactions in potentially polluting environments or with people with potentially polluting occupations or identities. These interactions may be considered to have negative effects on a person,

and lead to the avoidance of certain places or people for fear of their perceived effect on an individual's morality, respectability, and how others see them.

Daniel argues that the 'substances' that make up person and place interact, so that "The territory that affects a person's bodily substance is the village in which he is born and to a lesser extent the village or town or country he chooses to live in." (1984, 101). Exploring this relationship between person and village/territory in Tamil Nadu he asserts, "The villager's concern is not only with what substances enter the *ur* [village[91]] and affect its inhabitants, but with the effect of these alien substances on the *ur* itself." In this reading, it is be possible to see the *mahaul* almost as a substance. Daniel continues, it "is understandable given Tamil beliefs that the soil substance is ultimately mixed with the bodily substance of the *ur* itself." (1984, 79). In Daniel's account of personhood in a Tamil village the openness of people to interrelationships between the physical environment and person has consequences that are physical, mental and moral.

In this view of the world "Conduct alters substance, and to a greater or lesser extent, any transaction involves an exchange of bio-moral qualities and consequently transforms the substance code of the parties to it" agrees Parry (1989, 493). For the 'dividual' person, where mind and body are not parted, there is a constant interaction of the 'bio-moral' person with the environment. This makes the relationship of the person with their surrounding environment important, including with other people in it.

However, interrogating his own ethnographic work with Brahmin priests on the cremation *ghats* of Benares, Parry comes to a different conclusion to Daniel. Parry demonstrates that while Daniel's 'monistic' view of the 'dividual' person is highly persuasive, a dualistic interpretation of the same data can be made.

> "What I believe my own data, as well as much else in the ethnographic record, would suggest is that Hindu society has often seen itself as engaged in an endless battle against impending chaos and disintegration, of which the ever present danger of disintegration and degeneration of the actors' own person is the most immediate and apprehensible manifestation. Constant vigilance is required to hold the balance of the body," (Parry 1989, 513)

Consequently Parry argues it is a strong 'ideology', encompassing caste within the need for purity that works against pollution. This ideology is part of "the symbolic elaboration of louring disorder which creates and sustains the world of order and regulation." (Parry 1989, 514). If the world is understood as chaotic, then attention paid

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[91] Daniel translates '*ur*' as 'village', but takes care to carefully discuss the fact that the two words do not fully overlap in meaning.

to maintaining one's own moral, associational and bodily integrity provides an important source of order. Following Parry's argument, ethno-sociological and similar approaches, especially those exploring the openness of people to their surroundings, are better understood as an ideology. In this case, an ideology that works to stabilise and direct the relationships of individuals with other people in a place, including how they choose to negotiate and manage those relationships.

If arguments about the 'dividual' nature of South Asian personhood are set aside whilst retaining the openness of a persons' relationship with the environment, it is strong ideologies like those of bio-moral personhood which help to order a potentially chaotic world, including that of the resettlement colony. Consequently, as some of critiques of this ethno-sociological work (e.g. Appadurai 1986) suggest, the question is not just about a formal, abstract systems of hierarchy[92] but rather how, through the same ideological framework, caste and other relationships of hierarchy and difference emerge in relation to each other, here, through 'place'. Recent work in contemporary urban India has shown how caste increasingly emerges with, and through, other categories of identity, like aspects of class (Frøystad 2005, 2006) in the way it is gendered (Donner 2006, 151), or informed by region, or assertions about religion (e.g. 'Muslims eat meat' as an assertion about pollution and disposition, see Ghassem-Fachandi 2009). This underlying 'strong ideology' is a framework for dealing with the immediacy of the contextual, highly specific, indexical relationships that 'persons' have with each other in a particular place and time, including that of caste.

This is of interest because Punarvaspur, as a low income urban setting, is very different from the traditional caste segregated villages of classic ethnographies (e.g. Mayer 1960; Srinivas 1960), from Daniel's account of South Indian villages, or from Parry's depiction of high caste (Brahmin) ritual specialists in Varanasi. At a macro level Punarvaspur is heterogeneous[93] in both religious and caste terms, if not in electoral politics (a reliable Congress 'votebank'). There is a substantial Muslim as well as Hindu population in the neighbourhood, while in A block Scheduled Caste people (mostly Valmikis) make up more than 50% of the residents and are the largest minority in B and C blocks. Consequently, they are the dominant caste in electoral politics in this

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[92] E.g. as caste relations are depicted by Dumont in a grid of exchange relations (1980, 87), or Marriott (1989)

[93] The product of demolition and forced resettlement, resettlement colonies are often particularly mixed in comparison to voluntarily settled sites, whether elite apartment blocks (e.g. 'Press Apartments', 'Lawyers Enclave' in East Delhi, organised by occupational affiliation), or squatter settlements often grouped by caste, regional and religion affiliations. See Dupont's (2004) comparison of neighbourhood types in Mayur Vihar, which includes the resettlement colony Trilokpuri with a similar history to Punarvaspur.

'reserved constituency'[94]. Internally, at a micro level, residential blocks and many *gali*s are segregated in terms of religion, but they are frequently mixed in terms of caste and regional identities. The area also has a high population density and turnover, particularly of residents living on rent meaning that social relations must be constantly renegotiated. In addition, there is very limited private or public space in which to manage and negotiate interactions with others. Together, these characteristics might seem like they should add weight to the popular belief that caste diminishes in importance as an identity under the relative anonymity of urban modernity. Yet, the ethnography discussed below suggests that even in Punarvaspur's dynamic, mixed setting, urban anomie is not an option. Instead the negotiation of identity, including caste, remains important and ongoing, shaping residents interactions in the neighbourhood's limited space and often the meaning of that space as well.

This is evident in residents' uncertainties about their interactions with each other, necessitating constant assessments and assertions of similarity and difference between oneself, neighbours, acquaintances and strangers from beyond the colony. Drawing on limited information, residents employ 'prototypical categories' (Frøystad 2005, 96) of difference interpreted through the framework of the *mahaul* to construe their immediate interactions with others. These perceptions of difference colour potential and actual interactions. A person's relative location in the louring spaces of the neighbourhood serves as a framework against which to assess their bio-moral value and potential impact on ones own personhood in that place. This is of particular concern for some residents who fear the 'bad habits' that their children may pick up through unsupervised interactions in the public spaces of the neighbourhood. For general caste residents in particular, assessments of the '*mahaul*' and the relationship of others to it, also offer a means to ascertain and articulate caste and religious interrelations, in a setting where it is unwise for political and particularly neighbourly relations to make these differences overt.

Negotiating spaces of the neighbourhood
While less hectic and packed than the spaces of Punarvaspur's market, neighbours in a *gali* are also often varied; from in-laws next door to single, male, temporary migrants sharing the rent of a room upstairs. Members of an extended family are often found in one lane. Frequently several brothers and their households are present, reflecting both migration and settlement patterns at Power House or Yamuna Bazaar prior to their demolition, and their clustering together again in the barren landscape of the newly

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[94] Punarvaspur became a reserved constituency with the creation of the Delhi Legislative Assembly in 1992, when the office of Member of the Legislative Assembly was created.

settled colony. With generational increase, the traditional North Indian virilocal family unit has also put pressure on households. Sons are now married with children themselves and the need for more space for family and conjugal life can strain family relations, sometimes forcing a move and the division of a household[95]. Should a nearby neighbour sell up the family may manage to buy a plot, if there is sufficient money at the time. Otherwise the younger couple may rent a room in someone else's house nearby until the money has been saved to build a room on the top of the original house. Alternatively, other family members may arrive from elsewhere requiring accommodation. Conversely schisms and splits, changes of work, or fights, may see some family units may leave the colony entirely, to live elsewhere in the city. In several *gali*s a single extended family predominates, but most often residents share a regional origin.

In this way, patterns of migration to Delhi are also reproduced on a larger scale in Punarvaspur, so that shared regional, religious and caste identities are often grouped together. Hence '*madrasi-wale gali*' retains the name of the predominant origin of the families who had once come from South India[96]. Nonetheless, there has also been a gradual shuffling of residents across the colony over time so that certain groups have condensed together in different blocks, and others, as in '*madrasi-wale gali*', have moved out of Punarvaspur almost entirely. Some UP Muslim families have gravitated towards certain D block *gali*s, while similarly some general caste families have moved in ones and twos, out of A block and *gali*s where there is a predominance of Scheduled Caste and Yadav households.

Good relations with one's neighbours, as 'known people' (*jaan pechaan*[97]) are an advantage indicating knowledge of their background and trust. Dealings with neighbours can be easier than with family as obligations and prescribed norms of behaviour are fewer, and interactions can be more easily managed at a slight distance. However, there is less certainty about such interactions, about who neighbours say they are, their caste, occupation and general trustworthiness, and so about the

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[95] A household is often defined by its *chulha* (hearth – i.e. kitchen/household). Some households may split to keep a separate *chulha* quite amicably, especially where resources become available. On the other hand, keeping 'separate' (*alag*) *chulha*s, may be shorthand for an acrimonious family break.

[96] *Madrasi* – north Indian shorthand for south Indian person – not necessarily from Madras/Chennai.

[97] The meaning of '*jaan pechaan*', literally a 'known-recognised' person, is governed by context. It covers a large, apparently infinitely stretchable number of relationships; from someone known in the next *gali*, to friends, acquaintances and work colleagues, to people known by 'word of mouth', notorious people, local leaders, politicians etc. It also obviates the need to name names, particularly if the situation/information is uncertain or possibly sensitive (i.e. illegal).

desirability of interacting with them. Neighbours are also extremely hard to avoid in the close living context of Punarvaspur, where the confined plot space of Punarvaspur means much life is lived outside in the *gali*. This makes it important to maintain relations with them. For women especially, based in the home, neighbourly relations with other women in the *gali* are the basis of a social life; they are the people who will usually keep half an eye on small children in the lane, help in moments of trouble, or be sources of information (e.g. work that has become available, another advantage of '*jaan-pechan*').

Equally information may also be gossip and the *gali* becomes a site of close neighbourly surveillance. It is sitting outside in the *gali* that remarks are passed about neighbours, news and stories flow up and down, and tales of misleading appearances, money and people lost to midnight flits, of pyramid schemes and alchemists are recounted. All this provides material for comment, reference to the work people do and the colour of their money. Perceptions of the space of the *gali* and the desirability (or not) of mixing with ones neighbours, all contribute to an individual's sense of the *mahaul* of the *gali*. There are some families who intentionally withdraw from the lane. To not use the public space of the *gali* for anything other than to access the house is to refuse interaction and social relations with others in the lane. Attempts to remove oneself from the *gali* in both its social and physical forms is usually perceived by others as an (unwarranted) assertion of betterment, of being above the social life of the lane. It is usually registered by other residents as literally 'anti-social', in its denial of social life and interaction by other residents in the *gali*.

In practice, the boundaries between public and private are flimsy and full-scale rows and shouting matches spill volubly out in to the lane. Such fights were frequently cited as evidence of the poor quality of the neighbourhood. But altercations are hard to conceal in such close living conditions, which had some positive aspects. The open windows, doors and close built houses mean that when domestic violence happens it may be heard, as well seen on the bodies of its victims. This was a good thing, a group of women reflected, as we sat queasily in the stillness following one outburst. "At least they know we can hear" one woman said quietly.

Indeed the most devastating events, which left neighbours most shocked, were those where the boundaries of the household had been sustained. People felt the everyday trust of living in a lane was most shattered when events occurred which they, as neighbours, were unaware of, especially suicides and midnight flits. Suicides are not unknown, but a couple of years previously a man had taken the lives of his young family and himself having been unable to return to his job after illness or find any

other work. He had had the electricity cut off, and had gradually sold the all the family's possessions. The police were eventually called, the door broken down and the family's bodies discovered. The two rooms contained nothing more than bed sheets, plates, spoons and glasses, containing the remnants of poisoned milk. It was emphasised by tellers of this story that this family had no relations in the city. What was most shocking to them as neighbours was their lack of knowledge that the situation had become so desperate. I was told this story on several occasions; it emphasised the knife-edge between the appearance of having achieved an urban working class life, and how quickly this could dissolve. As an example of isolation, it was clear that it still retained the horror to appal the teller and other listeners too.

Inside/outside, 'public'/'private', or semi-domestic space?

The above story was an example of where household boundaries had been too strong. Yet where does peoples' concern about their relationships with neighbours, the environment of the *gali*, or the effect of the *mahaul* on their children start and finish? Where are the boundaries between inside and outside, public and private life, and how are they marked? Discussing the colonial bazaar, Kaviraj (1997) and Chakrabarty (1991) have demonstrated that the location of these boundaries between inside/outside, public and private are not fixed. Nor do they neatly overlap, even as they underpin spatial relations in a particular place. Furthermore, "The inside/outside dichotomy…is a matter of *constant performance* in the exchanges in the bazaar," argues Chakrabarty (1991: 25, my emphasis). They suggest, boundaries are contextual, variable and dynamic, shading from one into the other, dependent on time, place, person, or occasion.

The 3x7m size of a Punarvaspur plot leaves no room for such a luxury, and with houses enclosed on all but one side; ventilation is limited and open space at a premium. So with access to the house via the *gali* alone, domestic life extends outwards into this space, making it hard to avoid one's neighbours and the incursion of the *mahaul* into domestic life.

Yet, even as domesticity is extended to the *gali*, the *gali* is not a fully domestic or 'inside' space. As the cries of handcart vendors hawking their wares up and down attest, they are also open to the incursion of strangers, municipal officers, NGO workers, as well as the interactions of ones neighbours. The periodic theft of objects left on front steps, from worn rubber sandals, items of drying clothing, or a *patila* (cooking pot) left outside to dry, bring residents up short, emphasising the difficulty of maintaining proper boundaries. This makes the demarcation and management of

domestic space in the much more cramped context of working class Punarvaspur, a pressing issue[98]. In the following section I examine the spatial practices by which people use particularly gendered norms of dress and mobility to domesticate spaces in the neighbourhood around them.

Dress, mobility, gender and domestic space

Despite the public visibility and physical accessibility of the *gali* to outsiders, it has many of the domestic qualities of the *angan* or courtyard. Similar domestic tasks are carried out here, and its semi-domesticity is marked in gender appropriate deportment, dress and mobility in this semi-domestic space.

Working men return home to dispense of formal 'outside' shirt and trousers, re-emerging into the *gali* clad in informal *lunghi* and vest (*baniyan*). Vice versa, leaving the semi-privacy of the *gali* to visit friends, for work or an appointment, they will dress, filling chest shirt pocket with cash, pens and, perhaps, a hair comb. In the *gali*, women who wear a *salwar kamez* (loose tunic and trousers) may entirely dispense with the *dupatta* (long scarf worn over chest and shoulders) for the rigours of housework, or it may be tied across the chest and round the body so as not to trail into the task at hand. But when the wearer leaves the *gali*, this is then pulled back into place or the *pallu* (sari end) may be adjusted over the wearer's head, marking the movement from semi-domestic into the fully public space of the street (*sarak*). This adjustment of clothing can serve to quite precisely demarcate the beginning and end of the semi-domestic space of the *gali* and was clearly demonstrated one day when Bilkiss, a Muslim woman in her 40s, got up from a long conversation to take some grain to the ration shop's mill for grinding to flour. The conversation in her *gali* had been interrupted by several handcart vendors, a number of friends passing by and the hire-purchase man collecting rent. During this her *dupatta* had only been loosely draped over the back of her head. It was only on the threshold of the main street that she paused, hefting the sack better onto her shoulder, to closely wrap the scarf round her head and chin.

The domestic nature of the *gali* also applies to men, whose relations are also shaped by their kinship relations as sons, husbands or fathers[99]. In the evenings, after work it is an

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[98] One solution to this was that of a Brahmin dominated *gali*, who had installed gates at each end of the lane, to regulate admission to the lane. Here good social relations particularly based on caste and shared region, between neighbours had allowed a collection to be made (see picture).

[99] This makes *galis* uncomfortable places for young, single male migrant workers who rent rooms in Punarvaspur, as without kin relations in the *gali*, they are somewhat out of place. Typically working very long hours, those I spoke to preferred to spend what time off they had with workmates elsewhere in the city.

appropriate place for discussions with neighbours over tea and for fathers to sit outside, and dandle small children. But in the daytime, especially in the afternoon when most women have finished their housework, the *gali* is a distinctly feminine space, and no place to be as an un- or underemployed man, and certainly not for gambling, card-schools or drinking. Where there are good relations between neighbours of similar ages and status, the informality of the domestic sphere may expand into the *gali* include informal terms of address, perhaps a gentle teasing and humour, sometimes across ages and sexes, and even between neighbours on occasion. Residents with these kinds of neighbourly relations described this as 'sitting leisurely' (*araam se*) and their *gali* as 'peaceful' (*shanti*). Such sitting together produced a sense of leisure, 'time-pass' and of shared time.

The exact borders between inside/outside, house/*gali*/*sarak*, domestic and public are what Daniel describes as 'person-centric' (1984, 70). That is their location is defined shiftingly, dependent on the specific context of the actors for their exact position. This is particularly evident in the mobility and dress of women, where the acceptability of mobility varies with age, marital status and motherhood (Donner 2006, 149). Furthermore, attention to the "the divided nature of houses, and the gendered nature of space." (Gorringe 2006: 53) highlights the lack of overlap there may be between the boundaries of inside and outside of a house in the conventional sense, and as they are marked by gendered spatial practices, particularly of veiling.

Yet newly married young women in traditional Hindu households in Punarvaspur are still often restricted to the house itself. In particularly kin relations are marked inside the house itself through veiling ('*ghunghut*') by pulling the *pallu* end of their sari over their faces in the presence of older male affines. This has the effect of individually portioning the relational space between two individuals inside homes too small to segregate physically. By extending this behaviour into the semi-domestic space of the *gali* the space of the house could also be expanded. The wearing of *ghunghat* by junior daughters-in-law (*bahu*) was not always enforced in the *gali* in the presence of female affines and friends. This, despite the fact that the *gali* is perfectly visible from the highly public streets at either end, with neither physical nor visual restrictions on access.

As the fabric and feel of the neighbourhood has improved over time, with increased physical security and impermanent *kaccha* homes and drains made *pakka* in concrete, the restraint on women and children's mobility has become less strict in many households. Aarti and Bimla, two Yadav women, now in their 50s, recalled their arrival in Punarvaspur in the early days of the colony, as young newly married *bahu*s

(daughters-in-law). Both of them remembered a stricter approach to veiling as young women, and how their mothers-in-law (*sas*) had confined them to the house, such was the reputed dangerousness of the *mahaul* and lack of security. "There were Gujjars[100] and *goonda*s roaming around", Aarti recalled, "it was frightening 'to go outside' into the *jangal* [to the toilet] in the morning". Bimla agreed: "Now the area has come up [developed], the *mahaul* is better; most people have their own [piped] water connection" They teased the young *bahu* (daughter-in-law) of the house opposite who had been silently observing the conversation, her son on her lap, agreeing that she would never have been allowed the liberty to sit outside in their time.

The movements of unmarried girls in their teens are particularly closely watched, with some confined to the house and most to the lane. As was the case for some daughters-in-law, the boundaries of 'public' and 'private' were sometimes pushed further back into the house space, so that young girls were sometimes despatched upstairs, or into the back room of the house at the arrival of visitors. In the public space of the streets (*sarak*) young women faced the risk of harassment by boys. More seriously they risked getting a bad reputation for unsupervised mixing with others in the 'bad environment' of the public spaces of the neighbourhood. Witnessing a shouting match break out one day in a B block *gali* between two mothers of teenage children, it emerged that the son of one, stood accused of standing at the end of the lane making lewd comments about the other woman's daughters as they passed out of the *gali* to go to a sewing class. The son's mother denied his actions and asserted that the responsibility lay with the other women's daughters, "if they roam around the streets, then what do they expect?" The argument hinged around whether the girls and the boy had been in the lane or the street, and the appropriateness of behaviour by each there. I had been talking to an older Rajput man at the time, as he prepared to his handcart for Punarvaspur's weekly market (*haat*). His reaction was to express his frustrations with his neighbours and the colony, linking both physical space and the *mahaul*. "The problem is that resettlement colonies are like this – there are many fights. It is cramped (*tang*) and the *mahaul* is here not good, so children learn bad habits about how to behave."

As spatial boundaries are expressed through gendered norms, Donner notes (2006, 150) it is not so much the existence of boundaries between 'public' and 'private' as appropriateness of a person's movement, as a working man, a young unmarried woman etc., through and across them. This is policed by a 'community of neighbours' (Donner 2006, 153) or even an extended family of fictive kin. Asking another group of young women, similar those who had been harassed by the boy described above,

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[100] Dominant herding caste in surrounding villages on the eastern side of Delhi with a reputation for strong arm tactics.

whether they faced similar problems in their *gali*, the reaction was generally no, "Here [in the lane] everyone is an aunty or an uncle." Similarly, I was often told, sometimes weeks later, whom I had been observed talking to and where. This was usually accompanied by the advice to avoid doing so, as the people in question were invariably classed as 'not good people', being untrustworthy, having bad habits and the area or lane, as having a bad *mahaul*. Thus, rather than simply a status-based withdrawal from public into private space as Dickey (2000a; b) suggests, mobility and agency in space is also maintained and managed through Vera Sanso's phrase, 'What the neighbours say' (1994). In this way movement and interaction in the public space is regulated and controlled through surveillance, gossip, and the oral policing of boundaries of respectability.

The above examples illustrate the careful and graduated degrees by which the boundaries of inside and outside are variably located and marked. Many of the practices discussed above, chime with those described in middle class Indian settings (e.g. Donner 2006; Frøystad 2005), yet Punarvaspur is far from middle class. So while in monetary terms, residents may share some similarity of income (compared to privately developed colony residents), in terms of spatial and boundary-drawing practices, many also attempt to differentiate relations of caste through articulations of class and status, often with reference to the bio-moral effect of the *mahaul*. These articulations of class, status and caste may take in variations of 'region'[101] and religion, as well as gender.

Caste, class and difference in the *mahaul*
The link between purity, gendered seclusion and the interiority of domestic space has been described in a number of middle class Indian settings[102], where allocations of space are more generous and populations often more homogenous. Sara Dickey (2000a) considers the operation of these boundaries in a smaller, domestic space in her work on relationships between upper/middle class employers and their domestic workers in Madurai, South India. She shows how ideas of class (relatively higher/lower) run parallel with caste (relative purity/pollution) and privacy/public-

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[101] Region reflects better the way in which residents themselves articulate regional identity and difference; as ''UP-wale", 'Bihari', or 'Madrasi' referring to South Indians (whether from 'Madras', or not). Under regional identities, religious, national and sometimes moral identity can also be glossed as in the case of 'Bengalis' assumed in Punarvaspur, as in the press and city generally, to mean Bangladeshi, Muslim and 'illegal' immigrant, regardless of actual status.
[102] See Sylvia Vatuk's work in 1960s middle class Meerut (1972) as well as Sharma's work in Shimla (1986), Donner in Calcutta (2006, 148), Weiss in Pakistan (1998), or Frøystad 's in contemporary Kanpur (2005, 64) for further accounts of the graduated public/private-ness of interior house-space.

ness to create contextually graduated boundaries of increasing purity with interiority, across the spaces of both employers and employees homes. She argues that the constant reiteration of these graduated boundaries "reveal an implicit but unexamined assumption that something logically prior to income or other assets makes people what they are. For higher-caste employers, this prior feature might be caste, but lower-caste employers conceptions of just what justifies their standing in a moral-economic class is less clear." (2000b, 53). Both sides frame these relationships in morality and imply a moral deficiency in the other to explain their attitudes and perceptions. "Moral differences provide one of the predominant vehicles for discussing class difference in south India, and not only in the realm of domestic service. These moral critiques cast a wide net; in addition to the criticisms narrated here, they can cover hygiene, sexuality, honesty, and consumption habits, among other qualities." (Dickey 2000b, 54). These topics are also encountered in discussions of the *mahaul*. Discourses about the *mahaul* often seem to be discourses of moral difference, enforced by forms of surveillance, which assert the moral effect of the *mahaul* on people, for good or for bad.

Indeed, the people most concerned with the problem of mixing with others and frequent offer-ers of advice about who I should not talk to, were 'general caste'[103], north Indian, Hindi speakers. In doing so, they were making the point that they themselves were not 'SC', or more emphatically not Valmiki, nor 'Bengali'. Indeed, 'General' and 'Scheduled Caste' (colloquially '*SC*' or '*niche log*' (lower people)) was the main division of caste relations that people used, rarely being more specific. They were also often the most keen on education, as a means of improvement and concerned by its lack or poor quality in Punarvaspur, and with perhaps, the strongest 'middle class' aspirations in terms of the kind of school they wished to send their children to[104]. In this respect, it is tempting to consider whether when people look 'downwards' to people they consider lower than themselves, they see 'caste' in their relationships, while looking 'upwards', to see markers of symbolic capital, like education, so seeing 'class'.

While classical Marxist approaches relate class primarily to the means and mode of production, as Liechty (2003) shows, these quickly come to be modified by 'cultural' considerations of status and value in social life. But while 'taste' and consumption as

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[103] The exceptions would be a few Brahmin residents who self-identified themselves as such, and who were sometimes also identified by neighbours adding "*pandit-ji/pandit-eiyn*" (m/f) as a respectful form of address to a Brahmin.

[104] Education was a common cross-caste and class concern, particularly that 'teachers don't teach' in government schools. It was parents most keen to differentiate themselves from others in terms of status, who were most enthusiastic about what else private, English medium schools could offer.

practices in the production of status have come to be one of the main ways in which 'middle class-ness' has been approached in South Asia (Varma 1999; Liechty 2003; Mazzarella 2003[105]), the constrained circumstances of Punarvaspur reiterate the importance of a wider range of practices for emphasising contrast and difference between people in the expression of class, and other forms of identity. With limited access to desired forms of consumption, it may be easier to articulate ones' position in terms of respectability, as a particular kind of person in relation to other people in the bio-moral sphere of the *mahaul*.

In particular, Liechty (2003) shows, understandings of class[106], like caste, are strongly relational. Liechty portrays middle class Nepali society, as caught up in a number of internally competing cultural strategies, for status, prestige and other non-economic forms of capital, so that "middle class [is] constructed in opposition to its class others – above and below" (2003, 15). Likewise in Punarvaspur, practices, movement, and comments made about the *mahaul* by residents, serve to produce relative difference between a person and those they refer to. In this way categories of identity are constructed and contested through each other (Fernandes 1997, 160), so that class is lived and experienced through gender, caste, and vice versa (Fernandes 1997, 5), even as their production, as different and in hierarchy with others are important to their expression.

Frøystad (2005) shows how in the space of the street, urbanites are forced to make quick, rough assessments through 'prototypical' social categories ('poor', 'good', 'low', 'hi-fi' people) (Frøystad 2005, 116) about the kinds of people that surround them. On this basis of this, they can ascertain the kinds of social relations they wish to have with them and can act accordingly. For residents of Punarvaspur, where visual clues (dress, location and type of house) are less varied, one crucial element of this 'public space' is the *mahaul*. The association of a person with the *mahaul* of a particular locale, functions as a 'prototypical category', making it possible to locate other people in relation to it, and so gauge their respectability and values. In ascertaining a person's location in the *mahaul*, social boundaries may be discerned and maintained.

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[105] Fernandes argues that consumption practices are the outcome of "subjective and objective dimensions of group formation. This structural dimension to the mechanism of group formation has been neglected by recent research, which has reduced practices such as consumption to purely subjective or symbolic processes." (2006, xxxi)

[106] See also Wilkes (1990) and Bourdieu (1984)

Talking about caste, caste and living in the same *mahaul*

> "It's people who make a place, if there are good people, the place is good, if the people are not good, the place is not good."

<div align="right">Durga.</div>

The degree of informality and interaction residents have with each other much depends on the kinds of relations with neighbours. Close family or kin relations, shared village and even region may allow easier relations; a shared background allowing for surer judgements about the kind of people they are. It is this lack of knowledge about one's neighbours – or indeed unease about what you do know of them – which is one source of anxiety about the *mahaul* in the close living space of a *gali*, and of living in somewhere like Punarvaspur. The combination of these anxieties and her place within them are well illustrated by Saroj's account.

Saroj is a Rajput woman in her late 50s who joined her husband in Delhi from her *sasural* (parents-in-law's home) from a village near Loni, on the outskirts of East Delhi, in UP. They had never lived at Power House she emphasised, but her husband had lived in Laxmi Nagar and Shakapur before he bought the house in Punarvaspur from distant relatives, "my own *jaat* (caste)" she concludes firmly. Both Laxmi Nagar and Shakapur are areas in East Delhi, which while not 'hi-fi' areas, are privately developed neighbourhoods, and would today be considered more middle class than Punarvaspur. As a resettlement colony, it is composed of ex-*jhuggi* dwellers[107] and retaining a perennial association with poverty. As a result, even though this was a move from renting to owning a house, she was not happy when she arrived. Her father, she explains, had worked in a magistrates court and her family had lived in Kishenganj, until he retired. This was a much older area of the city, west of Old Delhi and Sabzi Mandi. "There it was clean and peaceful, people came and brought [i.e. sold] milk and vegetables. This is what I thought Delhi was like. When I came here I cried, I said what is this Delhi you have bought me to where the houses are so tight (*tang* i.e. squashed)? I had seen a different Delhi," She talks briefly about her son's small electrical shop she is minding at a distance from her vantage point on Middle Street, but returns to her theme. "I had thought Delhi was like that, a good *mahaul*, educated people, our people."

We are joined by Saroj's sister who came to Punarvaspur later, and conversation slides to talking about marriages. "We get our girls married where there is land and the city" she comments, referring to land (*zameen*) as assets and city (*shehr*) to refer to a job there.

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[107] As ex-*jhuggi* dwellers the neighbourhood is negatively associated with poverty and illegality as ex-'encroachers' on public land, and as a site in need of development. Consequently, upward class mobility while a resident is difficult.

> "People in Punarvaspur don't make good relations. People here are mixed – I don't know who you are – if you say you are a Brahmin, I have to believe you…Here we are all from different states and places, we are not related here, we are all from villages."

So, Saroj explains, *rishtedari*, making relationships, particularly arranging marriages, doesn't happen here in Punarvaspur. Instead, families here look back in their village for spouses for their children. "That is how people here are," she gestures to the gathering pace of the evening's rush to the market. For her, her sister and a neighbour from her *gali* who has joined us (who stays uncharacteristically quiet in this exchange), the problem of what people are like in Punarvaspur is evidenced by people's children who run around in and out of the *gali*, that people chew *paan* and spit it, and that they leave rubbish in piles down the street. Saroj continues that "They are small, small houses here, so everyone comes and sits outside, some people they even eat outside. We do not do this…People, they even call Punarvaspur, *Kachera*-pur[108] because there are this many people here." The village, according to Saroj, was better in this respect, because the other castes, '*bhangis aur chamars*'[109] lived separately. "We never had to eat from their hands, they did everything in their own place, but here places are all mixed up."

The main stress in Saroj's account is of difference, particularly between themselves and others in the neighbourhood, particularly in terms of caste. In the last sentence, she and her sister emphasise their desire for separateness in their use of caste terms (as slurs) and in their desire for traditional village inter-caste segregation of interaction and layout. Consequently, her and her sister's biggest concerns, is of mixing and of unavoidable interactions with others in Punarvaspur and the lack of ability to order relationships in the space of the *gali*. The uncertainty in knowing who people are – versus who they say they are, make it difficult for Saroj and her sister to manage their relationships in terms of purity, pollution and caste in Punarvaspur. They discuss the spitting of *paan*, throwing of rubbish and assert with disgust that some people even eat outside (i.e. in full exposure to the *mahaul*, going down with their food). Examples of 'polluting' behaviour is a common tactic used in Punarvaspur to link places and by strong inference, the kinds of people there. Commonly people refer to meat eating and liquor drinking and other kinds of behaviour, which in public threaten to pollute not only themselves, but other users of the public space as well. In this respect, the consumption of such troublesome substances, come to stand as déclassé idioms of a

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[108] *Kachera* – rubbish.

[109] Like many general caste people, Saroj, with a particular point to make, uses traditional caste names, where in more public contexts, they might use the adopted references of 'Valmiki' and 'Jatav' to refer to them.

kind of reverse 'Sanskritisation', undermining the bio-moral status not just of themselves, but of the neighbourhood in general.

Saroj, her sister and other residents place themselves in the account in terms of caste and status. Although her plot was bought from some one of 'our own *jaat* [caste]', the shock and affront in Saroj's description of arriving in Punarvaspur, it was evidently, by her description, a step down from where she had considered herself previously, or perhaps where she wanted to place herself in her account as talking to an outsider. Her talk about Kishenganj appears here both as a claim of origins in a better *mahaul*, perhaps making her a 'better', 'moral' kind of person than others present, and a kind of distancing move, to inform how I should read and understand her, and her status in relation to the neighbourhood.

Saroj is unusually blunt referring to castes by direct name, perhaps reflecting her disdain for the locale. However, in the rest of her account, as in usual public discourse in Punarvaspur "Ideas of caste hierarchy, like notions of ethnic hierarchy are excluded from legitimate public discourse, coded with special reference to social and economic capabilities, and expressed in the organisation of space" (Jeffrey 2001, 232), in a manner similar to discussions of race elsewhere. This form of positioning others through the moral idiom of the *mahaul,* codes for not talking about 'caste' and 'class' explicitly, but instead invoking spatial differences but also social, economic and moral capacities. Discussed through the language of the *mahaul,* this offers further evidence of the interweaving of categories of classification, and explanation through each other that Fernandes (1997,160) describes.

Saroj bolsters her own claims of relative class status through reference to her background (that her father worked in the magistrates courts, the kind of place they lived), while also deploying reference to caste difference in relation to others, even as she is unable to maintain segregation. Kishenganj comes to stand as a kind of foil to Punarvaspur of what a good middle class *mahaul* is like, linking occupation, education and a more middle class style of consumption, with goods were brought to the door.

It is very much a narrative of downward mobility. Emphasising their own lowered status, they point up their own 'better' origins, and in doing so employ through the idiom of the *mahaul,* many of the markers of 'distinction' (or the lack of) that Frøystad's (2005) middle class, upper caste informants use in order to draw boundaries between themselves and others. In contrast to others in the city, for whom the resettlement colony is a step on the ladder, into property owning, and in some cases moving into

the city, for Saroj and her sister, their narration is of downward mobility and a gradual peripheralisation.

Although Saroj has lived in Punarvaspur for at least the last ten years, she is keen to emphasise that she and her husband had not come from Power House, and so are not part of the original resettlement. Instead she draws a line between herself as someone who has purchased a house later and the mix of people settled in Punarvaspur, from *jhuggies*. This is the reverse of the 'narratives of emplacement' employed by some residents in the previous chapter, where stories of the resettlement served to legitimise their residence.

Saroj illustrates the flipside of this assertion where the resettlement is implicated in many discussions of the *mahaul* in Punarvaspur, both by residents themselves, or in perceptions of the place by others outside of the colony (particularly the police, potential employers, school principals etc.). Here the neighbourhood, as the product of 'slum clearance' is linked to *jhuggi*-dwellers to mean grime, hard grind and illegality. As De Neve (2006, 27) also argues of South Indian Vanniyars, these associations of people's negative characteristics serve to constitute a place and the general identities of people within it – regardless of people's actual identities there or characteristics. Indeed, asking why the *jhuggies* at Power House had been demolished, I was told by a number of people that the government did not like the sight of them, "*Gandegi nahi chamakaagi*" ("Dirt won't shine"). Illegality by dint of 'encroachment', particularly in the eyes of the state and upper classes[110], but more often of liquor, looting and prostitution, were accusations that were readily made of the residents of the surrounding *jhuggi* areas at Punarvaspur itself, and are widely available in the press and media[111].

Amidst the energy and efforts in the accounts above to infer distance and status in the disquietingly mixed up *mahaul* of Punarvaspur, there is the almost silent presence of one of Saroj's neighbours. A thin, elderly, but as I come to know her better, intense and energetic woman with a strong personality, she joins us on the end of Saroj's charpoy at the end of the lane, that we are all sitting on. As an older woman I know her mostly as 'Amma' or sometimes as 'Disco' ("People call me Disco - dancing is my *shauq*[112]"). Strikingly among my notes, here she is uncharacteristically silent here, and I am surprised on reflection that she comes and sits with us. Amma lives but five doors up

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[110] As noted in chapter 3, this image of the encroacher as criminal received an official courtroom validation in the now infamous *Almitra H. Patel vs Union of India (2000)* case.

[111] Such images and 'reputations' are also very similar to those in Victorian accounts of London 'rookeries' and 'slums'. E.g. Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (1985).

[112] *shauq* – 'fondness', pleasure, of an activity done for fun.

from Saroj, but with a household of nine adults spread over a double barely two storey plot. Although the plot is double, its unbuilt-up state is a testament to the lack of money in a household where none of the adults have permanent jobs. Life is extremely tight, and much of it spent in the space of the *gali*, the course of which Amma dominates. Yet Amma's presence in this conversation, if only as an observer is worth noting. Despite being a Muslim, (and hence a meat eater – if only the budget would permit), she is permitted to join the conversational group, is not excluded from the charpoy, nor do I think the tone of the conversation altered.

Amma's presence gives the lie to the fact that despite the 'Othering' rhetoric of Saroj's conversation, in order to live in the *gali*, relations with neighbours need still to be maintained. Despite Amma's well known poverty, many children and grandchildren and threadbare red *dupatta*, not to mention religion and meat-eating dietary habits, all of which might add to Saroj's negative representation of the *mahaul*, her presence in close proximity is tolerated, and not commented on at all. Neither does Amma dispute Saroj's account. Here then, the need to maintain social relations with neighbours in the enforcedly social space of the *gali* overcomes the misgivings that might be expected from the subject of the conversation[113]. Saroj can make her point, and Amma can satisfy her curiosity, neither threatening relations in the *gali*.

Education and being smart in a bad *mahaul*

For people like Gurminder, as well as asserting difference, the *mahaul* is also dynamic – it can be worked on and have a beneficial effect on people. In her 40s with school age children and a frequently absent truck driver husband, she is a resident of the 'DDA flats', and is sitting in her (Muslim) neighbour Khatun's ground floor room. DDA Flats were the only buildings constructed prior to occupation in Punarvaspur, sometime around the resettlement itself, and have a chequered history of having been 'captured' by their occupants. Nonetheless, tucked next to what has become Gulshan Extension, residents consider themselves separate from the rest of Punarvaspur, even as their access and services come from the same side.

Repeating that "DDA Flats is a 'developed' area," and "it is healthy and clean," Gurminder dominates the conversation. She talks about the personal cleanliness of houses and clothes, taking in Khatun's room which we are sitting in, "Your clothing

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[113] As Chakrabarti (2006) and Gorringe (2006) observe, while high population densities can strain relations over resource scarcity, exceptional events and great upheaval tend to be needed to bring people together, or produced complete cleavages. Indirectly, this was also recognised by some NGO workers I discussed 'community mobilisation' with, and by the few residents who mentioned the 1984 riots in Delhi after Indira Gandhi's assassination.

also matters, but many people don't bother." She gives the example of her tenant, who she says dresses very nicely, so much so, that until recently she didn't know the tenant was illiterate – "but her children don't even go to school". There is a murmur of assent and nodding, as if this is the give away as to what kind of people the tenant and her children really are. "In Punarvaspur, people in *jhuggi* areas don't wear fresh clothes everyday. There is greater want and people cannot improve their *mahaul*. We can't sit with each other." she says. Everyone talks at once; but conclude that "Here people can live better…educate their children" and so "people are smarter".

The 'good *mahaul'* appears as the 'peaceful', 'clean' neighbourhood in these accounts, but most importantly to Saroj and Gurminder, it is found in a place populated by 'business' and 'educated' people' and particularly made up of 'our people'.

Gurminder's inference that education can have a transformative effect on people in a particular *mahaul* is common. While people may have little education, being *anparh* or illiterate is a frequent slur in conversation, inferring being uncivilised, or 'unaware'; standing as an explanation for the state of the *mahaul*, is used to suggest that people in a place do not know any better. Here it is the give away, between Gurminder and her tenant. Although living in this 'better' area – and environment, and although, as Gurminder is at pains to remind me, she "dresses nicely", the tenant is still illiterate. By not sending her children to school as well, demonstrates to Gurminder, her failure to recognise the value of education and by implication, awareness, and self improvement.

The formative properties of study (*parhe-likhe*, literally reading-writing) can also be seen in Promilla's ditty, the epigraph to this chapter. A Valmiki woman in her 60s, our conversation (actually about her morning's work sweeping for the MCD), provided her a great opportunity to embarrass her lanky grandson in his teens, about giving up school in front of me (a research student). Without reading and writing, she declared, he would never become a '*nawab'*, inferring literacy bred cultured-ness or at least education and power, as a means to get anywhere. Pleasing himself, he would simply become 'bad'.

Study also marks people as not being '*gaonvar'*. Literally meaning 'villagers', in practice it means 'country bumpkin', being 'uncivilised', uncouth, not very bright; people who don't know how to behave. People sometimes commented positively that the Punarvaspur had the same 'atmosphere' or *mahaul* as a village, in terms of

sociability[114], but negatively in terms of space to move and create distance in. Education can make people 'smarter', and more aware (*jagrook*), less likely to be taken in, and more able to deal with the state (particularly ration shop owners, but also electricity meter readers, MCD workers etc.). This is a highly salient issue for some people. Being '*anparh*' (illiterate) makes you vulnerable to tricksters and apocryphal stories circulated about people tricked into to giving their rights and property away with a thumbprint (*anguti-chaap*) on papers. One woman (not from Punarvaspur) I met at a Right to Information *jansunwai* (public/people's hearing) giving evidence against fraud in the ration-shop system in Delhi, explained that when she had applied for her records from the government showing what subsidised sugar, grain and kerosene she was supposed to have bought, she found large (male-sized) thumbprints purporting to be hers on the account books. She was furious; not only had she not brought any grain that month, but "I always write my name!" For Rehmat, a shop assistant in his late-30s with a young family, the issue was more suspicious and more serious. "The government doesn't want us to do well; government teachers don't teach, the system doesn't work, so poor people can't come up." In Punarvaspur, to be educated is not only a matter of cultivated-ness, but more acutely to be 'aware' and more alert to the casual work of tricksters. For Rehmat and others, the poor provision of education, was nothing short of systematic discrimination against the poor – to prevent them from improving themselves, and their environment – in short, from 'coming up'.

Hence being educated may allow you to overcome the *mahaul* of the place and so move on up in the world, but it can also be the *mahaul* that holds you back, preventing you from taking control of your life. Amita, whose mother Lakshmi had gained her plot in F block in exchange for *nasbandi* (see Chapter 3), is married to a man some twenty years her senior, but it is a good match in the circumstances, being one of the few Hindu families in F block, let alone Brahmins. Her sisters are successfully married, and her husband runs a profitable wholesaling business supplying grocery shops in the Punarvaspur area. With the profit from the business, she and her husband have put down a deposit on a flat in neighbouring Gulshan Extension with some hope and relief. They hope to raise the rest with the sale of two built up plots in Punarvaspur (including her mothers) and a loan.

> "There [in Gulshan Extension] people's children study, and they are able to work – there is a good *mahaul*. Also population is less, and dirt is less also. We people [our family/caste] emphasise education. My son is in 7th standard, we want him to study further. But if this was a Muslim family, he'd be earning by now. The main problem is that they [the perceived majority in her block] are Bengali, not that they are Muslim."

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[114] I was often told that "in a 'hi-fi' colony, people wouldn't even talk to you", being too superior and too suspicious – in comparison to Punarvaspur.

Aside from being easily maligned, the 'Bengali' population is usually understood as being the poorest in the locality, and it is this Anita is referring to. The *mahaul* of F block is often said to be the worst in Punarvaspur, owing to the concentration of the polluting *kabari* industry there and Bengali population. For this reason, although Anita's children all go to a private school in a nearby respectable middle class colony, the *mahaul* is seen as threatening to hold them back. She has limited her children's movements to the space of the house, and described the stress of avoiding at all cost explaining to classmates where they live. With her eldest daughter coming up to marriageable age, she is looking forward to moving out of Punarvaspur, into the better neighbourhood of Gulshan Extension, where they can have people to visit.

Anita's comment that a 'Bengali' boy would be earning by now reflects different groups' perceptions of job prospects and the likely return on their investment in education in poorer households in Punarvaspur. Predominantly Muslim, E and F blocks have historically had few government jobs compared to the significant scheduled caste population in ABCD blocks. Even now in these blocks it is now very difficult for government jobs to be passed from father to son as they once previously were. To acquire similarly good jobs increasingly require schooling up to 12th standard, and a number of young men now in their 20s have now taken university B.Com degrees. This has meant a considerable outlay of time and money, but this investment has not always paid off, as qualifications are themselves insufficient to overcome the negative view of the *mahaul* the neighbourhood. Sanjeev has a B.Com degree and has, in the past, been employed as a surveyor for a number of NGOs, before his current job working at a petrol pump near Loni. As he says, this is something someone who had only studied up to 10th class could do. His mother is frustrated:

> "He has done that much studying – but for what benefit?! After graduation they won't take out a *thela* (handcart), they've studied so much they won't pull a *thela* anymore."

> Sanjeev: "We have to create job for ourselves, even pulling a *thela*"

It is a curious exchange, in which I suspect it is his mother who would rather he didn't take out the handcart. Sanjeev's friend, who also did a bachelors degree (and now privately tutors school children in Punarvaspur), tells me later that Sanjeev had wanted to set up a business, but had not been able to find the money from his family or any other source. He tells me that Sanjeev had applied and worked at many jobs, "but the problem is that there is no 'permanency'". Sanjeev himself says that even with qualifications and after sitting tests for jobs, applicants from Punarvaspur are discarded after the interview stage once their Punarvaspur address is noted. The colony's bad *mahaul* and association with criminality, throws into question their

trustworthiness and value as future employees. This demonstrates in practical terms, Bourdieu's argument about the difficulties of translating capital from one form to another (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 118). Neither of these young men are Dalits, but claim that it is the stigmatising effect of the *mahaul*, which prevents them from capitalising on a hard won education, even as they also recognised the structural constraints of lack of money, in a situation similar to Jeffrey et al. (2004).

Girls also study, although fewer, and often for different ends. In the eyes of more conservative parents, girls should know how to read and write so they can deal with household and school matters (cf. Sharma 1986). It is also seen as a kind of 'insurance' against the future. Should something happen to a husband or the family finances, they can respectably work at home, providing private tuition or similar work[115]. For this work they would not necessarily have to leave the house, further risking their reputation and respectability in the *mahaul* (see Vera-Sanso 2000). Most girls get to 8th standard at school, and a number to 10th and some to 12th. A small number of girls I met were thinking about taking a degree, although for three of them this was going to be a 'correspondence course' via IGNOU[116], reflecting their own and parents fears about having to travel across the city on their own. A couple of girls worked in offices elsewhere in Delhi, one for a Hindi call centre and a few others for different NGOs in the area. However, for the most part, unmarried girls have a different relationship of respectability with the *mahaul* of the *gali* and, the more dubious and public, *sarak*. Beyond the feminised, domesticated space of the *gali*, the much more masculine, public domain of the street is a place of men, labour and loafing, and girls risked not only their reputation, but also potential exposure to harassment, and it was feared, worse.

Valmikis, space and 'not being bothered by the *mahaul*'.

For Valmikis, what makes the neighbourhood a concern for some non-Valmiki residents, may offer them advantages. In comparison to the rest of the population, most Valmiki families are less concerned by the *mahaul*, or voice their concerns less stridently than general caste families. Issues of reputation and risk in public spaces, especially for girls, are still important to Valmikis, as is the increasing temporisation of the job market in Delhi, and near impossibility of getting a government job (for which I was always told "'connections' and money are essential"). But, for Valmikis, anxieties about the *mahaul* are rarely articulated. Well aware that many general caste people in Punarvaspur view the place negatively, as do people in the wider city, Punarvaspur offers a number of advantages to Valmiki families. Even those Valmiki families who do

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[115] Two of the women discussed in the following chapter had made their livelihoods in this way after their husbands had disappeared.

[116] IGNOU – Indira Gandhi National Open University, based in Delhi.

well for themselves, there seems less desire to move up and out of the neighbourhood, unlike similar general caste families.

Partly this is due to the particular characteristics of Punarvaspur. Resettlement colonies typically have a high proportion of SC people, who as often ex-landless labourers who migrated from rural areas into the city. Resettlement itself has also served to consolidate scattered *jhuggi* clusters into a larger colony with a higher density of SC people. In Punarvaspur a higher proportion of government jobs in DESU and sweeping jobs with MCD Sanitation Department ensured the stability of a regular income that, after the resettlement, daily wage labour could not. This helped sustain the SC population in particular in the neighbourhood's early days. While government jobs are no longer inheritable, the density of MCD sweepers (*safai karamchari*) means that any vacancy is quickly known about. Finally, Valmikis in Punarvaspur gained political visibility following the reservation of the constituency in 1993, with the creation of the Legislative Assembly. An assured Valmiki vote serves to ensure a safe seat for the MLA, despite being poorly regarded by most residents, regardless of caste, for doing insufficient work in the area. The MLA's office and status has allowed Valmikis much greater visibility and ease of living and working, than they might find in other neighbourhoods. So for many Valmiki, Punarvaspur offers some structural advantages not found elsewhere – partly due to a different relationship to the space of the neighbourhood and its *mahaul*.

A lack of squeamishness by Valmiki residents about the *mahaul* compared to 'general caste' residents partly manifests itself in the use of space. The lane running down the outside of the colony, between the bus depot and A block at each end, has house-plots only on one side. On the other side is a mixture of scrub, a government workshop site producing components for local brand of CD players (and it is rumoured, pirate VCDs for Delhi electronics markets), as well as a number of Community Toilet blocks in various states of disrepair. After the resettlement, the plots facing this edge of the colony were often abandoned in fear as people clustered towards the centre of the settlement in fear of '*loot-maar*' (armed robbery) and theft by marauding Gujjars. This lane is a good place to sit out to catch the possibility of a cooling afternoon breeze, away from heat radiating buildings, but also a good way to keep up with friends, relations and fellow caste members walking between the bus stand and A and B blocks. It is also a space known for being Valmiki dominated, and consequently less frequented by non-Valmikis.

Specifically, the sliver of land along the edge of the colony offers space to be built on and developed, safely obscured by the workshop and community toilets from the

casual view of officials. Here some Valmiki residents have erected a small shrine, or *chabutara*. In between them are a number of small rooms with flat asbestos roofs, built by residents living on the ends of adjacent *galis*. The shrines allow the space to be 'claimed' in a relatively 'invisible' way, as well as obscuring other buildings erected in the space. As religious objects, they are controversial to demolish, and tend to be avoided in demolition drives. Watching her son and friend fitting a doorframe to a new room built to share a wall with a shrine, Tarabai explained its site; "anyway, with *chabutara* there, it is easier to rebuild these rooms [if they have been demolished]"[117].

In this way, the (mostly) Valmiki community living along this side of the colony have managed to expand and extend their living space, providing extra room for storage of valuable items like motorbikes, space for keeping pigs and chickens, running small shops, but particularly rooms to let out on rent. As unofficial buildings, the rent is considerably less than for rooms in colony houses (approximately Rs150-250/month, rather than Rs5-700/month), but are valuable, offering a steady income without compromising the space of one's own house. For many non-Valmikis, keeping pigs exacerbates the pollution of this space, already compromised by its proximity to community toilets. This confirms their prejudices of pollution against 'SC people' and desire to avoid mixing with them. The added space and ability to make money from letting 'illegally' constructed rooms adds to a Valmiki reputation for 'smartness'[118]. From this perspective there are many good reasons for Valmikis to be less worried about the state of the *mahaul*, in a neighbourhood that offers sympathetic living space, as well as opportunities of space and income, in contrast to the majority of non-Valmikis, for whom their very presence is hazard. Indeed, for Valmikis, there is a certain pride in this, in the same way as in the following chapter, a small shrine built outside the Valmiki Ashram was also a good 'joke'; the space is there for the using, regardless of the *mahaul*.

Conclusion
The Valmiki indifference to the *mahaul* as a means to structure the space of the neighbourhood, serves as the exception to prove the rule, whereby the *mahaul* provides a symbolic medium within which to situate oneself in relation to others, particularly in terms of caste relations. The majority of this chapter has focused on the way in which residents have sought through 'spatial practices' to draw boundaries between themselves and others by reference to the bio-morally charged medium of the *mahaul*. In this way, the lived, experienced, symbolic 'representational space' of the

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[117] This strategy is also observed by Benjamin (1996, 244).
[118] *chalu* – 'smart' or 'sharp; in a negative sense.

neighbourhood is subtly shifted and negotiated, contrary to official spatial representations of Punarvaspur which make it difficult to express caste as the basis for social cleavage.

Following Parry's (1989) elaboration of the ethno-sociological work of Marriott (1991) and Daniel (1984) the *mahaul* can be seen as an ideological organising principle, through which non-Valmikis, particularly upper caste residents, have sought to order and organise their interactions with others. Looking at the neighbourhood around them, it is evident that many people see their relationships with others through the lens of relative purity, pollution and caste. This resonates with external assumptions about what people from resettlement colonies are like – based on their association with potentially polluting livelihoods, low caste, and alleged criminality. For general caste residents, allusion to Punarvaspur's *mahaul* is a means of articulating difference, without direct reference to caste. Valmikis, by contrast, are relatively indifferent to ideas about the *mahaul*, coming off worst in this ideological framework anyway by their association with polluting work, even if they are not actually sweepers. In fact as Scheduled Caste people they are relatively well positioned in this reserved constituency through job reservations and political affiliation to access class based goods of modernity and development.

Indeed, looking 'upwards' at themselves and their aspirations, Punarvaspur residents in general (Valmikis included) aspire to status through forms of symbolic and social capital like education and 'respectability'. Here, gender, mobility and respectability are key. A good *mahaul* and the greater space of a middle class colony presents greater scope to negotiate middle class, gendered notions of respectable behaviour, including the withdrawal of women from work and greater seclusion. Aspirations to these markers of symbolic and social capital make the maintenance of domestic boundaries and education particularly important in Punarvaspur. Education in particular offers the possibility of moving beyond the neighbourhood. But as Rehmat notes, a critical reading of the poor access to services in the colony, including education, can be seen as a way to hold people back. Furthermore, as Sanjeev's case shows, education itself may not be enough, without some economic capital, for the translation of a degree into economic value. In this way the state of the neighbourhood becomes not just an affective field, but a powerful semantic and political field as well, serving to discursively fix people into the dominant representations of space. It is that which I address in the next chapter.

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'MAHAUL': Part II:
Working on the space of the neighbourhood.

In the last chapter I examined the way in which different residents of Punarvaspur sought to negotiate the 'representational space' in which they live through 'spatial practices' in the terrain of the neighbourhood. Over the years the dominant 'representation of space', cut from state planners' blueprint has been both modified and entrenched by discourses around resettlement colonies. As a resettlement colony, Punarvaspur retains its official designation as a 'slum' and as such is the target of development interventions, both by the state, and by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This has layered further discursive representations of space onto earlier ones. At the same time, residents have drawn on the symbolic medium of the *mahaul* in an effort to negotiate similarities and differences of caste, class, religion and region between themselves and others. In doing so, they have adapted the dominant, ordered 'representation of space' in their everyday interactions. For upper caste residents in particular, the lived, experienced 'representational space' of the resettlement colony, is interwoven with anxieties about its mixed population in the semi-domestic space of the *gali*. As Massey observes, just as space is socially constructed, "the social is spatially constructed too" (1994, 254). Hence, boundary-making assertions of difference and respectability have become important spatial practices, in seeking to order and negotiate uncertain caste relations in the space of the neighbourhood. For others, particularly Valmikis, as low caste residents in a reserved constituency, a relatively secure identity and indifference to the *mahaul* of the neighbourhood has allowed them to potentially transform their localised cultural capital as the politically dominant caste in the neighbourhood into monetary capital more easily. This is whether building on the peripheral boundaries of the colony, or drawing on caste/*biraderi* networks to access jobs and opportunities.

In this chapter I look at the ways in which residents act on the *mahaul* of the neighbourhood to modify 'spatial representations' of the place. This is done by producing tangible markers of boundaries of difference, rather than verbal assertions as seen in the last chapter. Physical interventions to shift the original 'spatial representations' of the neighbourhood are also attempts to shape other people's 'spatial practices' around them, for example, in this chapter through shrine building. Examining the *mahaul* of Punarvaspur as a political field, I look at the ways people

articulate their identities and interests through formal and informal associations organising to work on the *mahaul* of the neighbourhood. Rather than looking at the way in which people's relationships to the *mahaul* of the neighbourhood organises social relations, I examine how people organise themselves around the *mahaul*, as one of the few political resources available around which most people can be mobilised and visible action taken.

The mahaul in a political field

The *mahaul* of the colony offers a powerful reservoir of meaning on which to draw. The previous chapter showed how, as part of a wider ideological framework (Daniel 1984; Parry 1989), it structures people's interactions with each other in it, while simultaneously being informed by ideas about 'development' and 'modernity'. This makes it a compelling concept to organise around. From this perspective, the *mahaul* might be considered as a medium through which the political field in the neighbourhood is articulated. In this way, the affective, symbolic dimension of the *mahaul* serves as a reservoir of political capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 119) through which the 'game', the competition for forms of political authority, is played out.

It is not surprising that people seek to act on the *mahaul* of the neighbourhood in some way. As the ethnography below illustrates, this may be to mark the fabric of the neighbourhood with symbols (from signboards to shrines) as a means of creating boundaries, changing people's behaviour or simply declaring one's presence. These actions can be seen as a means of improving the neighbourhood and may include asserting the inclusion, exclusion or affiliation of people in relation to the *mahaul*. It is a form of spatial politics that relies on the assertion of difference based on an essentialised notion of personhood in relation to place. "Preservationists of place…are in this sense, seeking to fix, to stabilise the identity of a particular place" (1994, 8) Doreen Massey notes. Likewise, the demarcation of an essentialised definition of place maybe used to stabilise and entrench an identity felt to be under threat.

Acting in the name of the neighbourhood and its *mahaul* may provide a basis from which to speak, represent, or make visible an interest, in relation to that *mahaul*. But boundary-marking is not the only spatial practice performed in relation to the *mahaul* of the neighbourhood. As a resettlement colony, Punarvaspur continues to be located, physically (on the periphery of Delhi), and conceptually within a constellation of governmental and policy definitions as a place in need of development. To work on the *mahaul* of the neighbourhood may also be as part of wider political project, or a pragmatic move to access the goods of development such as employment, improved

services, or perhaps to set up an organisation to access funds (although this seems rare). The *mahaul* offers formal political actors potential access to the development goods of the state (i.e. contracts through the area MLA's Local Area Development Fund) or other forms of formal political largesse and recognition. However, for many residents, the desire to improve the *mahaul* of the area is a realisation that work to improve the bio-moral status of the area, is to improve one's own status and relations with others, and hence, one's own reputation too. In this way working on the boundaries and meaning of space in the neighbourhood provides residents a site for the shaping of collective identities and gendered subjectivities but also a platform to speak from too (Vera-Sanso 2006, 182).

Making formal politics visible
Not all speeches from the platform need be verbal. Looking up while walking around Punarvaspur, many of the streetlights sport a curious decoration. Spelt out in clear, neat, red, sign-writer's script, painted onto the transparent bulb cover, is the name of the Municipal Councillor for the area. On some of them is the name of her more senior, powerful and better-funded fellow Congress member and cousin, the Delhi Assembly Legislator (MLA). Most of these lights, with covers intact, seem to be located along the back lane of the colony or in A block; both areas from which the Municipal Councillor and MLA they receive their main support. Likewise, at intervals along the side of Punarvaspur's informal *jhuggi* extensions are several large volume black plastic water tanks, each raised on a small brick plinth. Each has a tap at the bottom, and large white script informs the observer that they have been donated by the Legislator for the purpose of 'development' (*vikas*) in Punarvaspur. Yet neither these water tanks, nor the mobile toilets next to them (labelled "Partnership of Delhi Jal Board and Japan Bank for International Cooperation: Yamuna Action Plan Project" in English on the side), can be officially made permanent at the site. They cannot be plumbed into the water distribution or sanitation systems, as this will be tantamount to an official recognition of these *jhuggi* areas' existence by the Delhi government. Such a provision of services would either produce a legal requirement to remove the *jhuggies* as illegal, or an obligation to recognise them and supply their with adequate services. But, so named and claimed by an international donor, the Delhi Government or local politician, all these items stand as testament to the interests of their patrons in the 'development' of the neighbourhood.

This raises the question of what issues NGOs and politicians can work on and how the level of engagement is shaped. '*Mahaul*' is rendered into English as 'environment' by many NGO workers and reflects the level at which most 'development' or 'social work'

in Punarvaspur can be done. This reflects the level at which problems may be visibly recognised and made actionable. By reducing '*mahaul*' to physical environment (such as the need for better drainage), the problem can be made concrete, visible and recordable, unlike residents' other pressing needs for secure jobs and employment rights. So while the *mahaul* is a broad concept, only the material fraction of it is amenable to be worked on by NGOs and the state. Consequently, when NGO surveyors ask questions like "In this *gali* what is your biggest and smallest problem?"[119], respondents also generally understand that the expected answer is to be addressed to the relatively narrow vein of the *mahaul* as 'environment'. These problems thus become tractable problems that may be addressed by visible work and it is in this vein in which answers are expected, and are given.

Residents of the area have had a long exposure to the work of NGOs who have exhorted them to send their children to school, berated them for family size, or told them not to throw rubbish. But there is also an awareness by residents of the money available for programmes, and for some, NGOs are a source of employment as a fieldworker. For women 'fieldworkers' this is usually in education, health, and 'awareness-raising' of different kinds, while 'technical work' such as surveying and bookkeeping is undertaken by male fieldworkers. At the level of the *gali*, the experience of NGO fieldwork has propelled some Punarvaspur residents to create their own, often very small organisations.

Other organisations are also visible in the fabric of the colony, some with much older, and unexpected linkages between them. For instance, the much older Ram Lila Club[120] which pre-existed the colony, provided many of the members of the to the present day Residents' Welfare Association (RWA). Some associations are caste-based (e.g. Valmiki Ashram Association), while others are caste (Valmiki) dominated but not exclusive like the Ram Lila Club. Here membership and indeed performing the role is as much to do with money and demonstrable influence, besides performing skills. "From this [Club], we were 'known people' [*jaan pechaan*]" several members explained.

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[119] '*Is gali me, sabse bara aur sabse chhota samasya kya hai?*' Dual NGO PLA survey, 'Punarvaspur' May 2004. It is notable that the opening cry to the survey, to get people to gather round was "*Pani aur sewer samasya kya hai?! Aaie! Aaie!*" ('What are the water and sewer problems?! Please come! Please come!'), already frames the interests of the surveyors.
[120] The Ram Lila Club in Punarvaspur dates from before the resettlement when it was run by men living at Power House. Ram Lilas narrate the story of Ram and Sita, culminating in Sita's rescue from Lanka by Hanuman and Ram, and are performed over the nights of Navratri in the run up to Dushera, all over the city. Roles in Punarvaspur's Ram Lila Club were only partially allocated on acting skill, or (age) suitability for the role; local pre-eminence in the Valmiki Ashram seemed also to have been an important prerequisite.

At a more general, city-wide level, changing governmental structures and an ostensible move towards decentralisation have seen a huge expansion in associations. In particular the citywide rise of RWAs has opened up alternative spaces often for doing formal party politics 'informally' within the neighbourhood itself, and the possibility of representation on the wider city political scene. These organisations and their varying degrees of formality, are often linked by the nominal aim of doing 'development' or 'social work', often for the sake of the *mahaul* of the neighbourhood.

The following section places RWAs in the context of wider governmental trends and their links to formal politics in Delhi, by way of background to their relative positions in the political field of Punarvaspur. I move on to look in more detail at the workings of the political field as people seek to work on the *mahaul* of the place, and indirectly upon themselves and fellow residents.

Residents Welfare Associations and associational life in Delhi
Residents Welfare Associations (RWAs) fit easily into contemporary urban politics, producing webs of governance and influence, woven through interests and affiliations across Delhi. Although only latterly institutionalised, RWAs and grassroots politicians continue to perform many of the mediatory roles recognised by Philip Oldenburg (1976) in his account of 1960s Delhi grassroots politics, even as the structures of government described in his account have changed radically. While part of a wider contemporary shift in political practice in the city and globally towards decentralisation, RWAs' base in particular localities makes them subject to specific local political forces in their own right, as in Punarvaspur.

RWAs have become particularly prominent through their recruitment and formalisation under Chief Minister of Delhi Sheila Dixit's Bhagidari ('participation'/ 'partnership') scheme. While targeting middle class interests and neighbourhoods the Bhagidari programme sought to promote 'participatory governance' by recruiting 'civil society' organisations such as residents' organisations and market traders associations. Ostensibly non-party political groupings, they are purported to be less 'interested' or corrupt than political representatives and have become popular vehicles for the representation of middle class interests to the state (Chakrabarti 2008; Srivastava 2009), and have been partly credited with Dixit's re-election in 2003 and 2008. RWAs have been popular for opening up a space for 'non-political' voices, creating a tangible and influential space for middle class politics. As such the Bhagidari scheme has also been criticised for promoting anti-poor aspects of middle class interests (Chakrabarti 2008, 102), for shifting regulatory work away from the bureaucracy onto the citizenry

(Harriss 2005, 3), as well as for being toothless in taking on vested interests. Clubbed together with the personal interest and concern invested in it by the Chief Minister, the Bhagidari scheme, has become a significant middle class power base in the city's politics[121].

In Punarvaspur by comparison, organising and the representation of the locale and the problem of its *mahaul* to the state has always been political, usually party political. Political connections were vital to Punarvaspur's residents, even before it was settled. Prior to the resettlement and in its aftermath, it was the local leaders, *pradhan*s, 'big men' (*bare admi*), or the 'known persons' (*jaan pechaan*) of the colony through whom information about the shift was relayed through political connections to the state. They were 'known', 'recognised' and therefore 'visible' in the colony, and importantly, had contacts with senior members of the Congress party allowing them to represent residents' interests and the situation of the colony in its early days to the party and the state. Mostly still remembered by name, they were of senior age and status at the time, and are now, bar one, all dead. Nonetheless they are remembered by residents as being sources of contacts, and conduits for occasional largesse, but most importantly, as mediators.

With the creation of the Legislative Assembly at the start of the 1990s, the reorganisation of the Delhi Government changed the political landscape in the city and neighbourhood once more. For Punarvaspur the effect was considerable, becoming designated as a reserved constituency, meaning that its 'general caste' former leaders could no longer stand for formal office. This left the few remaining 'big men' with little inclination to act, or any associated authority. With the boot now on the other foot, it was the 'ex-Untouchable', 'Scheduled Caste' Valmiki community who were now able to 'do politics', and access its resources. Represented by the Valmiki MLA, residents must go through him 'to get things done', whether gaining school admission for children, ration card alterations etc. It also saw the emergence of a second RWA in the neighbourhood, such was the reluctance of the older power base to affiliate with the new SC grouping. The RWA closest to the MLA is most closely associated with the Valmiki community and contemporary Congress party, with the other RWA which split away, offering a less visible and less influential space for doing politics.

In contrast to Bhagidari's official portrayal as a suitably 'clean' form of 'non-political' representation through 'participation' (so, appealing to middle class involvement), in Punarvaspur, it is the RWA's very political nature that gives it its usefulness. The Chief

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[121] While the specifics of the political setting are different, the underlying politics of lifestyle are similar to those outlined by Fernandes of the 'new Indian middle classes in Mumbai (2006).

Minister's patronage of the Bhagidari scheme makes it desirable for the Punarvaspur RWA to situate itself as a willing participant in the programme, claiming its authority. This is evident, when I sat in a room in the RWA president's house, evidently set aside for RWA work, the walls covered with Congress party posters and memorabilia[122]. Here I was talked through a bulging photo album from an official Bhagidari training session at a central Delhi conference centre, with serious, formal photographs of RWA members with Sheila Dixit enlarged and pasted pride of place at the front. While in middle class colonies the Bhagidari programme's emphasis on being non-political offers RWAs a form of (apparently) non-partisan authority, in Punarvaspur it is the reverse. It is the close association with the Chief Minister that the Bhagidari scheme offers, that infers potentially beneficial connections – and hence also authority.

Externally founded and funded non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are also significant in Punarvaspur, running field offices and providing services to residents. Here Punarvaspur's identity as a slum clearance neighbourhood continues to structure the NGO-neighbourhood relationship between a central Delhi 'head office' and peripheral 'field offices', mediated by funding and markers of 'class', 'poverty' and difference. The ill-effects of the neighbourhood 'environment' on health and education inspire much work by external NGOs, perhaps also motivated by un-stated associations of the *mahaul* with dirt, caste, and class. Perhaps for this reason, fieldworker-residents recruited from the neighbourhood in which they work, unlike residents setting up their own groups, tend to see work for external NGOs as means to work (for money) rather than to work on the *mahaul*. Hence, while there are some of the benefits of working on the neighbourhood in terms of local visibility and contacts, the bottom line is that such work is a job.

Mimetic authority?

There are also smaller informal organisations that have been formed in Punarvaspur over the years to work on issues around the *mahaul*, although by contrast to external NGOs, their activities have been limited. Most are male friendship groups linked by area of residence, broad caste affiliation (general or scheduled caste) and age, (but not usually kinship). Developing from informal groups of friends that regularly congregated at the ends of *gali*s to drink tea and put the world to rights, some have self-consciously constituted themselves as an organisation with office bearers, business cards and a committee. Formed in reaction to the mainstream political and NGO scene

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[122] An end of terrace house allowed easy access via a separate entrance to this ground floor RWA room. Decked out with Congress calendars, posters and mechanical clocks of 'Madam' (Sonia Gandhi) waving the seconds past, this room represented a substantial investment in the space, and in terms of commercial space eschewed.

in Punarvaspur they are small scale and few in number, but curious for their striking imitation of larger organisations.

One of the small home grown 'organisation(s)' (*sanstha*) I was introduced to was made up of Arif and his two friends. Now in his early 40s, Arif came to Power House a child, but his father's persistent ill health made getting an education difficult as he frequently had to take his father's handcart out selling bangles. This is a matter of regret, and he is keen that his children get as much of an education as possible. Today he runs a small shop selling tube lights, electrical items, and repairing element heaters and fans, as well as running a sideline in *kabari* collection. His describes himself as 'Lenin-wadi'[123] (rather than Congress), but as a Muslim (i.e. non-Valmiki) there is little room for him in neighbourhood politics. Despite this he is a keen observer, not just of local politics, but also from the vantage point of his shop, of all other life and conversations seen passing by.

His group is made of up himself and his friends Prakash and Om, who are lawyers. All three now find themselves in middle age with growing children and are concerned about the *mahaul* of the area. They had long met as friends for tea and 'time pass', discussing 'the problems of Punarvaspur', particularly the lack of teacher attendance at the local government school, the expense of private schools and difficulty of getting children admitted and were also concerned about the charges made for getting a personal water connection. Agreeing on the 'wrong' work of the MLA, one day they decided they should form a group themselves.

This is only a recent decision, and the organisation wasn't registered yet owing to the amount of paperwork required. At the moment, they didn't yet consider this necessary, as they didn't want to handle money. They had decided that they wanted to work for 'awareness' (*jagrook*) in the neighbourhood, that "people should know what their rights are". Arif's interest in 'social work' and NGOs stemmed from his memories of Mobile Crèches[124] as a child. He credited the NGO with helping him through school

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[123] i.e. Communist.

[124] Mobile Crèches: an NGO originally set up to provide childcare to labourers working on the construction of offices around ITO, near Rajghat and Power House, including many later Punarvaspur residents. Links between it's founder and Indira Gandhi (who can be seen in photographs visiting crèches) benefited the organisation, as notably it is the only organisation to have plots marked for it on the plans of Punarvaspur at the time of resettlement, suggesting, even during the Emergency, some kind of agreement between planners and NGO; when the *jhugghies* along the Yamuna were demolished in 1976, the Mobile Crèches also followed residents to a number of resettlement colonies, operating out of tents until *pakka* buildings were constructed.

and getting him a training in electrical repairs as his father slowly succumbed to the long and expensive stomach illness for which he had first come to Delhi fifty years ago.

"There are common problems in the neighbourhood, so there should also be common solutions" Prakash argued. He had been nominated to speak on behalf of the group because of his experience of speaking to all kinds of people in his work as a lawyer. He described the group as being *samajwadi* (i.e. socialist), but explained that they weren't part of the Samajwadi party, "because in Delhi no one can stand successfully from this party.' This designation allowed them to represent themselves as different to the dominant Congress party, where in a reserved constituency like Punarvaspur, and as Muslim and general caste men they are ineligible to stand for election. So while their tiny group stood aloof from the more obvious forum for such 'social work' of either of the RWAs, or as party workers, it gave them the forum to discuss their concerns about the neighbourhood through the idiom of doing 'social work', even if their practice is rather limited. When I went to say goodbye to Arif in his electrical shop at the end of my fieldwork, I asked him how the group was going. But like all the other times I had dropped by, between his customers buying tube lights or selling *kabari*, it seemed he and the others in the group had been too busy and although they knew the issues they want to work on, they had not yet organised anything.

Another group, apparently also organised to be an alternative to existing groups in Punarvaspur, is the creation of Kishanlal one afternoon; the group's constitution written out in an old exercise book in slightly uncertain strokes. Kishanlal himself is in his 60s, retired from working in one of the Delhi's big hotels, and now spends much of his time sitting on a *charpoy*, observing, addressing and catching up with the endless traffic of people walking up and down the back lane. It is an advantageous position, that affords him a precise and up-to-date knowledge of who is doing what, where and when, and what the news is. An engaging and garrulous character, conversing with the occasional MCD officer or RWA member alike as they pass by, he is also something of a 'known person' (*jaan pachan*). Yet, perhaps because of his volubility and ear for a good story, he also lacks of the authority of other 'known persons' in the neighbourhood. Like most of his neighbours he is a Valmiki, and rather sheepishly admitting to being the cousin of both the councillor and the MLA, claiming his connections on this basis. However, he stresses, he is not part of *that* RWA, meaning that while he speaks of Valmikis as 'our people', he is not part of the MLA connected RWA and its local Congress party orientated grouping.

His organisation will be called the 'Valmiki Vikas Parishad' (Valmiki Development Council), its purpose, he quotes from his exercise book "is for the all over development

of the Valmiki community" and as such it is to be a "four sided development" under the four headings of "social, religious, political and economic" ideals; this work to be carried out by the 'Valmiki Sena' with four different ranks. He explains that the ranks of the '*sena'* (army) will give its members a sense of progression; "all of the ranks are for making the Valmikis aware of this [the 4 ideals] through the Sena" adding "The ranks are for seniors and for progression." As this is explained the targets of his 'organisation' become clearer, as do the similarities with concerns of the other mostly general caste accounts above.

> "Men here [in Punarvaspur], and young men also, waste their time drinking and playing cards, gambling etc. and their language is not good, so that it is not that they earn less, but that their money goes on these things. The idea of an army, is that they'd look at these people and want to achieve, to be like them. That they should understand."
> "Should understand?", I ask.
> "Instead of young men wasting their time, they should do something useful," he replies.
> I further ask "Why only Valmikis?" (as he has said it will be)
> "Generally, it is only Valmikis who have these habits – they're rude with each other even," Hence he says he is targeting Valmikis.

When I see Kishanlal next time, I am told he is working out who the office bearers should be and they are working on getting the organisation registered, ("then we can handle money"). A month later I am called over, on my way to the bus depot one evening, to be shown by Kishanlal the printed up letterhead and logo (joined hands), "the hand of friendship" he adds with a characteristically disingenuous grin. At the same time, I am introduced to Rajpal, future president of the new organisation, who carefully and soberly lists his credentials as patron of other Valmiki based organisations in the area (ex-Valmiki Ashram Association secretary, 'representative' on committees of the nearby government hospital), implying his support of this organisation offers it links to other circuits of Valmiki influence in the area.

As Kishanlal sets out his plans for his group, he draws on a number of discourses available to him in the locale. He lists and reproduces formal structures and norms of NGOs, including office bearers and a constitution, which will be needed to give the group the appearance of status to make his, Rajpal's and the others in the group's position visible. He employs normative language of reform and 'proper' behaviour to depict young Valmiki men. The masculinities he outlines are consonant with both popular (and non-Valmiki) depictions of young men's travails in general (a lack of industriousness, a failure to try hard enough to find work), but seem to be a particular concern to Valmikis. His picture of troublesome young Valmiki masculinities, fits within a steady low level self-criticism and declaration of the need for Valmikis to work to 'come up' in society, within which this putative group appears to situate itself.

As such, for a certain number of Valmikis these narratives fitted into a wider public discourse of self-improvement and aspiration.

A few weeks later, as my period of fieldwork ends, the planning phase is still "going on", and holding office seems to have become primary to any actual activities. It seems that while this organisation is more officially organised than Arif's it is also destined to be mostly 'on paper'. But how should these rather 'papery' organisations be understood? As proto-NGOs, alternative political spaces, or simply as mimetic?

At first glance, Omar Kutty's experiences of Valmiki[125] organising in Delhi are very similar, although as Arif's and other groups arguably show, this tendency to 'papery-ness' and the importance of office bearers is not limited to Valmikis. In a phrase identical to that used by Kishanlal on another occasion, one of Kutty's informants comments,

> "The leader of this group frequently warned me not to waste time talking to most Balmiki and other Dalit leaders saying that 'everybody is the president of a *sangh*, a *kendra*, or a *dal*, but if they're all leaders, who are the followers?' So the problem with most Balmiki organizing, as far as this group was concerned, was that it was all form and no content, formality without any practical consequence." (Kutty 2006, no pagination).

Although Kutty's informant and Kishanlal address their question to Valmikis in particular, their question raises issues for small scale organising in general. Kutty describes the mass exchange of business cards at Delhi-wide Dalit events, each detailing the multiple offices individuals held, similar to the apparent importance of headed notepaper and a constitution in Punarvaspur. But to what purpose?

While these organisations were not going to become fully-fledged NGOs, they do seem to open up the potential at least of being alternative political spaces in a terrain where the dominant political setting precludes any chance of obtaining effective power. Should this be seen as a form of self-delusion, or 'false consciousness'? Woost disagrees, arguing that villagers in Sri Lanka who situated themselves as suitable recipients of irrigation, within the dominant, nationalist discourse, "are quite aware of the injustices thrust upon them by their involvement with development. In a real sense they are 'playing the game' of development in order to make it work to their advantage." (1994, 516). Rejecting also their behaviour as 'rational choice', he argues that "What has taken place is a powerful reorganisation of their [the villagers'] common sense – a reorganisation 'educated' by development discourse and practice." (ibid.)

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[125] also 'Balmiki'.

This makes it possible to see the actions of these Valmiki and non-Valmiki groups, as a genuine attempt to create a kind of 'visibility' for themselves in a small corner of this huge, diverse city. The issue of 'if everyone's a leader, who are the followers?' is important if assessing the 'genuineness' of such organising. Nevertheless, the readiness with which groups are formed, and disinclination to follow this formation up with action, seems more indicative of a desire for recognition, for the 'visibility' offered by office (as *pradhan* of whichever *sanstha*, *kendra*, or *parishad*), than as a 'failure' to be able to organise a following.

Certainly, as Ruud notes of West Bengal village organising, "Reputations are made in public" (2003, 189), and 'public-ness' of this kind requires visibility, in order for there to be recognition. Like Mines' Tamil 'big men' the production and enhancement of individuality is through extensive networks of relationships (1994, 31), or put more plainly, of 'visibility' in public spaces. Working on the *mahaul* of the neighbourhood, doing 'social work', or 'development', are all tasks that might be widely perceived in Punarvaspur to be necessary, and are relatively un-contentious. Hence an assertion of interest, marked out if necessary by headed notepaper, is a claim of intention to act on the *mahaul* in Punarvaspur, and for the goods such 'visibility' might offer you.

Papery as these organisations are, they still offer the potential for recognition – and incorporation into other circuits of influence in the city. Rajpal's contacts potentially offered Kishanlal access to other networks beyond the obvious Congress affiliated RWA or NGOs in Punarvaspur. Indeed, it is noticeable that Rajpal seems to be involved already in a number of organisations, perhaps suggesting that it is office-holding in the membership of organisations that counts in the production of networks of contacts. In this way, improving ones 'visibility' by dint of working on the '*mahaul*' of Punarvaspur, can be seen as different ways by members of these groups to reposition themselves within the political field of the neighbourhood. By creating their own organisation, by holding multiple offices across different groups and producing the facsimile of an organisation structure, visiting, and ID cards residents seek to play the 'game' of development and politics in the neighbourhood, by creating themselves a form of mimetic authority. Hence acting in the public space of the neighbourhood, even if only in very low level form, (reflecting lack of access to literal monetary and other forms of capital, as Bourdieu's (1992) outline of political fields suggests), is to be able to operate in the same mode as other more powerful, visible (and richer) kinds of organisations, who might even refer back to you one day. Or at least to be able to at least act for the improvement of the *mahaul*, even if in practice this is only very limited, from a position of (nominal) authority.

*Chabutara***s and less godly objectives**

Other ways of working on the *mahaul* of the neighbourhood include attempts to order the space of the neighbourhood to delineate the presence of different communities[126], including the 'capture' of land (with potential property value) and space (with semantic value). In Punarvaspur both are in short supply. As discussed in the previous chapter, bio-moral concerns about mixing and interactions expressed and experienced through the *mahaul*, mean space in Punarvaspur is a valuable resource, particularly in the political field to mark and manipulate social relations.

One of the ways this ordering has been done in Punarvaspur is through the building of small shrines, or *chabutara*s. Some are for personal use; others direct and delineate surrounding public spaces and how people use them. When linked to organisations like the RWA, to politics and caste, their visibility becomes more contentious. As Simpson (2006) Kaur (2005), Hansen (2001), Rao (2003), and others have shown, religious imagery, architecture, spectacle and sound is near ubiquitous in Indian public space. More to the point, it is also widely used to mark, delineate and emphasise the presence of different communities in an area. Such constructions effectively manipulate and modify the public space of the street, park, or even the pavement, to alter the public landscape of the area, creating a focal point in some cases for community self-representation and organising. In effect structuring the space, organisation around collecting funds for building and maintaining these shrines can be the starting point for more overtly political manoeuvres that may structure the terrain of interactions with far more effect (Gorringe 2005, 2006). Done successfully, shrine-building can firmly emplace the presence of a particular community into the terrain of the locale, and serve to delimit the presence, extent and boundaries of a particular community, as well as point out to others in the locale, its presence, and to infer what kinds of action that requires from them too.

In this next section of the chapter, I am interested in exploring how residents act with the spaces of the neighbourhood. Spaces are not 'blank' but are underpinned by remembered histories and assertions about the kinds of people residents, as a form of emplacement. To assert the presence of a community in a particular locale, is to make a statement not just about oneself, but about the interactions envisaged with others too, and to attempt to structure more formally the relationships with others both in physical space, and in conceptual fields.

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[126] In this case to mean groupings or affiliations made on the basis of caste, regional origin or religion.

Personal shrines

There are quite a number of *chabutaras* in Punarvaspur, as there are all over the public space of the city. Generally they are small arches, or inverted V-shapes, closed on one side and raised on a small dais, form a small niche. Most are personal, built by individual residents from scrap excess building materials, brick and plaster. Some are constructed out of a collection (*chanda*[127]) from neighbours, remaining small, while others grow in line with the ambitions of their builders.

Many *chabutara*[128] shrines are kept at a slight distance from a house, built wherever a fragment of space can be found, squeezed at the end of a lane, next to a blank wall, by a telegraph pole, or on some scrap land at the edge of the colony. These shrines are often for deities such as Sheetla Mata and Bhairon whose *mandir*s in the city (Gurgaon and near Pragati Maidan in central Delhi respectively) are popular sites for outings in neighbourhoods like Punarvaspur. Unlike household shrines, these deities are not popularly depicted, so these shrines do not contain images but simply a small *diya.* There is little spare room to build a shrine in a *gali* without impinging on neighbours, but as one person pointed out to me, these are also not the kind of deities one would want too close to the house either. *Chabutara* building can seem almost whimsical, built when there is some concrete and a couple of bricks spare, but their presence usually marks a lane with a predominantly Hindu population, from the same region, and relationships are good. One woman, Shakuntala, a Hindu in her early forties, had taken a small collection (*chanda*) from her female neighbours to support the building of hers. Dedicated to Sheetla Mata, because her children had had chickenpox[129], it was in the public space of the street (*sarak*), unattached to her house, but was viewed by her neighbours as being Shakuntala's, "after all, she does *puja* there". Constructed of seven small arches, the largest central one lit with a *diya*, it was roughly put up in brick, and over the course of several months, being plastered and whitewashed before *prasad* was offered to the central arch, and each of the arches being given a small red *tikka* at the apex. Latterly, the colony boundary wall behind the shrine was whitewashed as well and "Jai Sheetla Mata" written in shaky lettering on it. Personal shrines like these serve to individualise tiny bits of the public street; as Shakuntala puts it, it was something she had wanted to do, that she had felt good about doing (*man lagna*). Similarly low

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[127] *Chanda*: religious donations/collections made for a range of purposes; building/improving *mandir*s, holding events: *bhandara*s (community meals), *jagraan*s etc. There is often much innuendo about what happens to such money; whether, despite careful receipts issued in the name of the mandir committee or *jagraan* group the money ends up in the organisers pockets.

[128] The *chabutara* really refers to the small four (*char*) sided base they are on.

[129] Sheetla Mata is associated both smallpox and chickenpox.

key was one man's small Devi shrine on the corner of his plot, who summed up his satisfaction, "Here, I am the *pujari* [priest]."

Marking limits

However many Punarvaspur residents are also cynical about the 'real' purpose of building shrines. A small *chabutara* may grow over time to become a decorated brick-built *mandir*: from simple tiles adorned with marigolds, set into walls, to structures with roofs, and even one or two full-scale buildings with rooms. Such *mandirs* and *masjids* often come to mark the ability of certain groups, or charismatic people to command the authority to organise the construction of one (or at least to claim to have), as well as the authority to control that piece of space. Others operate in more pragmatic terms, to show the presence, or limits of a particular community.

In Punarvaspur, the divide between D block with its North Indian, predominantly Hindu population and E block, perceived by others as being 'all Bengali' (for which read Muslim and by inference illegal immigrant Bangladeshi), is drawn by market area between the two. As most people buy their vegetables daily from the market, the area becomes extremely crowded as the rush peaks at about 7pm. Yet even in the crush of the crowd, the market functions as a border marking an antipathy between the fish and meat eating Bengali Muslim community on one side, and the (nominally) vegetarian Hindu households on the other side. The vegetable market lies next to the D block 'Hindu' side, although market vendors in general are predominantly Muslim including mobile handcart (*thela/rehri*) vendors. It with reference to the *mahaul* of the market with its crush, muck, dirt and mixing, that Hindu residents of adjacent D block *gali*s express their concerns about the Muslim and (allegedly) Bangladeshi handcart vendors, and the boundaries of the market. Residents in these adjacent *gali*s are perennially fearful of mobility of these handcarts; fearing strangers, incursions down *gali*s, and mixing, illustrating the difficulty of maintaining 'proper' boundaries, of controlling mixing and interactions in the scarce space of the neighbourhood.

It is down one of these adjacent *gali*s that attempts to use a shrine to mark the exact limits of the ordered space of the *gali*, against the market can be seen. One resident, Kamlesh, in her early 40s, lives with her teenage daughters, next door to her sisters-in-law and her husband's brothers. All the brothers work as drivers and are often away from home. The vegetable market itself is not obvious from her end of the lane, but instead, with an eye-catching sparkle of red and gold tinsel, a formal *mandir*/shrine has been raised. About 1.5m high, in whitewashed plastered brick with a small, pitched roof, it contains a small Durga *murti* ('idol'/image). The height of the auspicious

banana tree beside it suggests it has been there some time. Kamlesh explained that with the vegetable market at the end of the lane, the traffic of people and goods up and down the *gali*, meant the 'filth' (*gandagi*) and rubbish (*kachera*) of the market was always creeping into their lane. "It was a good thing anyway that a *mandir* had been raised" she said. She explained that the *mandir* was built primarily, because most of the vegetable sellers in the *mandi* are Muslim. She described how in reaction to the vegetable sellers setting up stalls at the end of the lane, one of the men in the lane had proposed that a collection be taken from residents in the predominantly Hindu *gali* and a *mandir* raised. "It's so they could not occupy (*kabza*[130]) this [space]. It started very small and then after a couple of years it was built bigger." Her daughter Archana is more blunt; the other side of the *sabzi mandi* (vegetable market) was the *machli mandi* (fish but also meat market) and E block – and "On this side of the road, it is good, on that side [*sabzi mandi* and beyond] it is filthy – there everyone is Bengali adding the usual comments about the deplorable state of the environment there (*"bilkul gandi hai"* / "it's completely filthy").

Archana voices what is often not spoken overtly in these narratives of space. As Parry (1989) interprets bio-moral sensibilities act as conceptual work against 'louring disorder' in the world, so fears about dirt and filth in Kaviraj's discussion (1997) of Deshapriya Park in Calcutta also serve to structure physical and conceptual struggles over space, class and access to the park. Both see the physical marking out of the conceptual bio-moral space of the neighbourhood *mahaul* with physical objects or avoidance behaviours. Similarly, discourses of 'otherness' are employed to justify the difference and need for action to be taken. As different identities are deployed in opposition, they are ordered, articulated and marked through space. Deploying the term 'Bengali', in the discussion of the capture of space, Archana also draws on associations of illegality and illegitimacy highlighted with the fear of the capture of land. As Bengali speaking Muslims, they are often the target of frequent police drives against alleged illegal immigrants (as opposed to simply internal migrants) and previously in Punarvaspur, against prostitution. As such, she neatly demonstrates how different identities can be and are articulated through the politics of space, not only creating boundaries through a politics of space (Donner & De Neve 2006, 13), but maintaining, and even entrenching them, while the mixed identities of gali residents are collapsed into community binaries on each side.

Further down the *sabzi mandi* the residents of another *gali*, dominated by the Chauhan brothers and family, have built a larger *mandir*, creating a small 'park' around it. This

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[130] *Kabza/kabza lena* also 'capture' has an inference of illegality, without consent.

too has been built to preventing the occupation of the 'park' by *kabari* sorters. As if to emphasise the point, high walls have been also been built and impressively tall metal gates installed. As in Kamlesh's *gali*, it was explained that the *mandir* had been built to prevent encroachment by those whom residents do not want to interact with, to save the space of the park and keep the dirt and decay of rag-picking at bay. The *mandir* stands to confirm the Hindu nature of the *gali*, but also marks the divide in Punarvaspur between regional and linguistic, as well as religious communities. The Chauhan brothers, all employed by the Railways (union cards tucked visibly into all shirt top pockets), also run a successful *jagraan* group hired to play in neighbourhoods across East Delhi, but that afternoon were preparing to hold a *jagraan* in their 'park' in thanks for one brother's return to health. Hence, these religious structures remain 'live', even as they mark out spaces not to be encroached upon by others. Yet like the *idgardh* ground, used by Bengali Muslims in the adjacent block for community events, the 'park' was for the most part simply an open space marked by a low wall and named entrance archway. Aside from small boys playing cricket, this was sufficient to mark the area as off limits for the sorting and storage of *kabari*. Hence, while the convenient proximity of a temple is pleasing to residents, and although everyday usage marks a stronger claim on the space, the 'activity' of a structure is not essential. As the *idgardh* shows, denoting a space for a particular use may be sufficient to mark the presence and boundaries of a community, relative to another[131].

Building influence?

Other than a cremation ground, there are no religious sites marked on the DDA's plans for Punarvaspur, a fact explained by the secularism of the Indian state, residents often told me – so 'they' didn't think to add anywhere. Today, however, all of the parks in Punarvaspur contain either a *mandir* or a *masjid*, or in Valmiki dominated A-block, a concrete statue of Dr. BR Ambedkar, clad in blue painted suit, Indian Constitution tucked under one arm. In two cases a *mandir* and a *masjid* have come to take up the entire area of the park, with their organising associations raising an income for their respective outgoings by renting shops set into their boundary walls. In other cases people from the predominant region in adjacent *gali*s have grouped together to put up a *mandir* in a park to a regional deity, and having marked the park symbolically with their influence, allegedly also raise an income from occasional weddings held in them. In other tales, told in reference to the hidden and impliedly illicit wealth of the (predominantly Bengali) *kabari* sorters and merchants of F block, a deal is supposed to

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[131] Here, as in Gorringe's account of political party's flagpoles marking the space of a Madurai housing estate (2006, 59) the space of the neighbourhood is marked and delimited, if not as actively contested (i.e. markers torn down).

have been struck with the developers of Gulshan Extension. In exchange for relinquishing land used for waste sorting, part of a plot on which a small *masjid* had previously been set in a wall has been rebuilt as a fine three storey building; the teller implying that much money had changed hands in the course of the deal.

While parks may more often be occupied by cricket players or waterlogged in the low-lying ground of Punarvaspur, the construction of a *mandir* or *masjid* requires great organisation. Consequently such construction projects make good platforms from which to make promises, or demands, through the authority of such a moral project. Some, like the campaign by worshipers in an F block *masjid*, are short term, based around a particular event, calling on the MCD to fix and cover the drains running in front of their *masjid* in the run up to Ramadan. Other involvements can be much longer and represent the trajectories of political careers in themselves.

Dressed in the '*neta*' uniform of crisp white *kurta* and a top pocket sprouting pens and mobile, Naresh Kumar was sitting in a plastic chair on the steps of the E-block *mandir* soliciting '*daan*' (religious charitable donations) for the latest building stage of his temple, when I met him. A one time resident of E block, self-described *pradhan*, kerosene oil depot and ration shop owner, and member of the Congress Block committee, *mandir* building, he explained, requires connections. Despite E block having predominantly Bengali Muslim residents, it was after a particularly devastating fire ripped through the mostly *kachcha*, bamboo matting (*chettai*), mud and plastic houses in the early 1980s, killing several people, but somehow missing his kerosene shop, that Naresh decided he should set up a temple in the park. He had been visiting the popular Hanuman *mandir* at Yamuna Bazaar (where his family had originally lived) when the fire broke out in his absence and he returned to find devastation. It was in thanks for his shop's survival, he said, the *chabutara* in the park was built up. Drawing on his longstanding Congress connections, as he told it, he and a group of men had made a collection of money, promises of time and labour for the construction of the first part of the *mandir*. Drawing on his contacts, Naresh had contacted the East Delhi MP of the day, HKL Bhagat, for help and for his influence getting the *mandir* registered on the DDA's plans with the Chief Engineer. Explaining that he (Naresh Kumar) was a 'known' Congressman who had 'worked for the party' in the area, his connections with HKL Bhagat were especially valuable because Bhagat had influence as he could deliver a reliable votebank to the Centre; "with him, they could get their work done." Later,

through similar connections, he had written to 'Birla-ji'[132], requesting help to finance a Shiv murti for the *mandir*.

Since then, Naresh has not always been so able to muster such contacts, or been able to provide the links through the MP between neighbourhood and bureaucracy, as well as between politician and voters. With the creation of a Legislative Assembly in 1993 to assuage calls for statehood for the Delhi 'Union Territory' area, the political set up in Delhi significantly changed, in places like Punarvaspur in particular. The creation of the Legislative Assembly in Delhi, saw the displacement of the Councillor of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) downwards as less moneyed and less influential compared to the new Legislator, and the MP upwards, more distant to local political storms and sources of influence. Most significantly for Punarvaspur it became a reserved constituency, meaning its Councillor and Legislator must both be from a Scheduled Caste. Since, then the dominant caste in Punarvaspur has been the Valmikis, the largest Scheduled Caste group in the area, radically altering the spheres of influence in the neighbourhood of local associations. For Naresh Kumar and a number of other committed general caste Congressmen in Punarvaspur, this has meant their displacement as aspirant office holders and more practically, as in Naresh's case, from general caste circuits of influence or connections[133] in Punarvaspur. Cutting his losses and drawing on the financial resources accumulated presumably through several decades of work for the Public Distribution System, he shifted into Gulshan Extension, the private colony next door which was just coming up, where he was able, amongst 'general caste' and Muslim residents, he said, to organise the Residents' Welfare Association. Since then he has been able to manage the rebuilding and considerable expansion of the E block *mandir*, with much larger donations from the wealthier Gulshan Extension residents than could be raised from the few Hindu residents of E and F blocks of Punarvaspur. Helpfully situated opposite Gulshan Extension shops, it is patronised almost exclusively by Gulshan Extension residents, and aside from the market, is one of the very few areas of Punarvaspur that Gulshan Extension residents will enter.

Organising for what?
Mirroring the reverse fortunes of Naresh Kumar's association with the E block *mandir*, the Valmiki Ashram *mandir* at the opposite end of the colony is less a personal project, and more a caste-based endeavour. The Valmiki Ashram Samiti (Association) is an

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[132] I.e. of the Birla family, famous in Delhi, aside for being mill owners, for being patrons of the popular Laxmi Narayan Temple, near Connaught Place in New Delhi.
[133] Naresh would also have lost influence when HKL Bhagat left office, with ill health, old age, and amidst serious indictments of his role in the orchestration of the massacres of Sikhs in East Delhi in 1984.

exclusively Valmiki association, but is also the site for a number of spin off organisations, not officially exclusively of Valmiki membership. These organisations comprise of mostly the same men, originating in the Ram Lila Club mentioned above, and a common Congress party affiliation also formed a Residents Welfare Association. With constituency being made 'reserved' for Scheduled Castes, these organisations thrived under the patronage of the Valmiki MLA, and with the rise of Sheila Dixit's 'pro-citizens participatory governance' Baghidari programme, RWAs were suddenly afforded much higher political profile to RWAs in Punarvaspur specifically, as a mode of representation, and indirectly, of funds.

The Ashram Samiti organises a procession for Valmiki Jayanti, celebrating Maharishi Valmiki, the writer of the Ramayana's 'birthday'. Marking this festival, rather than that of Ambedkar's birthday, makes clear the predominant affiliation to 'Valmiki' caste-association type politics that the Rudolphs describe (1969, 63) practiced in the neighbourhood. The continuing importance of the Congress party in Punarvaspur, rather than Ambedkarite, or Dalit activist type politics that Gorringe (2005) describes of Dalit Panthers in Madurai reflects the breadth of voter identities that must be encompassed in Punarvaspur. In this way, the breadth of the Congress party has kept it in power in Punarvaspur, rather than a politically narrow activism. In this way, Congress was seen as being able to deliver political goods more effectively than any Dalit party would. So the Valmiki Jayanti procession, as a form of action in the public space of the neighbourhood, was a way of emphasising the ubiquity of Valmiki influence in the colony, rather than asserting some unified Valmiki population in the neighbourhood, or marking their limits.

After a *kirtan*[134] session in the newly whitewashed Ashram the previous night, and further music and performances in the presence of the MLA and President of the Association, the Valmiki Jayanti procession sets off. Made up of young men dressed as figures from the Ramyana, dhol players, *shaadi* bands[135], it is a rare and noisy spectacle in the street, and draws residents to the ends of their *galis* to watch. Lastly the committee members bring up the rear with a carrier rickshaw issuing *sujii ka halwa*[136] as *prasad* to excitable children who follow the procession through the main streets of Punarvaspur, and out into the roads of the surrounding the area.

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[134] Prayer and hymn (*bhajan*) singing session
[135] *Shaddi* (brass) bands are usually hired to accompany the groom and his guests to the bride's house at weddings (*shaadi*). Composed of musicians from areas like Punarvaspur, they are too pricey for most residents, who hire *dhol* players to drum the groom along the streets instead.
[136] A sweet made from toasted flour, ghee and sugar and a common *prasad* offering.

Passing Valmiki associated *mandir*s and businesses, the route of the procession is marked by banners "heartily congratulating" the organisers of the different organisations involved on the occasion of Valmiki Jayanti, and prominently naming the key patrons; the MLA, Councillor, President and Secretary of the MLA associated RWA, making them more visible (for those who can read) in the neighbourhood. The procession offers an opportunity to demonstrate to the neighbourhood at large, both the patronage and following the Association can draw, and underlines the profile and confidence of Valmikis and Valmiki associations in Punarvaspur. This sense of the ubiquity of these Valmiki organisations (or rather the lack of space left in party politics for others), is increased by a general blurring between associations, often with interchangeable committee members, and frequently the same president. Connections to wider city politics are emphasised by repetitive reference to the presence of the MLA and in general speech with references to 'Sheila-ji' (Chief Minister Sheila Dixit) and occasional ones to 'Madam' (Sonia Gandhi), with a kind of first name proximity. Evidence of these links are provided in the ability to organise police escort for the procession. The Ashram itself is marked with the involvement of Valmikis (and occasionally some non-Valmikis) in the colony and surrounding area with a plaque publicly listing names and donations of money for building of its different parts over the years, carefully ordered into hierarchies of the MLA at the top, down to the donation of a ceiling fan at the bottom.

With the advent of RWAs in the city, the slide between caste association and city politics in Punarvaspur has become even more blurred. The RWA with the best connections to 'get things done' in the neighbourhood is that with the closet connections to the MLA. Consequently, the RWA draws publicly on both residents' concerns with state of the *mahaul* in the neighbourhood, like drains or the lack of water, as well as mediating issues which require direct access to the MLA, like ration card alterations and schoold admissions. It also provides a rallying point against which to complain about wider city political issues, like fast running electricity meters. Hence, the RWA offers a conduit to influence, which other organisations can rarely match. This is even as the MLA, in a safe seat does not always feel the need to mediate.

Making the neighbourhood a joke

Yet as I show in the following section, drawing on on a particular episode from my fieldnotes, where communal relations, personal religious sentiment and neighbourhood politics overlap, there is often dissonance.

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Fieldnotes[137]: It is mid-June, and too early in the afternoon for sensible people to be out, especially standing in the intense humid sunshine. School is out and even if wiser people are inside and asleep. Punarvaspur feels empty as many families have taken the opportunity to go back to respective villages to see parents, grandparents and relations, attend marriages, plan others and generally get out of the heat-trapping, close-living of the city, in the height of the summer. I am taking advantage of a quiet afternoon to try and take photographs of the colony with my newly repaired camera. Walking past the Valmiki Ashram in A block, a few desiccated marigolds still cling forlornly to the concrete lintel of the Ashram gate, and to the mural of Maharishi Valmiki where they could not be reached down after the festival of Maha Shivratri a few months earlier. But apart from the sound of traffic on the UP border road, everything is shut up and quiet. Even the tea stall in the Ashram wall is closed and the metal fabricators' workshop in the market is not sending out bright sprays of welding sparks into the street.

Standing at the crossroads, I meet Abida. We are considering the crossroads, and close to it, a public urinal. Community toilets are part of the running theme of the resettlement colony, where although mains sewerage was eventually provided, houses have not been connected and the neighbourhood remains studded with a large number of badly broken down, decaying and much reviled toilet blocks. But, the urinal is not what we are looking at, rather, the small *chabutara* or shrine that had been built in the middle of the road, barely a meter in front of the urinal and drain in front of that. The *chabutara* appeared shortly after Valmiki Jayanti, constructed from left over bricks, and liberally splashed whitewash. Somehow it has survived delivery trucks and other vehicles in the following months, to be built up onto a large concrete plinth, with the remains of a small *diya* visible inside.

Abida is in her late 40s and runs a small *balwadi* (crèche) in a room built into the corner of an adjacent park. The *balwadi* belongs to a small NGO based in central Delhi, funded for the most part by the government and donations. It is one of a number of NGO structures built into corners of parks and public space in the colony. She herself is not a resident of Punarvaspur, but of the neighbouring resettlement colony Suraj Nagar, seconded from another *balwadi* in the scheme there, to this one. Although a Muslim herself, she is irritated by the positioning of the shrine and not amused,

> "These people have made a joke out of a *mandir* – what were they doing putting it so close to a urinal? – To keep rubbish out? – Ha! They have just made it a joke!" she says in tones of irritation and disgust.

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[137] These fieldnotes also contain some initial interpretations.

That the *chabutara* was a 'joke' was widely known, and had been explained to me in various ways by different people at different times. Several people associated with the Valmiki Ashram claimed the idea as their own, but it was agreed that the *chabutara* had been put up to stop people throwing rubbish in the gutter and blocking the drains. Its efficacy was more debated. One of the members of the RWA, a declared atheist and modern secular rationalist, pulled me aside to explain this. I had objected "But, won't people soon get to know that it's not real and throw rubbish just as before?" "No, people around here are very superstitious, they won't dare to offend even a small small god like that," was the reply. He continued, "The problem in Punarvaspur is superstition. The *mahaul* has improved but many people here are still superstitious, they are '*gaonvar*' [villagers']". He agreed with me that technically, the *chabutara* was an 'encroachment', but explained "we [the RWA] built the *chabutara* to stop people throwing rubbish in the drain, because it blocks and then it floods. It is against the Delhi government's directive, because what else what could we do?". Also standing with us was a younger Valmiki man who commented, "Even if the people don't believe it is real, then they will still behave [i.e. not throw rubbish], because they wouldn't want to offend the person who had built it."

The primary reaction by those who claimed to have built it, all of whom are Valmikis or are associated with the RWA, was that it was a big 'in-joke', but this is a humour lost on others like Abida. Just as she's finished telling me this, Kishanlal and another Valmiki RWA friend come round the corner. Seeing them, Abida collars them to ask what they are going to do about the rubbish accumulating in the drain outside her NGO's room. This is brushed off with a wave of the hand, "*Ho jayenga*" ("It'll happen"). Noting the camera in my hand, Kishanlal asks me with a knowing grin, if I was taking a picture of the urinal or the *chabutara*, adding as he passes on "It's a big joke". This only serves to infuriate Abida further, and as we turn away down the road to get out of the sunshine she adds "These people here do not have a good way of being, they behave badly [*badtameez*]".

Abida's complaints about the neighbourhood continued as she said that she had asked the card school which regularly congregated in the park in which the NGO room was set to disperse or go else where, as she says, they drank and urinated against the walls – "this place is for educating children" she said indignantly, "they should not do this stuff here". She noted that she has asked the RWA to do something about this also a number of times, and she took the continued presence of the card school as evidence of the lack of respect people had for education and the *mahaul*, only going to confirm her misgivings about both the RWA and the neighbourhood in general.

Abida's view and that of others (notably all non-Valmikis), was that shrines and religion were not things that should be joked about. A number of things seemed to be at work around this *chabutara*; it is a shrine at one level, but at another it is an explicit ploy to change the way people use the space. In combination this is an open recognition of the possibilities of the shrine to challenge or mark the meaning of space, even as the builders of the shrine seek to deliberately subvert its other spiritual meanings. Where other *chabutara*s, *mandir*s and *masjid*s mark personal sentiments, or the presence or limits of a particular group, they are, ostensibly at least, for a religious purpose, even if as in the case of the *mandir* at the end of Kamlesh' *gali*, they are also agreed to have other uses, occupying or bargaining for scarce space. This small '*mandir*' by comparison is foregrounded as a 'joke' by its proximity to the urinal even before anything else about it is known, in a way that is seen as being in bad taste by many. That basis for the joke is premised upon other people the builders consider superstitious (and by inference gullible and '*gaonvar*'). For many non-Valmikis, this only confirms misgivings about Valmikis.

Chabutaras and small scale associations mark in many ways the different relations between groups, be they political, religious, regional or caste, but in a way which is partly 'invisible', implicit or at least not publicly acknowledged; in a sense 'kept below the radar'. In this sense, they are meant to be objects without other motives, being religious, or for 'social work' to improve the *mahaul* of the neighbourhood. What is foregrounded as 'visible' seems to be a general concern for the *mahaul* expressed in terms of a need to clean up the neighbourhood, to improve education, or a desire to organise on a religious basis for the community where the organisations and *chabutara* are forms of public expression. In this way they are 'visible' sites for organising, a base from which to negotiate and speak from, and from which patronage and petitions can be made in the name of the *mahaul*, which can include a range of 'invisible' implicit motivations. What seems to rile people about this latter *chabutara*, is this public acknowledgement of the value of being 'smart' ('*chalu*' [slang]). The encroachment of public space and such bad behaviour ("*badtameez*"), as Abida puts it, with little pretence to disguise it, for the majority of Punarvaspur residents, threatens to undermine any improvement to the *mahaul*.

The Valmiki relationship to the *mahaul* in Punarvaspur stands in striking contrast to the prevailing attitude of many general caste residents. Valmikis are better positioned and more assured of access to the social and political fields of the neighbourhood, and the symbolic (or even just plain monetary) goods they may offer. Excluded from the field of formal politics, for some non-Valmikis, to create a group might be understood

as a way to augment their identity and visibility as an office holder. In this way it is less the spatial practice of identity politics through the *mahaul* of the neighbourhood – than the means to practice a form of political identity.

Conclusion: Working on the *mahaul* of the neighbourhood
In the previous chapter I examined the way in which Punarvaspur residents sought through 'spatial practices' to draw boundaries between themselves and others by reference to the bio-morally charged medium of the *mahaul*, subtly shifting the meaning of that lived 'representational space'. In this chapter I have examined how residents mark the physical space of the neighbourhood in an attempt to manipulate the spatial practices of others, and so the meaning of the space.

The possibility of interventions in space, whether to mark it to direct the behaviour of others in it, or to draw on the meaning of particular spaces to assert an identity, makes the space of the neighbourhood, and the *mahaul* within it, a potentially potent source of meaning – and politically powerful. In positioning themselves favourably in relation to a bad *mahaul*, Arif and Kishenlal present themselves positively, and perhaps, if the possibility of funding were to come along – as having the wherewithal to act on it. By contrast, the building of *chabutara*s presents a quite literally 'concrete' spatial practice, asserting identity in relation to the *mahaul*. Emplaced within the fabric of the neighbourhood, *chabutaras* serve to mark boundaries and limits of communities.

The use of *chabutaras* to mark and assert community boundaries also allows the varied identities that make up each community to be over simplified, collapsing them into binary differences either side of the boundary. So in the case of Kamlesh and others, 'Bengali' has been collapsed to mean, Muslim, illegal, foreign, meat eater, etc. While on the opposite side of the market, Hindus in the locale are asserted to be 'all *bhangis* and *chamars'*, in colloquially offensive, politically incorrect terms. This chimes with other work in South Asia which points out the highly contested and political nature of boundaries and markers in the operation identity politics in space (Donner and De Neve 2006; Gorringe 2005; 2006; and Simpson 2006). So the politics of space can also be used productively to create new forms of political authority. Even as a joke, the shrine created by members of the Valmiki Ashram and RWA, is a concrete and whitewash illustration of Valmiki political authority to act in the space of the neighbourhood. In the deliberate dissonant clash between the formal, respectable 'representation of the space' of the neighbourhood, as it is subverted (becoming offensive to others in the neighbourhood), its authority is all the greater, challenging the experience of the representational space of the neighbourhood, day to day. In this way, the 'power

geometry' of the neighbourhood becomes visible as the political authority of different groups is challenged through different groups' day to day practices.

Much of this power, Massey points out (1994) is the ability to fix people through their associations with a place. In the next chapter I investigate how NGO fieldworkers negotiate their association with the neighbourhood as the field site of the organisations they work for. In particular, how women have negotiated their way through the reputation minefield of the *mahaul* of the neighbourhood as well as the demands of NGO work, to use their unusual positionality to bring critical insight to bear on the operation of NGOs in Punarvaspur.

FIGURE 2: Punarvaspur *gali*s

Left: A typical 'C' block *gali*, reasonably prosperous, with a range of houses visible, some much more built up than others, often reflecting relative of wealth of occupants. The two room house in the foreground is similar to those of the first decade of the resettlement colony

Above: Prosperous B block *gali*. Most residents in this *gali* were Brahmins and proud of the fact that their lane was 'harmonious' enough that they had been able to raise money to put in gates at either end to regulate the movement of people in and out of the *gali*.

Above: Punarvaspur Rooftops, where much social life also takes place
Left: Punarvaspur weekly *haat* (market). The buildings of Gulshan Extension are visible on the left of the picture, and with the batteries of water tanks, in the background of roof-scape above.

Above: 'This shrine is a joke!' See Chapter 5: The offending *chabutara* in front of the drain and a urinal in A block. The poster on the wall behind advertises the MLA, the local Congress Party men and their works.

Right: Claiming Development: A street light marked as having been installed at the expense of the MCD Councillor. Hook-ups drawing enough power to run a tube light on can be seen reaching away to the *jhuggies* on the back road behind B block.

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"BOYS WOULDN'T HAVE THE PATIENCE FOR THIS KIND OF WORK"
Negotiating gender, work and NGOs in Punarvaspur.

"People have become smart because they have worked with NGOs – they have gained awareness. To work in the field you should have much thought and understanding."
Umrao Jahan

Thus far there has been little discussion of NGOs in Punarvaspur[138] itself, their role or interactions with residents in the neighbourhood. Yet the signboards dotted across the topography of the colony indicated their presence and programmes. Simultaneously, it was disconcerting to be addressed in a *gali* with the challenge; "What NGO are you from?", "What's the survey?" or more gallingly, "When are you people ever going to do something? All you ever do is write!" In conversation, it swiftly became clear that the work of NGOs was often contested. NGOs' claims of interest in people's lives and attempts to 'mobilise' them were a source of irritation to some Punarvaspur residents. Residents often used the services NGOs provided for different reasons to those promoted by the organisations themselves, and it was on the basis of using services that many residents engaged with NGOs. Some NGO programmes openly challenged prevailing ideas about respectability and mobility, especially of women, encouraging feminist principles of equality, as well as ideas of 'participation' and 'empowerment'. But, as residents of Punarvaspur who worked for NGOs found, such ideals were not always maintained by NGOs themselves, as aspects of class and power came into play too, particularly across the divide between 'head office' and 'field office'.

In this chapter, I shift from thinking about how spaces are represented and the spatial practices by which their meanings are modified, to how agents negotiate and are constrained by these structures. I examine how NGO fieldworkers, who were resident in Punarvaspur, perceive and negotiate their ambiguous position within the wider politics of development. Their position is ambiguous in that it situates them on both sides of the divide between NGO and 'community', as both 'recipients'[139] and

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[138] For an account of the NGOs working in Punarvaspur at the time of the research, see 'Appendix A: Organisations Working in Punarvaspur'.

[139] Up to now I have referred to people living in areas targeted by development workers as 'residents'. Other writers concentrating on development institutions refer to them as 'beneficiaries'. Given the jaundiced view of NGOs by many residents in Punarvaspur, I am less sure that they would see themselves as necessarily benefiting. 'Recipients' assumes the receipt of something, (also not guaranteed), as well as implying something of the direction of the 'Gift'

'practitioners'. This is a powerful physical and conceptual divide which seeks to define and fix actors within these particular subject positions, even as it undermines them by making 'community' residents into 'practitioners' when the 'field' continues to be the location of 'recipients'. In this way the divide is both structural (in terms of access to resources) and discursive as fieldworker-residents negotiate between NGO demands and Punarvaspur's mores of respectability and mobility. Massey's characterization of 'place' as a network of social relations is useful here (1994, 121), capturing the structural, powerful and dynamic nature of the subject's interrelations with others; in this case with families, neighbours, fellow fieldworker-residents, bureaucrats or head office staff. This is important because in spite of the divide the position of many fieldworker-residents, 'fixed' in place by their residence in Punarvaspur, but mobile as NGO fieldworkers, has afforded them unusual critical insights and opportunities through their interactions and meetings with people across Delhi. By understanding the way in which fieldworker-residents are positioned and negotiate their interrelations in Punarvaspur, the spatial politics of development serve to both fix people within social relations at the same time as they are stretched out over space and scale (Massey 1994, 23).

To understand this, I examine the 'translation' (Merry 2006) and negotiation of concepts and categories by fieldworker residents in Punarvaspur. Mostly women, they found themselves not just negotiating the power structures of NGOs, but doing so across the moral terrain of the neighbourhood and its *mahaul*. Exploring the 'case-' or here, 'career-'histories of some fieldworker residents of Punarvaspur, as they shed light on their negotiation of their positions with families and neighbours, and the critical and reflexive perspective that many say they would never have had, had they not worked for NGOs. Their position is crucial for understanding the circulation and transformation of ideas about 'development' between NGOs and those framed as recipients in their wider lives as residents in places such as Punarvaspur. As intermediaries, these people are "A key dimension of the process of vernacularisation…those who translate the discourses and practices" from, in this case, head office to field site (Merry 2006, 39). In particular, there is a need to understand the practical experience of vernacularisation of such ideas within the discursive fields of power and practices within which they work[140]. In Punarvaspur, the success of this

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and its associated power relations (Stirrat and Henkel 1997, 69-74). I have continued to refer to 'residents' when referring to residents' own views of themselves, and use recipients in reference to the views NGOs tend to have of them.

[140] A similar point is also made forcefully by Li (1999), arguing for the importance of the understandings, interactions, practices and compromises made in the accomplishment of Foucauldian 'rule' in the governmentality of developmental projects emphasising the ongoing, 'unfinished' nature of interactions through them.

depends heavily on their ability to negotiate their work identities and identity as residents around the views of their neighbours.

Situating NGOs

From the late 1980s and well into the 1990s, one of the major areas of growth in the development industry has been of 'non-governmental organisations' (NGOs). Grappling with questions about 'dominant development discourses' and 'unintended consequences' (Ferguson 1994), anthropologists' studies have often taken projects (Crewe and Harrison 1998, Ferguson 1994, Rossi 2006) concepts (e.g. 'participation', Cooke and Kothari 2001), or latterly institutions (Rossi 2006; Mosse 2005) as a means of framing their subjects and ethnographically exploring the 'social lives' of these concepts in practice.

Simultaneously there has been a shift in the development industry, academia and government away from seeing the state as service provider, with the rise of the 'third sector' or 'civil society', which have almost always meant NGOs. Numbers of these have increased substantially in the same period, in parallel with funding. In the Government of India's 10th Five Year Plan, this has been through a direct, explicit combination of "the acceptance of market liberalisation and globalisation" that, "with the growth of markets and the presence of an aware and sensitive civil society" should take over the role of providing 'development functions' which provide stability to the social order' (in Chandhoke 2005, 1033). This can be seen in the institutionalisation of certain NGOs as service providers, as part of the Delhi government's Ministry of Social Welfare's 'Stree Shakti' scheme, with lists of partner organisations published as newspaper advertisements. Despite this, Hilhorst argues, both in India and more widely, "NGOs have not been very central to the concept and concerns of such critical development studies. More often than not they escape scrutiny and are simply posited as alternative signs of hope against dominant development discourse." (2003:2).

NGOs' escape as subjects of study (although much written on as actors and purveyors of policy implementation), is starting to be addressed by people like Hilhorst herself in her provocatively titled book, '*The Real World of NGOs*' (2003)[141]. Similarly Celayne Heaton explores the construction and management of relationships within two Nepali NGOs; with 'beneficiaries' externally, and internally, between themselves, and

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[141] Hilhorst's title can be read as a riposte to often optimistic exhortations about the possibilities of NGOs to stand as vehicles for development, aloof from the complex and messy state, politics and society around them. In this it is also a wider comment on discourses offering a strongly normative view of civil society, sliding swiftly from what *is* to what such organisations '*ought* to be' (Hann 1996, 18).

management (2001). In both accounts, the objects of interest are the NGOs, the organisations themselves and how they are constituted by the social relations that make them up. Crucially both start to address the importance of context and setting for NGOS, and the contradictions and inconsistencies within their work (Hilhorst 2003, 3).

Of previous work, Hilhorst adds

> "What remains problematic,…is the implicit premise that, however complicated, there is nonetheless a single answer to the questions of why NGOs are formed, how they are given meaning, and how they operate. Like other NGO approaches, [it] is limited by the implicit assumption that NGOs constitute a single reality…. *NGOs are many things at the same time*." (2003, 3, my emphasis)

The linking up of 'beneficiaries', workers and donors in accounts about NGOs is reflective of wider changes of approach to the anthropology of development, so that it is no longer justifiable to draw thick black lines between the arenas of development and anthropology as, rhetorically at least, has been previously done (Mosse and Lewis 2006a; 2006b). This is not least because many anthropologists find themselves working between the two arenas, as both anthropologists and as development practitioners over the course of a career. Indeed, even those who work solely as 'pure' anthropologists often work in the same areas as development organisations[142], regardless of what the 'proper' subject of their research is (Lewis and Mosse 2006, 1; Leve and Lamia 2001, 55)) making them hard to ignore, if not disingenuous to write out of accounts. Equally, as will be shown, development practitioners or activists themselves have their own reflexive and critical perspectives (Mosse & Lewis 2006, 6; Crewe and Harrison 1998; Cornwall and Brock 2005). Thus, the apparently singular, monolithic portrayal of the development industry in previous anthropological writing (e.g. Escobar 1991 or more subtly Ferguson 1994) is broken down through complex relationships of 'identity' and 'positionality', how actors perceive each other; their interests are increasingly important (Gardner and Lewis 2000, 17). As Mosse (2005) and Mosse and Lewis (2006a, 14) emphasise, questions of brokerage and translation both by anthropologists and development practitioners, and the importance of understanding the 'social life' of projects, policymaking and also professionals (Merry 2006, 40).

Hilhorst (2003) and Heaton's (2001) work brings the social life inside NGOs into view, and complex interrelationships and negotiations between people in and around them. The practices of mediation, representation and negotiation are particularly important for Punarvaspur fieldworker residents, who as *both* residents and NGO workers live

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[142] NGOs are found equally in other contexts too; from medical research and healthcare organisations, to environmentalism, as well as lobbying, making the near ubiquitous NGO even harder to ignore as part of a social setting.

and work across these two (and many more) kinds of identities. As Merry points out: "Translators are both powerful and vulnerable. They work in a field of conflict and contradiction, able to manipulate others who have less knowledge than they do but still subject to exploitation by those who installed them." (Merry 2006, 40). This also counters the impression of development actors, donors and recipients existing in different 'life worlds' (Rossi 2006, 27) as was present in many earlier approaches (e.g. the 'farmer-first' and 'indigenous knowledge' movements, from which the broader 'participatory' approaches have also come (Gardner & Lewis 1996, 109-120)). As Rossi argues "it is not helpful to compartmentalise 'aid givers' and 'aid recipients' as if they were social groups governed by different or even incompatible logics" (ibid.), a point even more pertinent in Punarvaspur, especially for those women residents who work as 'fieldworkers' in the 'field sites' which are Punarvaspur and other surrounding 'bastis'[143].

As suggested in the Introduction, there are direct parallels to the ways in which anthropologists have previously conceptualised the field and the location of their respondents, and many of the same critiques can be made (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). While conceptually and physically 'the field' and 'field office' may locate some aspects of NGO work, they do not locate all aspects of the lives of people who work for them, nor are they subject to incommensurable logics, even while head office staff, activists and fieldworker residents may have very different class and caste backgrounds.

Nonetheless, it is not always easy to be part of such an engagement in a neighbourhood like Punarvaspur. Although it is not solely women who work for NGOs in Punarvaspur, nor solely women from Punarvaspur itself who work for them, it is women who are most visible as 'fieldworkers' in the neighbourhood, and certainly women who are most often the 'targets' of projects. Mediation between NGO, project and neighbourhood can be an ambivalent position for anyone, translating across different priorities and logics of interaction: male, female, resident or non-resident, 'hi-fi' people, or 'little' people (chhote log). Women fieldworker residents in particular, find themselves simultaneously defined by quite different roles, as wife, mother, sister in-law, or daughter, and working women amongst one's own neighbours. This raises acute issues of respectability and reputation within the neighbourhood, while at the same time representing an NGO. These are positions which rarely reconcile themselves comfortably. However, for some people (particularly women, but also men), as I will explore in this chapter, this uncomfortable location has offered them a degree of reflexive critique they say they would never have had, if they had not worked for

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[143] *basti* – community/settlement, but usually used with reference to areas with a poor population and rundown locations, and by NGOs to refer to the locations of their fieldsites.

NGOs. From this ambiguous, ambivalent viewpoint, they have lived, experienced and seen much of what constitutes both worlds and been exposed to challenging, critical thinking available in development discourses. This has allowed them to reflect on their own positioning, articulating some of the contradictions and inconsistencies inherent in development projects in general, and in their own positions in particular. These are not always positions they have been able to sustain financially, or in the view of their neighbours, but while some have given up on their work, as others have set up their own organisations.

Development and day-to-day work

In the previous section, as will be the case for much of this chapter, the discussion referred to women who worked for NGOs, not least because it is women who are the primary targets of NGO projects, and hence, it is women who are often employed to carry out those programmes. Women are targeted for both practical and perceptual reasons. The practical reasons, many residents pointed out, why NGOs programmes seem to target women, is that "Men are at work during the day". The overlap between the hours of male wage labour and female NGO work is obvious on reflection, but was rarely addressed in official terms by NGO workers. Additionally, 'welfare' is filtered through development narratives that, at the national level in India, have tended to concentrate on 'women' when discussing gender. Consequently, those men who were anomalously around the colony in the daytime, by not working, seemed to fall outside the NGOs' categories of 'welfare'. Equally, in practical terms, there is little that NGOs can offer to fundamentally change the underlying levels of underemployment of men, and chronic temporariness of work in the local economy. Consequently, for NGOs to target women, because they are at home, is only part of the truth.

In the better off blocks of A,B,C and D most women could be found at home, but if the housework is finished, then there are extensive networks of subcontracted small home working jobs which can be done. This was usually 'piece work' (paid by output) for very low rates: tying plastic mesh into dish scourers, sticking bindi's onto cards, packing microscope slides into boxes, stitching sequins onto pre-cut, unstitched clothing pieces or threading *malas* (marigold garlands). Most work was obtained through informal, word of mouth subcontracting networks of friends and neighbours, and mostly stitching 'fancy pieces' are aimed at the local market. On average Rs5-10 could be earned from 3-4 hours work and the work was usually explained by women

themselves in derogatory terms, as a form of 'time-pass'. As such it was not really considered 'work' (*kaam*), but a kind of 'pocket-money' occupation passing the time[144].

Women in E and F block households were also targeted by NGOs. However, with lower household incomes, many more people in the family (women and children) were employed in *kabari* (rag picking/scrap merchanting) work, with women also working as maids in adjacent middle class colonies. In these blocks, NGOs mainly offered services, especially childcare and skills training, or rotating credit. Organisations working on issues of women's rights and empowerment made fewer inroads in E and F blocks as their targets were most often busy, or not willing to leave home for such events.

Women and work

As discussed in the previous chapters, issues of mobility and appropriate behaviour can be a tricky for both men and women to negotiate in the space of the neighbourhood. The "neighbourhood as panopticon" (Vera-Sanso 2006, 195) has a strongly gendering effect on the norms of acceptable public behaviour, work and the domestic sphere. This is equally applicable to both men and women in the public spaces of the colony, even as this may clash with other norms in circulation, including those of development programmes.

The work of Donner (2006), Vatuk (1972), Frøystad (2005), Vera-Sanso (2006, 1999) and Grover, (2006) offer much of the necessary background to understand the ambivalence with which women's work for NGOs is viewed. While Punarvaspur is not the apparently comfortable middle class setting of the first three accounts, concerns about mobility, propriety and above all reputation, remain key as Vera-Sanso and Grover are at pains to show. Crucially, they demonstrate that apparently middle class concerns about reputation and respectability remain key in a low-income settings such as Punarvaspur, where the question of 'what the neighbours will say' (Vera-Sanso 1994), can have a positive, or devastating impact on an individual's reputation, and their consequent ability to act; to get married (especially if a girl), to maintain adequate relations with neighbours etc. Hence appropriate mobility through the *mahaul* and public spaces of the neighbourhood is key.

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[144] Vatuk reports similarly of middle class Meerut in the 1960s, that "work is so poorly regarded that none reported it as a source of income, although a number of women were observed doing the work in their homes or transporting bundles of finished and unfinished goods on their heads." (1972, 29). By contrast in Punarvaspur, where although poorly regarded in terms of pay, informal networks of subcontractors in East Delhi are keenly observed distributing sewing/embroidery work into the neighbourhood. Neighbourhood networks of gossip and acquaintance are then quickly be mobilised to take advantage of new work.

Appropriate mobility varies with age as well as marital status, and whether the individual has children (Vatuk 1972, 125; U Sharma 1986, 45; Donner 2006, 149). Although Donner argues that this cannot be solely attributed to concerns for women's sexuality, in Punarvaspur the safety of girls is given as one of the prime concerns about the *mahaul*, and the reason for their involvement (or not), in all kinds of activities; from school, to going to the market, going out to work, to leaving the house[145]. Mobility even varies, depending on the task in hand, as Donner (2006, 149) notes of middle class Calcutta women taking their children to school. This has a strong impact on the possibility and respectability of working outside the home, and consequently on women's work with NGOs. As Vera-Sanso notes (2000), the question of the 'risk' or cost to one's reputation for working outside the house must be balanced against need and necessity inside the house – as well as the fact that working outside the house makes that need, public. Consequently, it is evident in women's accounts the way in which necessity to work is foregrounded, mitigating against accusations of self-interestedness - both in terms of money and neglect of the household ("they must pay you so much you don't have to do your own housework!" was often thrown at fieldworker residents). However, the predominance of women working in the field for NGOs, does not just reflect women's position as targets (although that may be a conscious decision by the NGO), but also that working with other women, in the space of the neighbourhood, is eminently more respectable than working outside of the neighbourhood in the unregulated, mixed gendered setting of a factory. The locale of work, and its 'public-ness' has an impact on its perceived respectability too (Vera-Sanso 1995, 161), for which work in the semi-domesticated, well surveyed and regulated space of *gali*s, was more appropriate than other 'bolder' forms of work.

NGOs in Punarvaspur
As can be seen in the table of NGOs working in Punarvaspur, there is variety of different types of NGOs ranging from the field office of an Indian branch of an international organisation running a time limited AIDS awareness programme, to Delhi based NGOs with service provision links to the Delhi government, and women's organisations with a history of working in Delhi's resettlement colonies. Others are religious by origin, or specialised in *balwadis*[146] and after school 'tuitions', and a few –

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[145] In a number of households, young teenage girls' movement is acutely restricted, staying inside the house a large proportion of the time, retreating to the back room or onto the roof/upstairs should guests be invited into the small front room.
[146] *Balwadi* – Similar to *anganwadis*, and run as spin-offs from NGOs, or sometimes privately as a source of income by enterprising women who have often worked for NGO or government ones previously. There a number of these in Punarvaspur, both NGO and 'private'.

more often office and sign-less - set up by women residents themselves, after long frustrated experiences working for other NGOs. Most NGOs offer training of one kind or another, the majority providing after school private tuitions, supervising homework, and most popularly, teaching clothes cutting and sewing skills to teenage girls, usually in the name of enterprise or job acquisition, all for a fee. These organisations are relatively uncontentious, if mostly unrecognised, in the sense that the majority of NGOs do not move beyond the provision of services from within field offices, and it is not uncommon for one NGO's existence to be unknown two lanes away. For residents, having NGOs is advantageous in so far as they offer relatively inexpensive services like childcare, or subsidised activities and desirable skills that girls particularly should learn, such as sewing, or about health, albeit without any assurance of their usefulness or quality. Indeed, the appearance of computers in one field office caused much excitement amongst children in the surrounding block, and computer skills were often listed amongst things young people wanted to learn, because as one girl in her late teens put it, "computers are a must for all jobs now", even if these skills are rarely put into in practice.

Punarvaspur's exposure to NGOs has been a long one, and only a few particularly activist ones are remembered from the past. Otherwise memories are rare, partly a reflection of the high level of turnover of residents in the neighbourhood, but also of NGOs, and of the limited contact that service provision NGOs have with residents – except through surveys. The organisations best known to people were those of most long standing in Punarvaspur, which employed local residents or which had a strongly activist bent. For the most part, people's primary encounter with NGOs on an everyday basis was on their front doorsteps, most often becoming the subjects of another survey, another project visit to a fieldsite. Indeed two organisations in Punarvaspur gave its handy location in Delhi as an easy site for funders to visit as one of the reasons for maintaining a field office there. One organisation ran several small, well funded projects in F block alone of Punarvaspur, while its major projects were run in Tamil Nadu. A tacit agreement with a large multilateral donor, saw its Punarvaspur projects funded, so long as the donor could bring interested parties to visit the project site and see its funds in action. Similarly another used the funding available for female skills training in Delhi to partially cross subsidise it's main interest in 'tribal' groups elsewhere.

For some organisations, presence in the neighbourhood is purposefully limited; one with the remit to 'raise awareness of AIDS', having arrived 2 years previously, was already starting to plan its exit strategy. Conversely, for more 'activist' groups the neighbourhood itself has become the project, and the employment of women residents

as fieldworkers is part of what they do through an ideology of consciousness raising. Between the two, are a number of organisations that have set up field offices in order to run projects. Often maintaining a presence becomes the object of funding, until such time as a funding stream ceases, when in the absence of other funding for some other programme, they cease to work in the locale. These organisations tend to be primarily service based, and most commonly staffed by lower middle class non-resident women, and often least known to residents themselves.

Although the majority of programmes referred to above were service based, aimed at children and therefore seen of some value, there was a widespread cynicism at what NGOs were good for. As people pointed out, this was partially due to the sheer length of time the place had been a target for projects, and particularly surveys. As one resident put it, "All this [indicating three storey houses with a sweep of her arm], people here have built up on their own; NGOs? They come and go". Most people's reactions were those at the beginning of the chapter, and there is a strong sense that NGOs expected people to give up their time to 'participate' for uncertain returns, while fieldworkers themselves got paid, regardless.

'Career' histories and narrative
Exploring the case – or at least 'career' histories of several people who have worked for NGOs over the years in Punarvaspur illustrates some of the different reasons they became involved and have come to work for NGOs. The choice of the word 'career' may seem strange in Punarvaspur where work, or the lack of it, is a fraught subject, but it offers a way of differentiating the relationships that people who come to be involved with NGOs have with work, from the experience of daily-wagers, for whom work might be better understood as 'labour'. This can be seen in the way in which NGO work is viewed; the degree of negotiation, 'choice' and reflexive thought about NGO work, and element of personal involvement that tends to characterise it. Comparatively, work as 'labour' has a different kind of personal involvement. While work is crucial, particularly to men for a sense of self, what that work was – so long as it was non-criminal – has far fewer implications for personal reputation. Contrastingly, for activist type organisations, the involvement and investment of the individual in their work was much greater, with activists often being called on to defend their work to others. The word 'career' embodies some of the facets of work for NGOs, perhaps also found in 'labour' type work, as people develop skills and contacts which in some cases has led to set up their own organisations, or to move to others.

This is also drawn out in the telling of life- or career-histories below, bringing to the surface some of the issues discussed above. The personal associations of an individual

with an organisation means the telling of a work history is irretrievably enmeshed within crucial markers in people's lives, the age of children, the loss of a spouse and the need for money, or a change of work. Likewise, other people's perception of NGOs also emerges, questioning the value of women working and 'roaming around' the neighbourhood. This enforcement of moral norms, largely by comment, was sometimes far from subtle. Consequently the coincidence of age, marital status and norms of respectability shaped the way in which people interpreted and explained their experiences. Wider social change is reflected in these norms, evident in the difference between older and younger women's accounts of their work for NGOs. These changes and expectations inform the ways in which women are prepared to engage with certain kinds of work, men to take on other kinds of work, and the gendering of peoples' perceptions of NGOs. Despite all this, in practice, Vatuk points out, "what the agreed values or the mores of the mohalla really are, is uncertain." (1972)

"Boy's wouldn't have the patience for this kind of work" Gendered accounts of NGO work[147].

Rupa, Bhavana, neighbour and friends
I have come to talk to Rupa, who I have met before as part of a joint NGO group conducting a 'PLA survey' on the state of drainage in the colony. She works for Saheli Samiti, an NGO of long standing in the area with an avowedly feminist background, and had been appointed to lead the survey team, down the lanes of her residential block in the neighbourhood. All of the survey team are of a similar age, in their late 40s and early 50s, and old hands at surveying with the organisation. I am meeting Rupa at home. Also present are Bhavana (her daughter, age 19), Meenu (younger daughter, 17), her friend and another woman in her late 40s, who is simultaneously Rupa's friend, tenant upstairs, neighbour and relative. Sitting inside the newly rebuilt house, away from the lane and curiosity of neighbours, we perch ourselves around the back room of the house on two beds and a plastic chair. Bhavana starts to fold the stiff dry washing collected from the roof, making space for her younger sister and friend who sit together at the back of the room on one of the beds. Unusually, the household shrine is on the long wall, on a series of ledges, with faded pictures of a wedding, steel ware,

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[147] In this section I present the 'career-histories' of several NGO workers drawn from handwritten fieldnotes. Direct quotes have been marked with quotation marks ("…"). All other indented text should be considered paraphrasing, or indications of action. For reasons of brevity and clarity in the presentation of these cases, it should be noted that fieldnotes contain some initial interpretation and analysis. This also applies to the presentation of ethnographic data in the following chapter.

plastic mementos from visits to India Gate; in the centre of it all an image of the goddess Durga, wrapped round in red cloth and tinsel, faces east.

Both of the older women are from Gharwal in Uttaranchal originally. To start with Rupa talks about Punarvaspur, when she arrived with her husband from 'Lady Hardinge' Hospital at the time of the resettlement, and clearing the land with a hoe. It soon becomes clear that what she really wants to talk about is her work over the years for Saheli Samiti, who she says came to Punarvaspur in the early 1980s.

> "I used to go to meetings; they helped people get electricity, and they brought people together to sort out family problems; they used go around and sit and talk with people and generally did work in the area. It's like this; problems which come from you must be solved by you…I went to the meetings and I asked them straight out if they had a vacancy – a job, for livelihood" she says.

> "Were there problems about working?" I ask.

> Rupa argues that she wanted to work for Saheli Samiti in Punarvaspur, because they had worked in the neighbourhood for a while, and so people already knew who they were. "So I was working in my own area, people here already knew me. Also this [what she was telling people about] was information that people needed, it was useful to everyone and anyone. We went everywhere there might have been problems." She explains that getting her husband's permission to work was not a problem as they needed the money "I had to do something, so I had to make some work, it was vital."

> There is a pause as a neighbours' young son of about five or six comes in to borrow coloured cotton thread. Meenu is dispatched upstairs to find the spool of thread, and Rupa makes an aside to the other woman in *pahari*[148], "But there is nothing in this job; there is nothing when you retire, nothing is cut from your pay, there is no lump sum or pension."

> In spite of this, she still presents a positive view of Saheli Samiti: "These people were doing good work". Asking why she had wanted to join this organisation, she replies "we discussed issues, there were events for women, people joined for information." in tones that suggest this is obvious.

> The conversation breaks again, as Rupa goes to the door again to another enquiry. As she leaves the room, everyone relaxes a little, and the conversation turns to the many 'tuition' centres advertised in Punarvaspur. Bhavana herself it emerges teaches tuitions and also worked for an NGO.

> Bhavana explains that she has worked as a teacher in a *balwadi* for an NGO (Shikshan) in the neighbouring *jhuggi* area as one of three teachers. Her mother returning, interrupts to add that the NGO also works teaching older children who have missed out on school to read, outlining the ages and numbers of children. Bhavana continues, "Teaching is my *shauq*[149] and is popular amongst girls here", she says. "It is 'safe' work."

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[148] A hill dialect of Hindi.
[149] *shauq* – hobby, fancy, interest in life, fondness for

When she found out about the vacancy she explains, she thought it would be safe money and it was work she thought she would feel safe in. "Teaching is part time also, so people can look for other jobs or do courses" she adds.

She does not like working for big organisations, maintaining that this is because they require school and college certificates and work their staff for longer hours for less pay.

Bhavana also teaches small *silai*[150] courses. "*Silai* is for younger girls," she explains, "it is something girls learn when they are 15 or 16, something it is good to learn, but not really something girls to do for work".

"But computers are a must for all jobs." she adds decisively, describing learning to use them as a 'course' not 'study'. She uses the money she earns from teaching to pay for computer courses. "Most girls learn privately, especially after 10th [class at school] and up to graduation, and most parents want their girls to study to 10th" she says authoritatively, adding "Only those who get to 10th will consider computers."

Bhavana says that she'd like to be a teacher and that some time in the future perhaps she'll do her B.Ed, and other courses. If not she would like to have something else in her hands, to do work using computers perhaps, or a private job.

"Why not continue working for the NGO?" I ask.

"No, working there is not good – you can only work at the lowest level, and there you can only listen, you can't say anything. You can only do things at the lowest level, you just have to do what you're told. We can't raise your voice to object." She explains that there are only two posts in the field office of this NGO; as teacher and as field office head. But she complains that this NGO only supports men as 'heads', "because they can go to the field at anytime." As a result "a man would be appointed over a woman, even if he only has two weeks experience and she has two years; even though the head of the NGO is a woman herself."

She has decided to leave this particular NGO because of the limited opportunities to progress, and is now working for a different organisation part-time. She also teaches private tuitions and considers the money to be good, but the work hard. She continues with it because it allows her to do her computer courses.

"Here [in Punarvaspur] you will mostly see women working for NGOs (*sanstha)*" Bhavana comments.

"Why? Why do women work for for NGOs?" I ask.

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[150] *silai* – sewing/stitching. In this case learning to use a sewing machine and basic dress making skills. *Silai* courses are run by almost every NGO with a field office as they are seen as a good thing for girls to attend, as this is something girls should learn and know how to do, hence strong attendance can be guaranteed. Some NGOs made much of the enterprise, income generation for women aspect of their *silai* classes, but for girls themselves the classes were an expected part of education and allowed them to hang out with friends.

Bhavana's friend next to her explains: "It is because women connect (*sampark*) more easily with women. A woman can talk with other women more easily, and with men because there is a certain respect given to them, so it is possible to talk to both, unlike for men. Boys don't have the art of listening in comparison to girls. In the field you have to be patient, men are more aggressive, they don't have the art of listening."

Rupa rejoins the conversation, "Women are more able to talk to women more easily and more openly. Men keep themselves at a different level, they see themselves in better places, they can't take being talked back to." Bhavana and Rupa's neighbour nod in agreement at this. "Women can come and sit with people, men can't understand why women might be doing this, hence they are more suspicious, it is not within their definition of a job" Rupa says.

Bhavana adds, "Some boys come for the training and for the money. They want to be at ease, and leave after probably 2 or 3 days. Girls only step out of the house for work, but boys, they can go around doing nothing in the street. But this kind of work won't suit them. Boys wouldn't have the patience for this kind of work." At this point, as if on cue Rupa's *devar* (HyB) arrives, and everyone gets up.

It was always striking talking to women in Punarvaspur who have worked for Saheli Samiti, how articulately and coherently they presented their work for the NGO to interested outsiders like me and in workshop settings. Nonetheless, their accounts, as polished as they are, very much repeated the NGO's discourses. If asked about their work for the organisation, the reply was always in the polished narrative about the organisation itself, with a practised, confident listing of topics the organisation worked on, teaching girls their rights as married women (and stitching, framed as a means of livelihood), reproductive health, family dispute resolution. If pressed further about their own involvement, it was an agentive description of one of women telling other women of their rights. Some women had been employed by the organisation for more than 10 years and specialised in presenting training sessions on particular topics (e.g. using home remedies for simple ailments rather than expensive shop bought ones) or representing women in dowry harassment cases. Yet, the language used was consistent and was often peppered with watchwords or maxims about the topic, as when Rupa said "problems which come from you must be solved by you". These were oft-repeated words, but also a reflection of the organisation, which as its head made clear, had always made a point of employing women from the areas in which it works.

On another occasion, Rani who had also worked for Saheli Samiti, described starting to work for Saheli Samiti as especially formative; "When I came from the village with my man[151], I was a very simple person. If you had left me on the street [gesturing to the

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[151] Her husband i.e. when she got married.

end of the lane] I would not have known how to get home. I am still illiterate, but they [Saheli Samiti] taught me how to speak."

As fieldworkers they have often been invited into settings other than the 'field' to talk about their work, which is also tacitly a demonstration by the NGO of their transformation of these women from subjects in the locales in which they work, into women who are aware of their rights, as a products of the programmes themselves. The ideals are far from easy to take home at the end of the day either, the contradictions between what might be espoused and what might be practised was frequently discussed, particularly in the context of the family dispute settlement group[152]. Largely those women who had been part of the movement the NGO represented, were also those with more sympathetic households, and it was striking how those girls who had taken up NGO and other work after school, were also those with mothers who had been involved in this kind of work[153].

The contradictions of this position emerge more strongly in the reflections and critique of this work by other women who have worked for organisations - but in Rupa's account it is also a justification. She repeatedly talks of the need of an income, but she has also invested years in the organisation, in its work and in her continued work with it. She describes her skilled practice of 'making a connection' with other people, and being able to engage both men and women in Punarvaspur and beyond. Yet in her aside to her Pahari neighbour, there is also a recognition of the weakness of her situation compared to the security of a more formal job, that of a government worker, or those in the official discourse of the organisation, as a woman working for the rights of women. While it is ambivalent, Rupa's account also offers another view of NGO work in Punarvaspur; one of the possibility of autonomy and pride at being good at what she does, with the possibility of public recognition, unavailable when framed in terms of household work, responsibility and duty.

By comparison, Bhavana's account is far more critical, and far less invested in the work than her mother, for whom there is a great deal of self identity invested in the work. She evidently feels much less constrained and is much more pragmatic in her approach. Her work for an NGO was one of an income from her skills as a teacher of tuitions and stitching. Based perhaps on the difference between a more activist NGO such as Saheli Samiti grounded in feminist principles of consciousness raising, and the

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[152] This work had had an effect in the neighbourhood; one women who had been beaten up by her husband and mother in law when no more dowry was forthcoming in an attempt to force her out of the house (and her rights to live there), was persuaded by other women in her *gali*, seeing her injuries to take herself off to this group.

[153] See too Reena's account, below.

service provision organisation as Bhavana had worked for, there is not the need for the same commitment or investment of self in the organisation. The work itself is less problematic being based within the confines of the organisation and as she puts it she felt it would be 'safe money' and 'safe work'. As she points out teaching, especially skills like stitching is a suitable and desirable skill for teenage girls to learn (implicitly separating herself from this age group), so it is 'safe' in this respect, making it an appropriate activity or work for an unmarried girl; bringing to the surface again the importance, of respectability. NGO work is also 'safe' as a relatively reliable income in an area where in the constant scrabble for work, arbitrarily not being paid or not paid in full at the end of a day's casual work is not uncommon. While in her view stitching and tailoring is a good thing to learn, it is not really something girls her age (and arguably with her background) aspire to do.

Bhavana is an unusual case in her aspirations to work, and particularly to work beyond the neighbourhood. Although, perhaps because of her mother's work, unlike the few other girls I met, or came to know of who worked beyond the home and neighbourhood, she and her family are not considered as keeping themselves aloof from their neighbours. No longer having a household's women in work (or at least not officially) is a demonstration of there no longer being the necessity to work. Education and a degree of mobility to move around in its pursuit and in certain kinds of work like teaching is in some ways a further statement of aspiration, but not one that is appreciated by all residents. NGO work for Bhavana is a means to an end, presently computers, but perhaps sometime in the future a B.Ed. Her views were similar to other girls, for whom, as she says, teaching is a '*shauq*', a hobby; a statement which, as she pragmatically points out its usefulness in paying for a computer course, also serves to demote it as work or a job. This is less easy for her mother to do by dint of age and marital status – having a household's work to do, and so for whom such work is explained by necessity.

The account is striking though for its gendered account of the work NGOs do. As NGO workers, being female allows them to speak to both men and women. While women arouse less suspicion in Rupa's view, Bhavana's friend argues that boys don't have the art of listening necessary for such work, being more aggressive and less patient and as Rupa puts it, "keeping themselves at a different level" – simply considering themselves better. In response to my question as to whether women work for NGOs because NGOs deal with 'women's issues', or because it is seen as suitable work for women, the response is one that takes in both these possibilities. Bhavana and her mother both attribute their ability to work 'in the field' to being female. It means they can interact with other women, without being threatening in the way that the intentions of a

strange man might be seen as. As she says, "men can't understand why women might being doing this work, so they are suspicious", but while the actions of strangers walking around talking to people might be enough to raise suspicion, this suspicion is less threatening as women, than had they been men. Had they been men, by their logic, they would have been excluded from talking with women. Given the main occupation of NGOs in the area is education of different kinds, and the underlying assumption that it is women who will be around the home during the working day – who the main interaction will be with, this would be a serious drawback.

Yet why does it seem to be mainly women who work for NGOs? It is explained that this is because men are usually working, and so it is women who come to NGOs. Hence for NGOs, it makes sense to work on 'women's' issues – and offer women's work – to women, because they are available. But underneath this, there is also a claim about personality and gender being made here. Boys, Bhavana says, do not have the art of listening in comparison to girls, and aside from a lack of patience, they do not take criticism well. Through their understanding and empathy, women can connect better with other women – but it is also a connection that can involve taking criticism and comment too – acceptable between women, (and perhaps between men), or from someone more senior. But, criticism which is irritating, trying to the patience when between the sexes, for a man in an inferior position. In this way such work or listening and taking criticism can be understood as not being in the definition of a job for a man as explained by these women. In Bhavana's statement that boys come only for the training and money, she adds "They want to be at ease, and leave after probably 2 or 3 days". The idea of this as proper work as young men is shrugged off in a similar manner to Rupa's and Bhavana's displacement of this as a necessity or hobby respectively, but as work not as a job.

In the divide between 'suitable' work and 'acceptable' work for boys and girls, Bhavana's friend makes a telling comment "Girls only step out of the house only for work. Boys, they can go around doing nothing in the street." She adds, "But this kind of work won't suit them." From the perspective of Bhavana's friend, it is work itself that makes it acceptable to leave the house or *gali*. The street or *sarak* by comparison is a much free-er space, with fewer censorious eyes of family and neighbours, but which carries its own risks. NGO work is more acceptable because this kind of work is carried out in the company of other women. It is also 'suitable' work, as the skills it requires, are also skills which girls 'should' know as in the case of stitching (just as they should know about cooking and running the house), or which it would be useful to know (e.g. tailoring). Both stitching and being sufficiently educated to give tuitions are

activities that can turn an income and be done respectably from home; often they were explained as a kind of insurance policy against future misfortune[154].

In Bhuvana's, her mother Rupa's, and Rani's accounts (below) reputation remains of great importance, even as they themselves work for an avowedly feminist organisation, highlighting the problems of mobility, work and female participation in the labour market. As Penny Vera-Sanso notes "females in a family take up work, and the type, location, hours and remuneration of work chosen are not primarily selected in terms of greatest returns but in terms of their impact on the individual's and family's social reputation." (2000, 163). Reputation, in its operation in the gendered spaces of the neighbourhood, means that even the appearance of individual interests and agency beyond the household, opens them up to the risk "of needlessly exposing themselves to unwanted sexual encounters, if not actually seeking them." (2000, 163), even as they may be accruing socially valuable skills, such as stitching.

Rani: responsibilities, risk and mobility
Rani describes her first meeting with the forerunning group to Saheli Samiti:

> "At first they would come and show themselves and teach us. They would come around 10 in the morning and call [on] us; they never had any materials or anything, but would sit us down on rags and teach us. We told them, 'we're very busy, we have houses and husbands to look after', but whatever we told them, they would still come back the next day. They would do things for us like take us to the dispensary, help our children get admission to school and things like that, until we were all involved. Through this came the idea that if we were all involved we should be a group, and we would need our own name. 'If you go somewhere,' they said, 'what will you call yourselves?' We said we'd call ourselves '*Saath Saath*' [Together]. Their main aim was to pull all of us women out of our houses, so afterwards they went and worked elsewhere. I was sad about that'.

But for all Rani says, moving around is not that easy. As if to illustrate this, halfway through the conversation her daughter appears with three other teenage girls and complains to her mother about boys in the street passing crude comments[155]. Similarly, as Rani suggests, married women leaving their houses to work for an NGO, saw other women in their *gali*, and the wider neighbourhood, impute their actions as abandoning husbands, housework, responsibilities and children, in pursuit of a job and money[156].

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[154] With an emphasis on non-confrontationary, if non-transformative work, much NGO work with women in Punarvaspur, is still very much in the 'Women in Development' (WID) vein.
[155] Rani lives on the same lane as the previous case of name-calling and harassment in Chapter 4, and the culprit was said to be the same boy. Eventually, another family's brother threatened the boy with a beating if he didn't desist harassing the girls in his lane. As noted earlier, in the street (*sarak*), this was considered fair game.
[156] Likewise, Vera-Sanso notes "one of the key objections of women working [is] that if women earn independent incomes they will become arrogant and disobey their husbands." So her

This especially as women working for the more activist NGOs found themselves trying to persuade their neighbours to join them to support a particular programme. In combination, this drew the cynical, but not unplaced reaction that "They must be paying you so well you can afford to leave your home! Don't you people have housework? Why should we do this work for free?"

Umrao: fieldwork, critique and making the most of contacts
Umrao is a Muslim woman of a similar age to both Rupa and Rani, in her early 50s or so, and had by her own account, also been a senior fieldworker at Saheli Samiti. However, when I meet her, she is sitting on a step, mobile phone in hand, supervising the construction work going on in the house opposite. As we walk down the side of it into her 'office' and house, the sign above a door announces it as 'Qaabil Public School'.

> Umrao describes how she had come to live in New Punarvaspur with her husband in 1981 when they moved away from his parents' house in South Punarvaspur, and his parents moved back to Agra. About a year after they had moved into this plot they bought the plot behind it. They had 5 children at the time and she was pregnant with her sixth when her husband who was a pearl wholesaler left to go on a sales tour of several large cities. He never returned. Her in laws told her, after some time, that she should sell the plots and move to Agra with them, but she refused. 'What if he came back? And what would the people in the *gali* think? That I knew he was never going to come back? I had good skills (*hunar*) at stitching, so that's what I did.' She describes how slowly her neighbours and others in the community started to bring her things to sew, and this is how she made money for the next 12 years. She found having to make her own money taking in clothes and sewing quite a step. "In our families, women did not step outside. We belonged to a respectable middle class family, so it was not right to go outside and work." After sometime she started supplementing her sewing income by teaching Urdu, "although when I was married, I was only 10th class matric[157]."
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> After some 10 years or so she thought about getting some legal information about her situation. When she met some Saheli Samiti women talking about the legal rights of women, she agreed to go to one of their workshops. She says that they were impressed at how she had managed to bring up her children, and after a few days they agreed to offer her a job as a fieldworker, for a few hours a day. "We used to go around and talk to people, exactly like you are doing, getting to know them and their problems." With time, she says 'responsibility started coming and I became a [legal] caseworker for Mahila Panchayat [family dispute resolution group].
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> "There is some resistance to 'social work' and NGOs here in Punarvaspur, mostly from men," she notes. About the time she had joined Saheli Samiti, the organisation had decided to stop being a women only group, and that it had to bring men in. "You can't say that men are always wrong or are the problem,

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husbands, and her reputation are at risk. "This is also why Shantamma emphasises the necessity for her continuing work." (2000, 125)

[157] 'matric' refers to matriculation, or 10th class exams.

because men can make a mistake or do wrong things like anyone. So we said we have to talk about this and treat people as individuals. We were feminists (*naribadii*), so we did not have a good image in this area. Men were against this work, so this is why we had to include men. The image of fieldworkers as feminists was not good."

Talking about the work she does, she says "Social work, may seem to be 10 to 3 o'clock, but really it is a 24 hour job; something that never stops. Today many people only pretend that they are doing social work. They want to think that they are doing it for the people, but they forget that they are doing it for themselves. There are arguments between people doing this work, but they forget that they are meant to be working together".

After some years of working for them, she made the decision to leave Saheli Samiti. "There was always a core group and the governing body at Saheli Samiti who used to take decisions, and we the fieldworkers were never asked… You can only stay doing this kind of work, if you don't care how it works, if you stay as a 'puppet' (*katputli*)." She explains that she had worked for long enough in the organisation to see that as a fieldworker it was only possible to progress so far in the organisation, after a point, it was impossible to move up. She describes funding for projects as "coming round like rungs on a ladder", so as one project was finished, another project was set up, so rather than working on a problem in the neighbourhood, the project funding meant that the organisation could remain in the area. "It is very difficult to be a fieldworker. Once you are a fieldworker, you see how things are done, and then it is very difficult to be a fieldworker anymore. You have to stop."

After she left Saheli Samiti she decided to continue teaching Urdu, and to set up a small school in the area. As the quality of teaching in Government Primary School was so poor, she felt there was a need for affordable education in the area, without small children having to travel a distance to learn.

She explains her choice of this work, and her determination to do 'social work', as coming from her religion. "I wanted to teach Urdu to other women in Punarvaspur, as well to children, because it is important to do *namaaz*. But because I also wanted to teach why *namaaz* was important too." She decided to set up her own organisation to do this. "To start with, I used to haul women from their homes and sit them down and tell them this. This upset their men who said, 'please don't call our women, you can come to us, but please don't call our women." One man had said that "this work, it brings disruption," so she had told him, "My Urdu is very thick, it brings unity (*ithihad*)."

She went to discuss this issue, and what she was doing with people in the surrounding Muslim community, with some 'wise people in [Old] Delhi'. "I asked them, 'is this wrong?' and they said it was not wrong, but maybe I should change the way I was working. Now I say, come if you wish, but I am not running behind you, I don't get a salary. Some still do come."

After about a year of running her school, when she had enrolled 20 children, another man in the neighbourhood told her that she needed a man to run it, and that otherwise she should shut it down. "And where would I get another man from?!" she laughs. She went round and talked to people who had helped her set it up. "Where else would these children learn?" she said, and other people told her to keep it open. After that however, she contacted people she had

known through Saheli Samiti and other NGOs and decided to do her B.Ed in Urdu at Jamia Millia Aligarh University "then no one could challenge me."

During this time she also taught sewing and adult literacy courses at the YWCA and she had been encouraged to go set up her organisation by them too. "The problem is also that there is much corruption in this [NGO] work…For organisations, the giving of money has become like a business. Even those people collecting money for *madrasas*, or for NGO work, each will get a percentage." She explains how she had applied for some funding herself to pay for making the classroom bigger. A man at Jamia Milia Aligarh [University] had told her of some funding available, but that he had asked for Rs5000 to help her get it, "I said that for that, I might as well build up my house."

"The problem with *sanstha* (organisations), is that they hold *jan sunwais*[158] and call people to big meetings, saying, 'Come! We have done all this', but they have done very little, or have just called people to show how many will come." She explains that there are many people in NGOs in Punarvaspur, mainly with teaching children and running stitching classes because people will come together for these. "But nothing changes, people lose interest in NGOs because they come, they write and they leave!"

"But people have learnt from NGOs. They have learnt to criticise NGOs; [because] they are aware of more things because of NGOs. It is from these NGOs that people can see that there are problems here, but also that there it is a difficult to be able to do things, to be able to change things, or to speak out. It is from NGOs that people see these things, these things that are not so easy to see. It is from this that they can criticise NGOs, but if it were not for NGOs they would not know to do so."

She tells me that people have lost trust in Saheli Samiti. "They hold you close when they want you, but when they aren't interested in you, they do not." "People have become smart here," she argues. "They know that organisations will come, talk and write about Punarvaspur and send [the report] away, but that nothing will really change. People have become smart because they have worked with NGOs, so they have learned and gained awareness, about what they can do, but also that there is not much that can change. You can put flour into salt, and it will go, but you cannot mix salt into flour.[159]" she concludes.

Like Rupa, Umrao's entry into work was through necessity after her husband disappeared. However, while a struggle, it appears in her account, through an entry into NGO work, as one of greater opportunity and a gaining of critical awareness (*jagrook*) of the world around. This awareness has come through her own and fellow resident's exposure to NGOs, working for them, but out of this, also being able to comment and criticise this work through the same categories and concerns as the NGOs themselves.

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[158] Literally a people's hearing: large public meetings, often with a court-like structure of 'evidence' presented to the people, often in front of a panel of invited observers.

[159] '*Aate me namak chal sakta hai, par namak me, aata na chal sakta hai*' i.e. the organisation, she argues, has outlived its good will; there has been too much salt added to the flour.

Umrao's portrayal of her work, is a more formal negotiation than Rupa's, consulting 'known people' in the neighbourhood. She is also more secure in her work than Rupa, who still situates her involvement as something that is not quite work. This endorsement by other 'known people' in the neighbourhood, and the parents of the children is an advantage when Umrao's work is challenged by the other school owner, that she should not be doing such work as a woman. She, similarly negotiates the reactions of the men of her area to her 'pulling women out of their homes'. Even though she frames the need for women's' literacy in terms of a better understanding of their *namaaz*, in practice she opts, informed by her experience as an NGO worker, to soften her approach to one of encouragement to attend, so maintaining her support within the neighbourhood.

For Umrao, as for other Punarvaspur fieldworkers with Saheli Samiti and other organisations, NGO work has also brought them into contact with a range of other networks. It has taken them out of the 'field' and into other settings in the city, sometimes into rallies (e.g. in support of a Domestic Violence Bill[160]), more often as representatives of the neighbourhood, or as trainers conducting workshops for other organisations. As such they have often appeared as fieldworkers from a 'slum' neighbourhood who can speak 'authentically', as well as fieldworkers from an organisation with particular interests and experience (e.g. 'non-formal education'). It has also brought resident NGO workers into contact with other organisations, and an awareness of opportunities in other organisations, or of other organisations looking to set up work in a particular area[161]. Her work for Saheli Samiti, at Jamia Milia Islamia University doing her B.Ed, and in teaching literacy courses at the YWCA has given Umrao a number of contacts that she has been able draw on. Being able to take these up and maintain them has given her wider access to possible resources and funding for her own organisation, as well as a greater profile amongst people interested in her school in Punarvaspur. These networks have allowed some NGO workers to broaden their options in terms of employers and becoming known for their own work. A number, (notably all the male resident NGO workers I know), sizing up their options in one NGO, had decided that their skills at doing things like leading survey teams and solving school admission headaches were better used elsewhere, and were recruited, or followed connections out of one NGO into another in East Delhi. This approach, of

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[160] This was a particular bugbear of Umrao's, noting how she had diligently gone round collecting signatures for a petition, only to find two years later the same job was still being done by women NGO workers at events – and in the same areas as before, so that she asked 'What was the point? It was just giving people something to do?! There is no benefit to that work.' I sympathise with her point of view, having been asked to sign the same petition four times in the course of the year by different women workers.

[161] This is not uncommon; a number of NGOs had chosen to work in particular areas because they already knew fieldworkers there, hence an area becomes associated with NGO work.

reflexive consideration of their organisation, and transfer of skills elsewhere is much more like a 'career' than typical home, or close locality based work would allow.

However, as Umrao is at pains to point out, such exposure to the large numbers of '*sanstha*' (organisations) over the years have left residents cynical as to what such organisations can achieve, or what their motives to change the area really are, beyond writing project proposals simply obtain more funds for their work. This was a problem acknowledged by several people working in the main offices of organisations with projects in Punarvaspur[162]. Some argued that the project money could be used to benefit the area, even if it was not a good project[163], and gaining funding on this basis could be frustrating, as even when money for a project was obtained, the project itself could be thwarted by the MCD's refusal to put in permanent infrastructure facilities. But as various people commented, with so many NGOs and so much money over the years, why is Punarvaspur still like it is? Umrao herself criticises the lack of commitment people have to 'social work', for whom it is just a job, while she is as aware as anyone of the need for that job.

Yet, while Umrao is critical of the NGOs that have come to work in Punarvaspur over the years, it is not so much the programmes of the organisations, as the gap between practice and ideals propounded that she takes issue with. Paradoxically, she points out, that for all people's cynicism of NGOs, much of the work on 'empowerment', on giving people a voice, and encouraging people to consider their rights seems to have made people consider the work of the NGOs themselves.

Reena and Ramesh: becoming a 'known person'
Like Umrao, Reena and Ramesh, quite separately, have become relatively well known through their work in the area. Reena has never worked for Saheli Samiti, although she knows many of the women in the area who have. Instead, she has been making ends meet after her husband left her, now nearly 20 years ago, at first by working for an *anganwadi*[164], and when that came to an end, decided to set up her own. Since then she has taken to teaching tuitions to small children in the *gali*s, supervising their home work and filling in the large gaps left by a government school education. Her daughter, Pragati, having passed her Class 12 exams, works in the Hindi call centre of a popular mobile phone company, and Reena, aside from trying to persuade Pragati to

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[162] As one NGO worker of an international NGO pointed out to me with some chagrin, "but now that they have fixed the drain in that lane, we can no longer take [the funding body] down there".

[163] 'What [area] needs is new sewerage, not 'beautification'.' I was exasperatedly told of one project supposed to tackle 'urban governance', funded by an international donor.

[164] *Anganwadi* – essentially pre-school childcare/crèche, sometimes with a basic teaching element.

sign up for a BA correspondence degree at IGNOU[165], is herself more determined to stick with her work in the neighbourhood. When the Delhi Right to Information (DRTI) group came round a few years ago she was very enthusiastic, and determined to get involved as she could see it would be very useful, and figured as it was a new organisation that they might have a job. While she offered to work in the newly set up 'Soochna Kendra' (information centre) in an old STD/PCO booth just off the Main Street fruit market, she claims it was full of men who sat around and did nothing, and so not a good place to work. DRTI conversely, claim that she was demanding money for what they had said was a voluntary job. However, Reena like Umrao had used her time volunteering with DRTI to make links with other NGOs, particularly women's organisations in the city, actively soliciting them for funds to set up her own group in Punarvaspur. Conversations with Reena were always punctuated by persuasion to sign one or another petition, and to talk over what I thought of the latest group's meeting she had attended. Most recently, she had started to be busily involved with the small BJP group, based in neighbouring Gulshan Extension, as part of their Mahila Mandal. For this my opinion was solicited to admire the large number of photographs of a tent which had been set up in the middle of the Main Street to protest against the fast running electricity meters of the newly privatised electricity companies.

Like Umrao, Reena, not needing to persuade her husband or mother in law (*sas*) of the need to work, had found NGO work offered a means to meeting other activists across the city. In doing so, it opened up a number of different networks that could potentially be tapped for funding and an income, in the role of an activist woman. Both Umrao and Reena shared the character traits of being strong personalities, and both had, prior to their marriages been educated further than most women in Punarvaspur at the time. Reena was halfway through a Masters degree in Bareilly, before her mother put a stop to it, getting her married to a man who swiftly moved to Delhi. After a series of unsuccessful jobs, he left her with two year old Pragati to bring up. "My mother didn't let me come up. I'd have been in a better position now if she had. I don't want to stop my daughter. … Now I have to work, my husband is 'missing', so it is only my daughter and me."

Umrao had found her experiences of working for an NGO frustrating, unable to progress up the organisation beyond her place as a fieldworker, the organisation's goals increasingly driven by the search for funding. Perversely, this is a problem she now finds herself and her school with. Reena too struggles to balance respectability as

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[165] Indira Gandhi National Open University. Correspondence courses are a popular choice with girls considering degrees in Punarvaspur as they do not require regular long, insecure journeys to college, or in Pragati's case would have allowed her to keep up her job.

a single woman, with the need for an income, by trying to set up her own organisation, the 'Nari Raksha Samiti'[166], which will work, inevitably perhaps, – 'to make women aware of their rights', where she will be the 'in-charge'. Yet as she reminds me, "If a girl goes out [to work], it will depend on the girl herself – if she has bad intentions, people will definitely comment. Even if that girl is careful and something happens, then people will comment that 'these things will happen'"

Ramesh used to be a business man. Although he had done some work for Saheli Samiti in the past, he had lost patience with it, and gone back to concentrating on a number of different business interests he had. A few years later, he was contacted by some one at Saheli Samiti, who put him in touch with a person from the DRTI, as they were looking to set up their office in neighbouring resettlement colony, Suraj Nagar. He went along, and despite his misgivings about NGOs, decided to get involved.

> "The difference is that DRTI follow up. They don't just build the curiosity about RTI and then leave, or say, ok, now file one yourself. DRTI people themselves go with people to file the RTI, and help them to run from window [service counter] to window, from officer to officer, and help explain to them how it works. So many NGOs, would just give you the leaflet with the information that this kind of ration should cost so much, and this one so much, and would leave it at that. But for DRTI, that is where it begins, it is about what happens after that."

He explains that he was so convinced by the value of the work, that after some time he decided to let his business interests go and, taking a pay cut despite his young family, went to work full time for DRTI. I venture that for many residents in Punarvaspur, an NGO job is just a job. Ramesh, agrees, NGO work in Punarvaspur has become like this, but disputes that his experience of DRTI has been like this. He had previously spoken about his long struggle with his father to be allowed to stay on at school up to 10th class, which he lost, leaving school early to start working. "Even with this, I feel for myself that I have become quite well known. I have learnt a lot, I know a lot about how things are and how things work." He continues "When my children were smaller, money didn't matter so much as now that they are getting older. …The business I had before when I started working for DRTI could have gone to zero, or could have made a lot of money, but – who knows?" For the moment he says that it is work that he believes in, and he gets satisfaction from that. He points out that when he rings up government offices now, they know who he is, and that people often bring him problems because he knows who to ask and how they might be solved, "So I have become a known person in the neighbourhood." This impression is compounded one streamingly wet monsoon morning in the Soochna Kendra office waiting for the worst of the rain to abate, after hearing to a series of people's problems with ration cards and

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[166] Literally, the 'Women's Protection Committee'.

school admissions, he is jokingly teased by friends: "So Ramesh – when are you going to stand for office?!...I'll be your election agent!"

Similarly, Reena's standing in neighbouring *gali*s has risen with her work on getting people to resist the replacement of their old mechanical electricity meters with new ones. Talking incidentally with another woman in a neighbouring *gali* about the political furore around the subject, but also what should be done, I was told I should go and speak to a certain woman about the subject, who I soon realised was Reena. "She is not with an NGO, but she came round and told us that we should not let them replace the old meters unless they were broken, and that these were our rights. She is quite a 'known person'[167] round here; some one you can take problems to."

These two depictions of Reena and Ramesh as 'known persons' is much like descriptions of political leaders in the early days of Punarvaspur. Being a known person can work on several levels, as part of a network of people known to you through places such as a worksite (more like contacts), or they can be brokers. Or as in the case of Reena and Ramesh, and perhaps in a slightly different way, Umrao, they may be people who know the system and people within it, and how it can be made to work. Crucially, they are people who have become prominent through this, and through doing this work for other people, whether as a form of social work programme, or through part of a conviction about how things should work. For both of them, there is evidently also a satisfaction in doing this work, from their recognition in the area, and in government offices, and the gain of importance, and becoming a 'known person' through it.

Conclusion

Of those people in Punarvaspur who work for NGOs, most are women. Stretched between two strong ideologies, of feminism, empowerment and demands for equality, against the requirements of family, and reputation and lesser confrontation that offers, it is an ambiguous position, not always easy to reconcile. Most strikingly in this chapter is the degree to which reputation and morality structure, constrain, and on occasion (i.e. necessity) provide legitimate reasons to act in the public space of the neighbourhood; more precisely to leave the house to work. This challenges prevailing perceptions of morality, respectability and reputation, and the withdrawal of women from the labour market as being a middle class phenomenon. On the contrary, the women fieldworkers here offer an insight into the negotiations they perform in order to continue their work in the public space of the neighbourhood.

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[167] *jaan pechaan*

Despite this, for women who work for NGOs, this work often had to be juggled with being part of a larger extended family, and it was the overtly feminist (*naribadi)* principles that were more often left at the front door. This suggests that faced with the powerful discursive field of the neighbourhood, the ability to 'translate' (Merry 2006), stops. Here the structural mobility of NGO work, comes up against the powerful discourses of respectability which serve to fix these women in the place of the neighbourhood. But, as Bhavana's experiences showed, there are also times or situations in life where as a job, NGO work may be more acceptable. While for Reena and Umrao NGO work really has been a necessity, it is also framed by many fieldworker-resident women as such, effectively demoting its status, as Rupa does, as a job. The gendering of the most NGO work as appropriate for women, as non-threatening and un-aggressive; people who will listen and take criticism, while reflecting women as the primary target of such work, reflects way in which such work is 'localised' and fixed close to 'home'[168], as well as reflecting historically its 'Women In Development' (WID) background.

However, it is extremely difficult to rise above the field office as a fieldworker, particularly so as a women. Here issues of mobility kick in, even if women NGO workers were championed for 'hauling women out of their houses', as the discourse structures relationships in the opposite direction, in practice women fieldworker-residents are hired because of their basis in the locale, as representatives of the community from which they come. The binding association with both the 'field' as a physical site of NGO work (head offices as not the place for '*basti'*('slum') women) with the gendered, discursive field of the neighbourhood, converge to form a ceiling that it is particularly hard to break through. This emphasises forces that act and shape the act of translation "up and down" (Merry 2006, 42) between office and field, and as Massey shows, the way in which social relations serve to 'fix' people in 'their place' as well.

This experience is in contrast to the few men I met who had worked for NGOs, who had had relatively 'technical' jobs surveying, inputting data into computers, or bookkeeping, and were relatively easily able to move between NGOs, owing to their greater mobility beyond the neighbourhood. As I came to the end of my fieldwork, three men who had all worked as surveyors for one long standing NGO finally decided, as they failed to receive direct payment for some consultancy work they had done, (demonstrating survey methods to another NGO), they had had enough of the

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[168] There are parallels here with Massey, who suggests that the association with women with the 'local' and 'home' can be seen as a powerful, nostalgic, patriarchal attempt to stabilise the space-time relations that make up 'place' (1994, 10; 166).

head office-field office divide and their inability to influence or gain credit for work, either in terms of praise or respect. All of them left for other NGOs jobs they had come to know of in East Delhi. Between them two left for the newly set up NGO of the Chief Minister's son and local MP, and the other to join friends at the DRTI group (which has tried to obviate the problem of structural hierarchies within an organisation by locating it's head office within the main area it worked). As Elyachar (2005, 168), Umrao and the examples of the men above point out, NGOs are also prime sources of contacts, and potential future access to officials, or funding etc., adding further to their draw. However, the gap between head office and field office remains a major source of friction, fuelled not least by assumptions of ability based on class and location.

Yet despite being caught between competing ideologies of comportment as men and women, and again between expectations of them as 'slum dwellers', beneficiaries of a project, and as people doing a job, NGO work has changed people's expectations and outlooks, particularly those working for them. However, the gap between 'head' and 'field' office, middle and working class, centre and periphery in the city still persists, perhaps particularly as viewed from the top-down perspective of the 'head' office. From this angle, the existence of the organisation's field offices and projects remain in many ways, it's raison d'etre. This is rather different to the way in which Ramesh suggests that NGOs should be seen. He argues instead that, NGOs should be seen as mediators, "An NGO is a mediating agency between citizen and government. They work on whatever there is a lack of in a community or neighbourhood; lack of information, services etc. There is that gap and NGOs 'facilitate that lack', they look at how they should start to fill that gap." This is a point that is taken up again the following chapter.

Generally, Umrao claims, exposure to NGOs has allowed people to be and become more critical of them, and to see them also, just as programmes and jobs, an interpretation which fits the large number of 'service-based' NGOs in the area. Certainly Punarvaspur's designation as a resettlement colony, as a suitable site for research, begs a number of questions about it and its residents' construction largely as potential passive beneficiaries, as well as what any of the outcomes of endless surveys ever are. Yet in spite of this, and Umrao's assertion, that once you have been a fieldworker for an NGO, it is impossible to remain one, most of these people with their more critically informed understanding of the relations between NGOs, funding and the inevitable surveys' have remained as she has, NGO workers of one kind or another. This begs the question, as Merry asks, whether these acts of translation, can actually produce changes in an indidivual subjectivities (2006, 43). For Quamar, it is clear that she believes so of herself, offering her newly critical eyes. But it is also clear in what she

says that she is sceptical of the work that NGOs do, through people like herself, to truly effect change in subjectivities of recipients, rather than perhaps tactical positioning by organisations and recipients to take advantage of the possible goods of development.

For some fieldworker-residents this work has opened up a number of different possibilities, mostly through networks of contacts and connections formed between people in other organisations. These may lead to better jobs and possibly funding, as well as knowledge about how the system itself works, which may be beneficial to others around them[169]. While there is rarely any 'benefit' in the monetary sense associated with political allegiances, and certainly the requests made to NGOs to get things done are not always the same as those that might be made to the local Councillor or MLA, for some NGO workers, their work has also given them an importance or increased status in the neighbourhood.

However, as Rupa's situation shows, these more critical positions are far from easy to hold amidst a number of other important facets of identity. Such work competes with what they see as their own responsibilities, as well as the responsibilities asserted by the surrounding community, neighbours and family. Their multiple positions as a member of an organisation, as a vocation but also as a job, and at the same time, as wife, mother, daughter in law too, remains a fraught experience.

In this chapter, I have examined how residents who also work for NGOs narrate and negotiate, and tack between the dilemmas of work, discourses of development, reputation and respect in their everyday lives in the locale. Positioned as 'translators' (Merry 2006), they find themselves in the tricky position of mediating – and translating between both groups' concerns. While one level 'replicating' (Merry 2006, 45) the messages of rights, delivered in plays, by megaphone and word of mouth in the case of the Delhi Right to Information Group, or on the legal rights of married women in workshops or classes for teenage girls run by Saheli Samiti, here the message is relatively unchanged. Both trajectories of contemporary development discourses about the role of NGOs and suitability of women as targets of development ('WID', 'GAD' etc.), combined with the pragmatic gendering of development work (since men are

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[169] One example of this was a young woman I met, the same age as me, who had only recently joined her husband in his family home in Punarvaspur from eastern UP, despite being married for several years. She was being deprived of food and regularly beaten by her in-laws in the hopes she would abandon the marriage, as it had become evident that her parents were both too poor to keep her, or to provide additional dowry. Here the 'panopticon' of the gali had worked to her advantage as other women had in her gali had put her in touch with women fieldworkers from Saheli Samiti. They had been helping her to file an FIR with the 'Women's Cell of the police, and to bring a case confirming her right to remain in her marital home.

assumed to be the prime economic earners, and out at work), together make women, like the ones in this chapter, particularly well positioned to 'translate' and mediate between organisation and field. However, such work is also carried out across the moral terrain of the neighbourhood, where receptiveness to the messages of NGOs are likely to be tempered by the operation of gendered discourses of reputation and respectability, drawn through different categories of identity (Fernandes 1997, 5). Within the discursive spaces of the neighbourhood, resident-fieldworkers are experts at 'hybridising' the message they work with, in setting. This shapes not only what these resident fieldworkers may say or do, but also whether it will be 'heard'. But by examining how women negotiate local idioms of reputation and respectability through narratives about their work in the neighbourhood, as they position themselves in their 'career'-stories, the possibilities and parameters for such work, also emerge. Exploring this, not from the 'inside' of an organisation (as Hilhorst (2003) and Heaton (2001) have instructively done), but from the external view of the neighbourhood, brings out many of the complexities and constraint of not only working for an NGO, but also the dilemmas of living and working in a place very much defined by development. As such these stories provide insights into how women position themselves, 'translating' within and through these narratives, negotiating categories of class and respectability, through gender, as part of the multiple relationships which form the 'power-geometry' (Massey 1994) of social relations that socialises the space through which they move, and their ability to act in the neighbourhood (Fernandes 1997).

"NGOS SHOULDN'T DO THAT KIND OF WORK"
Negotiating representations and NGO norms

In the last chapter I looked at the 'career'-histories of some Punarvaspur residents who worked for NGOs, in their position as 'translators' (Merry 2006). In this ambiguous situation, they found themselves mediating between their work as NGO employees, and their position as residents of the same locale in which they work, as spouses, parents and householders. Examining the narratives emerging from their 'career'- (as opposed to life-) histories, I showed how women NGO fieldworker-residents found themselves mediating between discourses about women's empowerment, and equally strongly gendered themes of respectability and propriety. This act of 'translating' (Merry 2006), mediating the NGO's messages between organisation and field, relies on fieldworker-residents' abilities to operate tactically across boundaries of identities in their interactions within the neighbourhood. It also offers a sharp insight into an NGO, and the operation of hierarchies within. Themes of respectability and appropriate movement gender the space of the neighbourhood and illustrate the uncomfortable position in which fieldworker-residents find themselves, moving between the organisation and field. As a result, I argue, that fieldworkers find themselves tacking between these different discourses, presenting their 'career'-histories in frames which attempt to balance their positions as respectable residents, against promoting NGO programmes on empowerment, even as this work has given them a critical insight into both.

In this chapter I follow some of the same residents into a very different setting; the 'end of project' workshop held by a group of NGOs connected with Punarvaspur, in the chilly air-conditioned refinement of a prestigious central New Delhi institution. The purpose was to present the findings and conclusions they had drawn from a project which had envisaged the galvanisation of residents, like these fieldworkers into 'community action', to demand the 'public accountability' of, and their right to public services. More practically the purpose of the workshop was to reflect very explicitly on the participating organisations' own experiences of the project, and the other invited organisations' experiences of trying to demand adequate services from the state. The workshop was unusual, and is interesting here for broaching a remarkably open (and heated) debate about what the role of NGOs 'should' be, and how they

should relate to the state, bureaucracy and politicians. In the struggle to normatively define and place NGOs as actors in the course of this debate, a parallel questioning of the internal hierarchies and workings of NGOs also emerges. The workshop offers an unusual view of interactions taking place across various "discursive fields" (Merry 2006, 40) of different organisation's interests, shedding light on the underlying structures which shape the practices, ideas and interactions taking place. Both inside and between organisations, these debates were stretched taut across the differences of class, status, language and security of income.

I will argue that while propelled by international development discourses circulating about 'civil society', the struggle NGOs face here is to make their work and themselves fit into its normative forms. Locating their 'recipients' as variously 'slum dwellers' or the 'urban poor', as well as citizens with rights, NGOs are struggling to deal both with the older idea of welfare, and the newer ideal of rights. This means framing their work in terms of rights, in order to continue accessing and delivering for people the public services and welfare they are entitled to from the state including education, water, drainage, power or PDS[170]. In the struggle to make both practices of rights and entitlements work, the uncertainties and near identity crisis of NGOs present at the workshop make more sense. In the face of these uncertainties, the boundaries of what NGOs should be doing, and their relationship to the state, suddenly appears blurred, and indeed are changing.

In this chapter, the wider circulation of 'global' discourses of development, and their interaction with 'local'[171] contexts can be seen, with discourses around 'civil society' interwoven with other contemporary discourses about rights, as they are expressed and contested in these particular settings in Delhi. Not least the question of what should and shouldn't NGOs do? These debates can be seen as a struggle, quite pragmatically, over the power offered by the ability to successfully represent others, and so to access the public goods of welfare, whether as a civil society organisation, or as a politician. Being able to negotiate these representations is increasingly important, especially as access to welfare is increasingly available to those framed in terms of rights.

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[170] Public distribution system (PDS), system for the distribution of flour, rice, sugar and kerosene at differently subsidised rates according to income.

[171] Merry notes the highly problematic nature of these terms in which "cluster of ideas evoked by *local* and *global* goes far beyond their spatial referents" (2006, 39). She asks how "things we call 'global' are often circulating locals," such that these terms "have a recalcitrant tendency to shape discussions of transnational phenomena" (2006, 40) like human rights, development or civil society.

Civil society

The question of what NGOs should and shouldn't do, is a vexed one. As discussed in the introduction, 'civil society' emerges from a number of theoretical genealogies, undermining any sense of there being a unified concept, but also observing the tendency for writing about 'civil society' to be normative: arguing how civil society *should* relate to the state and society. As Hann notes, this normative view of social life is not only 'thin', but often also contains a slide between what *is*, and how such organisations '*ought to be*' (Hann 1996, 18). Pointing towards a more descriptive than normative consideration of civil society, De Neve shrewdly notes that:

> "'Civil society' is not necessarily 'civil' in the sense that it contributes to democracy, freedom and equality merely because it is composed of local or community based associations…[instead]…civil society organisations might well be central to the way in which inequalities and social boundaries are reproduced and consolidated and they may be limited in their ability to curb imbalances or challenge inequalities." (2005, 307)

This last point emphasises the potentially exclusive nature of some 'civil society' type organisations, and the problem that many accounts about civil society, neglect the heterogeneity within organisations, their inequalities of access and hierarchies. These aspects only emerge through a more descriptive approach, asking what *is* there, rather than what *ought* to be there. Yet, in the course of the workshop, it is evident, that many of the 'normative' qualities of discussions about civil society and NGOs in the literature, persist in discussions about them, moving off the page and into seminar rooms and tea stalls beyond. Consequently this normative sense – of the kind of work NGOs *should* do and *should not* do, can still be found, underpinning debates taking place in the workshop and in the neighbourhood itself, even as it is revealed through a more descriptive approach. This approach, rather than becoming hung up on definitions of civil society, bound to the theoretical genealogies and questions of what to include and exclude, instead examines the interactions of organisations already at work in Punarvaspur. It looks at the discourses around which these organisations work, including that of civil society and its norms, in particular the normative assumptions about its relationship with the state.

Civil and political society

This more descriptive approach is taken by Partha Chatterjee to the Indian experience, in a series of 'reflections on popular politics in the most of the world'. He argues that normative forms, like 'civil society' would be better reformulated in post-colonial settings. "Civil society as an ideal continues [post-Independence] to energise an interventionist political project," but "as an existing form it is demographically limited." (2004, 39). Instead he argues that in India, the term civil society is often only

really applicable to the elites, as rights bearing individuals (2002, 174), increasingly "peopled by the largely urban middle classes, it is the sphere that seeks to be congruent with the normative models of bourgeois civil society,' (2008, 57).

Everyone else, beyond this narrow sphere of 'civil society' falls into the category he calls 'political society'; an area of "strategic manoeuvres, resistance and appropriation by different groups and classes" (2002:176), which envisages a radically different relationship with the postcolonial state. If 'civil society' for Chatterjee is made up of rights bearing, individual citizens, 'political society' is population, falling into a demographically determined relationship with the state, subject to policies of security and welfare. In the Indian 'developmental state', it is through these policies of welfare that large sections of this population relate to the state (2002:176). However, people's demands are not framed as individual rights-bearing citizens of civil society, but as a 'mass', (here 'the urban poor'); sections of a numerated, determinable population. These demands are made from the political terrain, pitching government agencies' obligations to a group's welfare against calculations of political expediency (2005, 85).

Civil society organisations might include Resident's Welfare Associations (RWAs) who meet to discuss 'problems of the colony', acting as the representatives of residents to demand their rights to rubbish collection, drain and road repairs etc are traders associations, or more obviously, NGOs and unions. 'Political society' might be the good relations maintained with the MLA to ensure that while you promise to deliver your vote, they will renew the hand pumps in your lane, get your child admitted to school or the details of family members changed on a ration or identity card. Alternatively it might be groups of small scale manufacturers who agree to deliver votes if an electricity substation is upgraded, or women from a lane who decide to *gherao* the local water board office, until a drinkable supply is restored to an area.

Yet is it really so easy to divide between 'civil' and 'political society'? As Corbridge et al. note, "like all binary distinctions, this one is also over-drawn." (2005, 256). The boundaries between them are hard to define, and in practice are blurred and indistinct, such that an organisation may potentially fall into both categories. Additionally, the spatial definition of 'civil' *or* 'political society' as 'zones' means the conceptual divide between them is static. This neglects shifts in the borders of the categories, or blurring between them, refusing the possibility of the movement of actors between these zones, taking on and 'practicing' different roles or styles of politics between the two.

There are also similarities between 'civil' and 'political society' in their modes of operation; both need contacts and connections in order to apply pressure to a situation,

to be able to 'represent' the people they work with, and to ultimately be able to deliver a particular result. As Ruud writes of politicians and leaders, "What keeps them in position is their ability to get things done." (2001, 130). So too for NGOs and other 'civil society' type organisations. In order to maintain a 'constituency' of people who can be relied on to take part in their programmes, whether as a part of presentations, protests or donor walkabouts. Otherwise, they risk being simply dismissed by residents as yet another '*sanstha*' (organisation) who are just working in the area to gain funding for themselves. The ability to be able to effectively represent residents interests is especially important if they wish residents to give up their time for them to take part in a project.

Representation and 'practicing' civil and political society
One solution to this overly static depiction 'civil' and 'political society' as zones, might be to understand them instead as practices; different styles of operating and making representations. In this way people and organisations can still position themselves flexibly in relation to the normative discourse around 'civil society', without being constrained by the term's boundaries.

Additionally, organisations are far from heterogeneous internally, and differently placed actors may not perceive the norms and priorities of the organisation alike. Hilhorst argues, that "By studying the interactions of NGO actors with relevant others, the dynamic interplay of official and everyday discourses becomes apparent." (2003, 25). In the ethnography of the 'end of project' workshop in the section that follows, I show how forms of civil society, the norms, practices and positionings of the NGOs involved are uncertain and debated both within and between organisations[172]. Hence, the workshop serves as a site of interaction, and is illustrative of the range of engagements across the floor between all levels of participant, from funders to directors, fieldworkers to recipients. Here then, relationships are less of brokering and translation (Lewis and Mosse 2006a), as representation and contestation, whereby participants in the workshop strategically work to depict themselves and their interests. These interactions take place across relative differences of power, class and status. In this way, these negotiations over norms are going on not just between organisations, but within organisations too, where they are shaped by both actors' identities, and the priorities of the moment.

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[172] As Heaton writes "development interventions are not only the site of formation of beneficiary identities, but also an arena for ongoing, and contested, crafting of benefactor identities," (2006, 196).

In the first section of this chapter, I examine the debates going on between NGOs over what the role of the state and NGOs should be in the provision of welfare and services, as well as examining how hierarchies are played out within organisations. In the second section, I note how different actors in the workshop are expected to frame their demands as appropriate to their identities as middle class staff, or as fieldworkers, and resettlement colony residents, thus shaping what and how they may articulate and negotiate their interests. In the third section, I show how representatives of what might be considered 'political society' may also find it useful to position themselves as members of 'civil society' in their style of organising, further blurring the already hazy boundaries.

Head office/field office - workshop

The setting for these debates and interactions is the end of project workshop of a group of NGOs working primarily in East Delhi, including Punarvaspur[173]. The workshop itself takes place in the rarefied, setting of a seminar room at the India International Centre. Set in the leafy 'bungalow zone' of Lutyens' New Delhi, the building is a determinedly modernist, 1950s concrete riposte to the white columned, colonial era parliamentarian's bungalows that surround it. Known also as a social club for retired senior bureaucrats and ex-ministers, people not arriving by car walk up the drive, past regiments of equi-distant, painted plant pots and under the gaze of watchmen, mark it as a place of power and of imposing reputation to visit.

Few people have arrived early, but I find myself shuffled along the circle of tables to end up next to the director of the organising NGO, Social Research Group (SRG). Specialising in 'gender', SRG works out of a large air-conditioned office block in South Delhi, advising on projects across north India, writing reports for international agencies, as well as running a small field office in East Delhi. Dressed in an impeccably crisp cotton *ikat* handloom sari, the director tells me how she's spent the last month travelling relentlessly. This turns out to mean conferences. First Islamabad, to present a report SRG had written for a UN agency on the status of women in South Asia. She notes with frustration the lack of input solicited from other NGOs working on similar themes, so that much of the report had been written from internet sources, and makes a special point to tell me that as part of this they had had dinner with Pakistani President Musharaf himself. After this she had attended conferences in Colombo and Madras to talk about the marketing of NGO research, as part of a wider funding strategy.

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[173] The following description draws on fieldnotes taken in the course of the workshop.

Other participants start to file in, including a number of paper presenters for the early part of the day's programme. Represented are a number of Delhi NGOs, explicitly non-political organisations, working specifically on development issues, principally targeting 'slum dwellers' as 'the urban poor'. All have been involved either with the project directly, or work for organisations facing similar issues, on similar projects. Shortly after me, patting bus blown hair back into place, straightening saris and dupattas, several of the women fieldworkers of Saheli Samiti from Punarvaspur arrive, including Rani and Rupa mentioned in the last chapter. They are here to present with Chet Ram and Shekar, the results of the highly theatrical 'participatory' survey through which I had been introduced to Punarvaspur the preceding May. This 'participation, action and learning' (PLA) survey had been one of the few collaborative exercises carried out in the project. It had been billed as a training exercise between NGOs SRG and Saheli Samiti, to map the public and private resources and services available in Punarvaspur, and to engage residents in the project. Although centrally organised through an office in a small South Delhi residential neighbourhood, and with a number of different fieldsites in Delhi, only Saheli Samiti's field staff from Punarvaspur and Punarvaspur's neighbouring resettlement colony Suraj Nagar, are present today. Also present is Ashwin, the charismatic and highly articulate head of the Delhi Right to Information group (DRTI), which unusually (and very consciously) for an 'NGO type[174]' organisation, locates its main office not in central Delhi, but in Suraj Nagar, with an outpost 'Information Centre' in F block of Punarvaspur. Other attendees include an organisation working on 'houselessness', as well as employees and associates involved in SRG at all levels, from the Director I had just met, researchers, fieldworkers, to women residents from their fieldsites, also in East Delhi. All had been part of SRG's wider project to produce a network of NGOs, which they had hoped could work together to mobilise the residents of their fieldsites for the accountability of public services.

Roughly speaking, attendees at the workshop can be divided by their involvement into two modes of work. Those associated with the 'head office' of NGOs, and those who work at the 'field office' level, some of whose 'career'-histories I discussed in the last chapter. The former group can be subdivided further into head-office staff, and 'activists', often middle class people who were much more animatedly involved in the physical doing of NGO work, although the categories are not exclusive. 'Head office'

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[174] DRTI specifically classify themselves as a 'people's movement' and not an NGO. Refusing institutional, and especially state funding, this also gives them an administrative and governmental independence of the state under the Societies Registration Act (1860), and implicit licence to tweak the government's nose. However, I include them here as an NGO, as this is how they are usually perceived, both in Punarvaspur and in the wider media, and their interlocutors here are all NGOs.

staff could all be described as 'middle class' in contemporary metropolitan Indian English terms, coming from similar educational and class backgrounds, with family histories of working in the professions, commerce, military or civil services. All have at least an undergraduate, and often successive further degrees. The majority are women who have made a name for themselves working on issues around 'gender', in practice meaning work on women and children. This partly reflects the 'gender' interests of the lead organisation SRG, but also the predominant make up of 'social work' organisations in the city. A similar emphasis can be seen in both NGO and government programmes where women and children are both the main conduits and subjects for development, as well as suitable subjects for women themselves to work with. 'Head office' staff are located for the majority of their time in the central office, analysing data collected at their request by decentralised field offices and making assessments of the programmes they run for donor reports. Some of the paper givers are 'independent researchers', or freelancers contributing their expertise as policy analysts or on specific areas of the law. Others are permanently attached within 'head offices' producing background papers and reports for conferences and international organisations such as the ILO, or orchestrating funding proposals. In these more formalised organisations, the head office staff are also the more senior figures, senior researchers and directors. For many, this level of engagement satisfactorily recognises the status of their professional interest in 'social work' and 'social issues', and a professional standing, at a distance from 'the field' which is acceptable to their own families, or which fits in with their family/childcare commitments.

This is in contrast to those who by self-description would position themselves as 'activists', rather than simply as working for an NGO. Tending to locate themselves in 'anti-hierarchical' organisations (in theory at least), or in positions where hierarchy appears be minimised, activists often locate themselves as working closer to 'the field', as more mobile (less office bound) and more campaign orientated. This is a personal, political location, a commitment to change and to crossing the class divides of English language, an elite education and their more affluent background, than of those in 'the field' that they work with. Drawing their working partners from the locale of the fieldsite itself, this also represents part of their commitment to the people they work with, again crossing class and against inequality.

Whilst often politically savvy – or at least pragmatically cynical, by framing their demands in terms of the rights of fellow citizens, 'activists' ironically situate themselves as explicitly 'apolitical'. They see this as being in stark contrast to politicians whose allegiances with residents in places like Punarvaspur are portrayed as being venal; motivated by votes or potential deals with contractors. From one

perspective, NGO workers and activists appear busy in the work of representation; producing information and reports about the people they work with, presenting them as citizens with rights to services, as well as deserving demographic 'subjects' in need of welfare. At the same time, NGO workers and activists also appear *as* the representatives, or mediators, standing in, or acting for others, which I return to in the second part of the chapter.

'Activists' do not always describe the organisations they work for as 'NGOs', some because of the organisation's un-registered status[175], others for the lack in the term of emphasis on producing social change. Some prefer to situate themselves instead as part of a 'people's movement', as in the case of the DRTI group, for their more radical and democratic associations. However, the activist and 'head office' styles of work are not exclusive to each other. Rather, strong elements of both 'activism' and more programme or research based work can be found in most organisations, indeed it is often crucial to have both, in order to maintain both funding flows and the life of programmes themselves.

In the case of women fieldworkers, profiled in the last chapter, it is their ability to mediate between the organisation and the 'field'/neighbourhood, and the different orientations and values of each site, which is often crucial to the success of the programme. It should be noted that not all 'fieldworkers' are residents. NGOs which purely provide services to an area, in particular tend to employ people from outside the neighbourhood, often lower middle class women. These organisations tend to limit their activities in troublesome neighbourhoods like Punarvaspur to strictly programme-based work; teaching income generation skills (usually stitching) or health education, but not activism. As a result the women working for these organisations are rarely encountered in the everyday life of the colony, much less in a workshop with activist commitments like this one. Instead, it is the presence, and contributions of the fieldworker-residents employed by more 'activist' organisations in the proceedings of the workshop which is both unusual and illuminating. Residents are frequently employed by 'activist' organisations as a useful means to bypass some of the scepticism of residents of NGOs, improving their ability to be able to communicate across the gap between resident and non-resident; a gap usually underlined by sizable differences in wage and class between NGO head office worker or activist, and resident.

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[175] Organisations are supposed to be registered under the 1860 Societies Registration Act, but some choose not to be registered because of the restrictions on positions of office this imposes.

As people arrive, it's evident that many of the workshop participants know each other well, and I find I have met many of them before in other NGO settings too. Some people have worked together in different NGOs before, others are known to each other from previous collaborations or through workshops and trainings. In many ways an invitation to this workshop represents an ongoing conversation around the problem of accessing the state and its services. Some organisation members arrive, sit and contribute together to the discussion as a unit, chipping in as another speaks. For others the forum is an opportunity to catch up. The paper givers are English speakers, but to varying degrees of comfort, there is rapid language switching and a mixture of 'Hinglish' depending partly on the topic and one's interlocutors. There is a conscious emphasis when the floor is opened up for debate, on switching to Hindi as a means of including those without English, i.e. fieldworkers. So, the semi-conscious choice of language, is also a reflection of expectations of competence based on the interlocutor's class and education, of middle class associations with English, and fieldworkers associated with Hindi.

Contesting the 'problem'

The workshop gets underway, and the project is outlined and the ups and downs of its implementation described. The discussion culminates in a film 'documenting' SRG's project, showing local people in various neighbourhoods trying to improve their access to public services. With an establishing shot of the Indian flag fluttering above Rashtrapati Bhavan[176], the viewer is asked to consider, how, after nearly 60 years of Independence, the state of life (cutting to a shot of SRG's rainy East Delhi *jhuggi* cluster fieldsite), can be so poor? Furthermore, how in this time had the state become so unresponsive, and people so reliant on the good will of politicians, and what NGOs and 'concerned citizens' could try to achieve? The film with shots of the PLA survey in Punarvaspur shows the mapping of services, and focuses on a campaign by SRG. This is to improve the environment by getting a basic rubbish collection system set up. Yet, the MCD are loath to provide services, lest this construe some kind of formal recognition of the settlement. Footage shows *jhuggi* cluster residents bemoaning the mounting rubbish; interviews with the settlements local leaders (*pradhans*), and a meeting with the local councillor. The outcome (shortly before general elections), is two small plastic litter bins on stands. The film closes with three men and various children, sitting on charpoy, the pale winter sun, peeling back the overnight Delhi fog. With clapping and small dhol for percussion produced from the semi-pukka house behind, the older man sings:

 "The world is going blind

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[176] The official residence of the President of India.

Oh Lord – what to do?
There are people cheating everywhere –
In disgrace of the saints and pandes."

The film presents problems recognisable to all, with predictable themes of lack or inadequacy of state services, the general need for money for residents to purchase private and state services, is emphasised with the inference of corruption. Voiced in Hindi with unambiguous visual depictions of the problem, the film was accessible to all present, visually defining the terms of the debate and generating a vigorous discussion, triggered by the old man's song: 'what to do?' What is the role of NGOs in all of this?

> "So we are asking" concludes the chair of the session, summarising the discussion "Is 'What is the role of NGOs?' Is this to say that the government isn't working? To act as "gatekeepers", helping the people to do the work themselves, or its is it for NGOs to do the work?" Comments are made from the floor, that NGOs can make people aware, but cannot do the government's work for it – yet what effect does NGO work have?

> These coments, referring to feelings of impotence and the inability of NGOs to effect change beyond the running of classes and giving of advice, brings tensions present between differently located employees and associates of NGOs to the fore. Ashwin, the head of DRTI agrees;

>> 'So the work here and documentation has been done well, but what are we going to do?'

>> 'There is the question of who the service provider should be. The problem is that there is government money for this work, but the money is with the government officer,' who he recalls had released money to the MLA to improve the water supply to Punarvaspur and adjacent Gulshan Extension. The MLA had then spent his 'local area development fund' money on Rs60 lakh water fountains in a Gulshan Extension park next door. Ashwin concludes exasperatedly: "The problem is who to complain or speak to – for good work or bad work."

> One woman, who works for an NGO in a *jhuggi* cluster neighbouring SRG's fieldsites, asks 'who are we to talk about this problem, there are *pradhans* (neighbourhood leaders) who work on these same things, and what effect do they have?' inferring that mediation by NGOs and others may be pointless, if the bureaucracy at the level of delivery is so unmoved, without the application of pressure from the MLA.

> Vimla, onetime Saheli Samiti fieldworker, but now with her own group, Ekta Manch, is sitting with two other women, just behind her former colleagues from Punarvaspur.

> "Conferences and workshops and so on are fine, but what about people who live in *jhuggi*es etc.?" she asks, adding in a statement common to Punarvaspur: "There are so many NGOs around in all these places, but they come, they write and they leave!"

> There is a moment of disconcerted quiet in the room.

Rani, former colleague in Saheli Samiti and Punarvaspur resident, rephrases this more tactfully before the better off, more senior head office employees, potential contacts and donors present. 'There is a feeling that people are fed up, people end up doing everything for themselves, but in that the state should do this work also!"

Chet Ram, a long time Saheli Samiti fieldworker (despite being a man in a feminist orientated 'women's organisation'), tries to put the perspective as a Punarvaspur resident. 'People come from the villages to the city for work education and health etc. They say they want to make Delhi like Paris, but really they don't want to get rid of poverty, but of the poor."

This tangential platitude irritates Vimla, "If NGOs and people do all this work, then what will the government workers do? They've been let off free!"

She points out that it is hard for NGOs and fieldworkers like herself to apply pressure to people like safai karamcharis[177] within the neighbourhood, because, she says, of the links between karamcharis and the government. 'They know that pressure can only come on them from the NGO, from above,' gesturing towards some of the middle class, Anglophone, head office NGO workers present.

By this, she can be taken to mean through elite contacts in the bureaucracy applying pressure to the upper levels of the MCD, and that this is unlikely. As other Punarvaspur residents had pointed out to me previously, local people cannot pressure the service providers, because they are also fellow residents, and have to live in the same neighbourhood as them. Although largely lost in this setting, Vimla makes the important point that much of what NGOs require residents do to demand their rights, which can create conflict with neighbours, who may be government employees, and themselves recouping costs the of 'obtaining' their jobs. Vimla added that The Right to Information (RTI) is very important, but not very useful, because poor people, even if they know their rights, must face the representatives of the state to whom such demands must be made. Most people present at the workshop knew of the severe beatings sustained by residents working with the DRTI group, when they had threatened to expose with an RTI application, volume of state subsidised food grain ('ration') gone missing. This raised the question, that with the problem of a multiplicity of responsible agencies in Delhi: who to go to?

So, Vimla says of Punarvaspur residents, welfare is essentially the work of NGOs, that they will look after children, and fill up forms for you. But, for things bureaucratic, you need a politician, the MLA, *pradhan* etc. for government services.

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[177] 'Sweepers', street cleaners, drain clearers, although many do this work 'privately' as well, most are officially employed by the MCD, as a 'government job'.

'What do people outside NGOs think of NGOs?' the chair asks, 'about their work, about who they are, are they necessary? What is it that people in Punarvaspur think about NGOs and other outside organisations?

A resident of Rajiv Camp, where much of SRG's film had been shot, tentatively says into the pause that follows: "We think that whatever all NGOs are doing – for welfare and so on is for good – otherwise we were just sitting quietly."

Rani adds: "We need people who can take our problems to the government as we are not educated [enough] for that,"

A young man in his 20s from an NGO working with houseless people in Delhi speaks up: " We have hopes for NGOs and people, because we hope they will talk to other people [about the problems]. NGOs' role is essentially to facilitate these problems. The perception of the homeless is of 'bekar log' [useless, 'rubbish' people]

Vimla replies swiftly, addressing the room at large:
"But why is it that researchers come and go and write and nothing happens?!
There are problems of drainage and so on in Lajpat Nagar and Defence Colony[178] also – but there the government does the work – they get them solved without 'research'. What is the advantage of this research?! There are *safai karamcharis* and plumbers also in these colonies also, but is a matter of money – there they can pay. What is the point of all this research? – It is just to get funding!"

Chet Ram in more conciliatory tones adds: 'you can't do the work without the research, you can say, "we will be with you, we can provide the information, but you have to do the work". People are united, but they are united on different issues.'

Rani, identifies herself by saying she had worked with the women's movement (i.e. Saheli Samiti); 'It is enough to identify the problem, but now what to do? It is not just that people have problems because of finances, we all have the problem of being women etc. There is more of a problem with the gap between research and action.'

Across the floor, the chair of the session for SRG replies 'we know there is a gap, but we don't know how far we lag behind [without doing the research]'.

Another NGO head adds, 'It is not just research that is being done through such surveys and filmmaking, through the PLA – we are part of this community – we are participating in the survey's direct action, so that next time there is recognition [in the community] and things [information about the locale] are already known,' he continues, "We are doing research, not just because we want to, but for the welfare or people. People see us and see that we are working – so we go to people and want to unite them through this research."

This assertion of 'participation' is too much for Vimla who leaps to her feet in the otherwise seated seminar room: "NGOs have been here for 15-16 years

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[178] Two central South Delhi 'middle class' colonies; Defence Colony is better described as elite, with a sizable expatriate population.

and we have pretty much seen it all: MNCs[179], NGOs etc. coming and going and doing their surveys. But if 100% surveys are done, then only 4-5% of organisations come back, and so people are fed up, they want the work to be done!"

Rani jumps in to try to soften Vimla's outburst. Which again threatens to fragment the veneer of consensus, cooperation and collectiveness, underpinning most NGOs mode of working. It also brings to the surface the relationships of patronage through funding, and foregrounds the underlying interests in the perpetuation of development work in the neighbourhood through funding streams, "We are not against research, but it should be followed by some work – otherwise what is the point?' she concludes.

"You weren't here for the results!" Another member of Saheli Samiti reacts, attempting to dismiss Vimla's remarks by way of her late arrival.

"Let me speak my mind!" Vimla objects as another Saheli Samiti fieldworker adds bitterly to no one in particular;

"They want to make India shine – then what about us?!"

So what *should* NGOs do?

The most disputed issue in the exchanges above is the role of NGOs. As participants in the workshop debate this, their stances and views reflect their positions in organisations and relations to each other. These affect how they can negotiate, what they can say and how they can act in relation to each other and their moral and normative concerns.

The normative but usefully indeterminate tones of the debate over the role of NGOs here, is similar to the theoretical debates in social sciences literature. Understood as part of 'civil society', the definition and limits of the operations of these organisations have been both normative, and productively vague – allowing a wide range of conclusions on how things 'ought' to be (Hann 1996; D. Gupta 1999; Howell and Pearce 2001) while its indeterminacy is deplored[180]. Yet, both the theoretical definitions and the ones animated in practice in the workshop, retain their strongly normative edge. From these debates it is evident that exactly where the boundaries of NGOs' work lies, remains far from clear and potentially contentious. Views on how far NGOs should extend their writ and limit of their role in the public space of neighbourhoods structured by development, like Punarvaspur, is far from unified, but belief in the

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[179] Multi-National Corporations, i.e. market research carried out for major corporations such as Hindustan Lever on emerging markets for branded consumer goods, (e.g. laundry detergent) in easily quantifiable neighbourhoods like Punarvaspur, sometimes hiring residents as surveyors.
[180] In this respect, civil society is be subject to many of the criticisms Ben Fine levels at social capital. Here, not least being "definitionally elusive" and its ability to 'absorb any criticism by the refinement of adding another variable or ten." to its definition, rather than addressing internal inconsistencies. (2002, 798)

value of their norms, strongly held. But how are the norms under which NGOs are seen to operate negotiated, and what do these negotiations allow participants to do?

Working the political field

"What to do?" the old man asks in his song at the end of the film. One answer is to pragmatically ask, 'how can NGOs best apply pressure to get things done?'. The other answer is to ask more theoretically, what *should* the role of NGOs be, and what *ought* they do? The first question forces the workshop to consider the power of the tools at hand. The second question challenges an organisation's self image by questioning the wide range of relationships it has with other actors. Should NGOs relate to the people they work with as welfare providers, or to promote empowerment and rights? What role should the pursuit of funding play in the programmes an organisation runs? What should an NGO's relationship to the state be, and how far should the supplementation of the state's inadequate services go, before it becomes replacement?

The first conclusion from these questions is the recognition that NGOs operate in a political field. In practical terms, the relationship of NGOs to the local elected representative can be extremely contentious, if as Elyachar notes in a different setting, useful, indeed productive when interests converge (2005, 11). For field-based NGO workers moving beyond simple service provision (and indeed often even for this too), means forging some kind of a relationship with the local elected representative, even simply for their approval of the work. One NGO worker I interviewed, now in her late 50s, described her experiences of working in Punarvaspur, shortly after the resettlement. She and her fellow NGO workers were repeatedly harassed by the police for putting up a tent in a corner of space in a park so they could continue to run the informal school they had run prior to the resettlement from Power House. Eventually she and her colleagues had turned to the area's MP, "He said to them, 'Can't you see that they are working for the people here?'" After this they had been left alone.

However, exactly what kind of relationship an NGO should have with local politicians is more tricky. Again activists and fieldworkers are faced with this question most often, since like residents they find themselves attempting to access public services, usually on behalf of residents themselves. This is better understood as mediation rather than translation (Lewis and Mosse 2006a, b, or Merry 2006), because it is not so much the cognitive conversion and transfer of ideas, as an attempt to move between, mobilise, influence and exert pressure on different parties, by representing the interests of one to another. Often motivated as a form of exchange by NGO workers, mediation and representation can be a way to recruit cynical recipients in an over-surveyed area

like Punarvaspur, which has seen the attentions of many organisation over the years, to, as residents say, little effect[181]. Understood as exchange; mediation on the recipients behalf is exchanged for their engagement and participation in the project. This is not an entirely comfortable situation for activists, many of whom view their work as propelled by a Freire-ian desire to conscientise and empower recipients, such that the organisation's mediatory activities, up and down between hierarchies, becomes unnecessary. Indeed, this was the original genesis of SRG's project of 'public accountability through community action'. This sought, in theory at least, to try to make the NGO's mediatory work redundant; finding a way in which residents and users of government services in the area could hold the state accountable for their adequate provision, including through the use of the Delhi Right to Information Act (2001). However, the inevitable need for mediation[182] on behalf of recipients, as well as their disinclination (for reasons discussed later) to take 'community action', was a source of continual frustration in the project. In practice, the push to participation worked more as a cleft stick for the NGOs. In order to recruit sceptical residents of the area to engage in the campaign, the organisation had to demonstrate its bona fides and commitment to the area, this included mediating on behalf of residents, to justify their input of their time and energy. In effect, to provide a mediation service, rather than 'transforming' residents to be able to act on their own behalves.

Yet at neighbourhood level, NGOs workers often have as little clout with the bureaucracy or MLA as residents do. While NGO workers expend much time and energy trying to get the volume, timing and quality of the water supply enhanced, or the sale of ration improved, in practice, much of this could only be achieved through persuasion of the MLA. But while fieldworkers and activists found they had little effect (much to their chagrin) in the field, at a more elite level other factors came into play. Here connections formed through shared class, educational, and even ideological backgrounds, of some upper middle class members of NGOs, as activists, directors or some head office staff, could be drawn on to engage similarly positioned government officers. Through these elite connections, senior government officers could be persuaded, if sympathetic to the cause, to apply pressure downwards through political

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[181] The present state of Punarvaspur, and the numbers of NGOs that have worked there over the years was often offered by residents as evidence the lack of work that NGOs do, and for some, confirmation of the simple existence of most NGOs purely to 'capture' places like Punarvaspur and to 'eat' the money due to them. This makes them very much like politicians.

[182] This is not simply because of the unwillingness of frontline government officers to engage with 'small people', but also for the lack of time of many people earning daily wages, mobility for some women, as well as childcare and household responsibilities, but also technology. To use either the Delhi RTI Act (2001) of the national RTI Act which superseded it in 2005, requires not only literacy, mobility (to file your application) as well as persistence, but also the input of expert knowledge of how to draft an application effectively to ensure a sufficiently detailed result.

networks or the bureaucratic hierarchy, to the frontline employees, effectively forcing them to carry out their duties. Just as drawing fieldworkers from the neighbourhoods in which they work offers an NGO some advantage in terms of sympathetic access and shared understandings, so Anglophone upper middle class employees found they could sometimes also get better access to elite members of the bureaucracy and sometimes the political classes too. This was in some ways an appeal across an elite level sense hierarchy of 'how things should be', which might also include disciplining lower level cadre for misdemeanours and failures in 'duty'. As well as appealing to a sense of 'social justice', upper middle class activists also cultivate contacts amongst government officers and sympathetic politicians who may be able to offer help at critical moments, such as threatened *jhuggi* demolitions. This ability to appeal on the grounds of shared class membership can be seen in the complaints of the upper middle class Delhi Jal Board officer present later in the workshop. She complained at being pestered by middle class South Delhi residents who had not received water, linked to her through shared backgrounds of education, class, and friend of friends with her phone number.

The changing political scene in the city, and the work of organisations
To understand the impact of development NGOs in the wider political field of the city, it is necessary to see Delhi within wider international development agendas, as they feed into donor and national discourses in India. Under the patronage of the Chief Minister Sheila Dixit, themes of 'governance' and 'accountability' link up with ideas about 'rights-based' development, to appear in guises such as the Right to Information Act (2001). Having introduced the legislation herself, her support for the movement and for forms of 'participatory governance', like the 'Bhagidari' scheme is well known. Consequently, by encouraging residents in places like Punarvaspur to demand their 'rights' (mostly pushed by NGOs), and to call the state to account, organisations can find they have a better purchase on the upper reaches of the government. With the Right to Information Act, and Bhagidari scheme in particular, because they are known as the Chief Minister's own projects, politicians and bureaucrats from the elite level downwards stand to lose or gain face through their attitude towards these programmes. Hence if an NGO's programmes converge with these programmes, (often animated by similar international development funding imperatives) it is much easier for an elite level officer to apply pressure downwards, through their institutions, to force change at the bottom, coal-face level, as has been found with the Right to Information movement. It additionally helps that NGO workers are also seen as being at a remove from the local politics of the field situation.

Yet, simultaneously, as the distribution of the electorate of Delhi has changed over the years, so too have those courted by elected representatives. Constituencies in areas of East Delhi and elsewhere, once made up purely of resettlers (who often feel a debt of gratitude to the Congress Party for their plots[183]), are becoming more mixed as previously unbuilt-up pockets of land are developed into 'middle class' private flats, as in the case of Gulshan Extension, adjacent to Punarvaspur. At the same time, Delhi's middle classes are increasingly coming to see themselves as an effective political entity in the city, particularly with the rise of 'Residents' Welfare Associations' (RWAs) as part of the Bhagidari scheme, as a mode of representation[184]. This scheme has been widely attributed with returning Chief Minister Sheila Dixit to office. But this is a phenomena which is also widely expected to bite back electorally, as fora for opposition[185]. Against this backdrop, where there is little competition amongst parties for safe seats, residents and NGOs find themselves with reducing amounts of leverage. With the competition growing for more fluid middle class votes, residents and NGOs find themselves unable to negotiate with or influence the lower level of the bureaucracy and elected representatives (both levels, of Councillors and MLAs), in order to demand improved services[186].

NGOs are much less able to gain purchase on the lower levels of the bureaucracy, which subject to the threat of potential job transfers pushed through by MLAs are more responsive to constituency level politics, mediated by the MLA. Elected representatives themselves, with their increasingly heterogeneous constituencies are more concerned to please their middle class voters, who may not be so easily delivered en bloc as residents of resettlement colonies and similar settlements, who are in more acute need of government services. As Ashwin points out, at this level there is greater concern to fulfil the needs of these new lower middle class private colonies, including diverting new water supplies to Gulshan Nagar.

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[183] *'Unke namak khaya,"* "They ate their [the Congress Party's]salt," See Chapter 3.

[184] See also Leela Fernandes discussion of a very similar rise of middle class politics in Mumbai, especially Chapter 4.

[185] This can be seen in volume of newsprint opposing the installation of replacement 'fast-running' digital electricity meters in the city from summer 2005. Supposedly tamper-proof, but widely disliked and disbelieved, RWAs have become fora for partially BJP orchestrated opposition, against an incumbent Congress Assembly government to protest against the introduction of VAT on traders, and later in 2006 against MCD demolitions of 'illegal and non-conforming' building extensions across the city.

[186] This could also be interpreted as part of a wider shift in electoral politics in Delhi with the advent of middle class politics care of Bhagidari, as Chakrabarti argues. "Since the primary reason behind the RWA's move towards formal politics is to safeguard middle-class interests and since formal electoral politics is the main channel through which the urban poor influence public policy, this development may crowd out poor voters and have adverse implications on service delivery for the poor." (Chakrabarti 2008, 100)

This all contributes to making workshop participants increasingly anxious about their ability to apply pressure to the state, only at the 'top' of the system, rather than at the service delivery level, as they are trying to encourage residents to do. That is, through the 'democratic' means of pressure applied to elected representatives, rather than the elite means of middle class contacts pressure, applied from the top. As a result, workshop participants find themselves disconcertingly reliant on their interests converging with those of the Delhi Government's for comfort. In addition to organisations risking looking like government stooges, these elite political and bureaucratic contacts can only be limitedly used before any good will is exhausted. Further, such mediations by NGO workers can put them in direct competition, and often direct conflict with the interests of local politicians. This on occasions has led to violence; in the case of the DRTI fieldworkers, to successive beatings and a case of attempted murder when one worker had her throat slashed in broad daylight, illustrating the height of the stakes involved for some parties.

What are NGOs for?
Understanding the political field in which these organisations are working, is important, as it brings into question the balance of ideal ways of operating versus pragmatism, and pulls participants at this workshop in different directions, as they consider, in effect, what NGOs are for.

NGOs find themselves propelled (not always willingly) by global development discourses about rights, empowerment and participation towards funding imperatives which emphasise agency and the ability to act freely through discourses of 'empowerment' and 'rights'; for people to sustain themselves. This is a shift away from 'welfare' and the physical, tangible projects many NGOs have traditionally run, which have produced visible evidence of service provision, and while access to state services remain crucially important in places like Punarvaspur. Despite the Delhi Right to Information groups' emphasis on rights, their point is precisely that the state should provide the services owed to its citizens. Residents and fieldworkers point out that the money they have to spend to purchasing private healthcare, their 'ration' in the market, or additional tuitions for their children's education, covering the inadequacies of government provision, could be better used. How to deal with this shift in emphasis, and whether it should be embraced tactically through avenues like the Right to Information, or 'partnership' (i.e. the Delhi Government Bhagidari scheme), in order to better access these resources, remains a dilemma for much of the debate.

Returning to the workshop, the parameters of the debate are neatly outlined by the chair of the session when she asks:

> "'What is the role of NGOs?' Is this to say that the government isn't working? Is it to act as "gatekeepers", helping the people to do the work themselves, or its is it for NGOs to do the work itself?"

The arguments about the role of NGOs is perceived differently by fieldworkers and residents, as by activists and head office workers. While there are common understandings on both sides of the need for development work to be done and the amelioration of conditions, it is evident that the different priorities of actors at the workshop are propelled by their different structural positions. For Ashwin the leader of DRTI, as a middle class activist, with an elite Indian Administrative Service career and an IIT degree behind him, when he asks 'who the service provider should be?', his frustration is with the conduct of politicians and the state. By comparison, for residents and fieldworkers, what matters is obtaining the services. As Stirrat and Henkel comment, "For them ['beneficiaries'], what matters is less self realisation, than access to material goods and services." (1997, 73). While activists were better positioned to demand the state live up to its ideals, for many fieldworkers and residents, whether the service provider is government or NGO – what matters – is what is actually, delivered.

This raises the issue of the inconstancy of NGOs, and the perceived split in their priorities which various speakers in the debate raise. The level of cynicism about the motivations of NGOs in places like Punarvaspur is a reflection of what is seen as their lack of tangible effect on the neighbourhoods they claim to be working for. Underlying this is doubt about their motivations; whether they are driven by a desire for change in the neighbourhood, or if working in 'slums' and resettlement colonies, is really in the pursuit of funding. 'They come, they write and they leave,' many residents in Punarvaspur grumbled, 'If they have done so much work here, then why is this place still so bad?' NGOs workers retort that they *are* working for the neighbourhood, and in many cases, the project may get no further due to lack of permission or action by the state, a change in the rules (or charges,) or lack of funding. Yet for residents it may seem that NGO work in the neighbourhood is to the NGOs' advantage, not theirs. Given that salaries are at stake in organisations, this is not entirely untrue. It may take research to get the drains fixed, either to raise the money or pressure on the state to do so.

That work is done by NGOs to obtain funding is not disputed, although such accusations tend not to get levelled at practical service provision type programmes, like tuitions or stitching classes. Instead, residents often choose to overlook or reframe

the official or donor reasons for a service; seeing stitching as something girls should know how to do – rather than a direct route to income generation, serves to make the programme less contentious amongst parents who do not necessarily want their young unmarried daughters out at work[187]. Similarly, there is also a recognition that NGOs require funding for salaries etc., including those of fieldworkers, but this is always less controversial where direct evidence of work done by an organisation can be pointed to. While development might be perceived as a troublesome 'gift' (Stirrat and Henkel 1997), the perception is usually of the unequal power relations that the unreciprocated gift creates in favour of the giver. However, here, this 'gift' is more often perceived as an exchange; the assumptions about residents by NGOs, and intrusions into everyday life by surveyors and activists are put up with, as they may provide material goods or practical help. What is resented is the sense of exploitation of the status of the neighbourhood as a resettlement colony for survey data and the time taken 'participating' in events etc, when nothing is returned in exchange.

Hierarchies, power relations, difference and space
Vimla's questioning of the motives of NGOs and subsequent, swift, mollifying statements made by other fieldworkers shed light on one of the most difficult aspects or intra-organisation relationships, that of hierarchies. When an NGO head asserts that "We want to unite them through research," Vimla loses patience once more. By rejecting this, she exposes most uncomfortably the hierarchies between less activist orientated head office staff, activists, and fieldworkers. This did not seem to trouble head office staff, who saw it as more a managerial rather than ethical concern, perhaps because the paths of fieldworkers and head office staff rarely actually cross[188]. But it forced the acknowledgement of difference between activists and fieldworkers into the open. This was much more troubling for the activists whose relationship with fieldworkers and the site is usually clothed in veneer of solidarity. This pushes hierarchies of income and class into the background, with day-to-day work operating firmly from a ground of nominal equality, repressing differences between NGO workers. Vimla's outburst threatened to force this into the open, but also to cause offence to those present, including employers, funders and other potential contacts. As noted in the previous chapter (also Elyachar 2005, 11), contacts within larger organisations, sympathetic organisations can open up a range of opportunities for

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[187] For similar reasons as Vera-Sanso (1995) outlines.

[188] One of the more troubling reactions to the workshop the suggestion by the head office of one NGOs that perhaps they should use 'their' fieldsite as a kind of incubator or laboratory, as well as producing a 'British Social Attitudes type baseline survey. Both could be used for testing out policy proposals with the dataset product to 'sell' to funders and other agencies. This caused concern with the activist staff mediating between head and field offices.

fieldworker residents like Vimla, of funding or affiliation with larger organisations. This is recognised in the interventions of other fieldworkers who attempt to soften the statement and mitigate offence - even as Rani concludes – research without action – what is the point?

Letting the state off the hook?

Even if NGOs are suspected of being duplicitous, both residents, fieldworkers and activists are also concerned that by filling the gap in service provision and welfare, NGOs are, as Vimla put it, allowing the government to get the work done for free. But if this echoes some of the literature on civil society, concerned about the roll back of the state, it is understood in different terms. Rather than being a deliberate revoking of services, as evidence of the neoliberal restructuring of economics (cf Ong 2006), NGO workers, and residents of Punarvaspur, saw this more in terms of a deal. The DRTI slogan 'Our money! Our accounts', demands the right to the information contained in the accounts of the state. Although appealing in terms of a rights rhetoric, at an everyday level, especially where money is tight – it is not a demand for information, so much as a demand for the due returns on taxes paid as citizens. For residents this fits with a wider sense of deal betrayed, a bargain which was struck with a duplicitous state (Osella and Osella 2001) as part of the resettlement, the basis in which many residents root themselves and their entitlement.

Additionally, Vimla and other fieldworker-residents, also point out the difficulty of confronting the state as a presence in the neighbourhood. As residents in Punarvaspur argued, they still need to maintain adequate social relations with neighbours who may also be government employees such as sweepers, in order to continue getting on with people in their *gali*, and getting by. This is even as they resent paying for a privately hired sweeper for the lane. More seriously, while residents may strongly resent to having to privately purchase the services they are owed as citizens, the signatures and good will of politicians and bureaucrats are still required to get many things done at a neighbourhood level, including most official paperwork. From the perspective of fieldworkers and residents, the activism demanded by activists and head office workers, by framing their demands in terms of rights, rather than entitlements as a demographic group (as resettlement colony residents, ration card holders,' 'poor people' etc) is an ideal, much less easy in practice[189]. Hence NGO work, from the

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[189] To be fair, this is recognised by activists themselves, but for whom the problem is part of a wider symptom of some of the problems with the state, and the need for tools like RTI to be able to force the state to do the things it should do; seeing their role as to facilitate residents ability to access services – through rights. For fieldworkers and residents, the need is often more acute than that.

perspective of fieldworkers is not meant so much to roll back the state as to force it to keep its promises by people and deliver the goods of the developmental state they are owed.

Thwarted expectations

Two further major tensions emerge from the workshop: the competing interests of different NGOs, for 'territory', funding, connections, reputation and profile, in an area discursively defined as in need of development. Secondly, the differing expectations between NGOs and recipients of each other, and what development may offer.

One of SRG's biggest frustrations had been its inability to produce a strong coalition of organisations in East Delhi, who could expand the 'public accountability' programme between them, to better pressure the state. However, other organisations' interests in collaboration quickly withered as fraternal impulses soon came apart over competition for the limited funding available for similar work to be carried out in the same area. This emphasised the tensions and frustrations that work against NGOs collaborating and mediating between each other, as well as between 'their people' or fieldsites and other institutions, producing a sort of 'silo' effect. Except where NGOs interests were sufficiently diverse, or organisationally distinct to avoid competition, territoriality emerged as key source of tension, diminishing effectiveness of any intervention they made anyway.

Similarly, NGO workers at different levels and in different organisations also told tales of donor's funding priorities running up against the concerns and interests of residents, with organisations trying to shoe-horn programmes tailored to a topical funding proposal into a practical and messy context. This outcome was interpreted in various ways, including as Vimla does, in terms of venality. Likewise, other organisations may have sound reasons of their own not to engage with others, including dilution of their own funds. As one person put it, speaking as much for residents in places like Punarvaspur as for NGOs trying to form partnerships: "There is a feeling that NGOs feel it is 'not on my agenda, we had a project to complete, I was working under terms and conditions,' so that people are cynical, and other NGO workers don't expect much from collaboration or outcome."

Consequently, although in the spirit of a shared cause, NGOs working on similar issues in the same area, often expressed an interest when asked to participate, but they often declined to interact further. Mere networking on behalf of another organisation, while perhaps beneficial to the area, would not benefit their own funding streams,

without which salaries will not be found nor the organisation run. Nor would networking produce the tangible documentation, project reports and research under the name of the organisation, in order to improve their status and standing with donors. There was also the fear that painstakingly cultivated field relationships with recipients, might be poached between organisations, and so not worth the investment.

Different expectations of the project between NGOs and residents also produced dissatisfaction for both. The 'participatory learning and action' survey carried out as a consultancy training exercise by Saheli Samiti fieldworkers for SRG, was also intended to map service provision, and to engage residents to think how these services might be improved. Yet, by appealing to residents with the promise of an RTI application to find out the proper cost of getting household water connections, this had also implied the promise of action. When the application ran aground, this was not just disappointing, but served to confirm residents' expectations of NGOs as being ineffectual or untrustworthy actors[190].

Visiting field sites with SRG, DRTI and other organisations, there was a tendency see themselves as representing the interests of residents, and to therefore assume that residents had an interest in attending their events. By contrast, residents themselves resented being asked to take time off from often tenuous employment to 'participate' in a project, to attend meetings, or 'particiapte' in more time consuming activities such as chasing up service providers. Residents often reminded NGO workers, that as workers, they were paid for their time and effort, unlike residents themselves, so perhaps they (organisations) should do this work of making demands on the state?

Who should speak – and how?

> In the workshop's afternoon session, senior government officers working for the Metropolitan Corporation of Delhi (MCD), Delhi Jal Board (DJB, the water board) and the Chief Minister's Office had been invited to discuss some of the problems of service provision and government accountability.
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> The earlier discussion had centred around the lack of responsiveness of ground level officers, and the inability of residents or NGOs to successfully demand improvements. Pointed questions were asked of the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) representative, about the need to improve the adequacy of the water supply in most neighbourhoods. For a while the dialogue digresses when a middle class attendee asks how she can best improve the water supply to her own colony. This causes the DJB officer some irritation, when she points out that her office

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[190] The need to manage expectations of degree and speed of change possible raised through participatory methods, against the limitations of changes that can actually be made in surrounding local power structures, are perceptively outline by Bovey et al. (2005).

number is already available, and that too many people already ring her up on her mobile to complain about their colony's water problem anyway.

Returning to the issue in hand, she is asked how she sees the role of NGOs, and replies by drawing two vertical lines in the air; NGOs should be working as "bridges", she declares adding that more information 'camps' on personal water supply connections would be held in Punarvaspur. 'But the problem is,' she says gesturing to the fieldworkers present as representatives of low income settlements, 'it is important not to pay middle men, and not to pay government officers bribes.'

"One shouldn't pay Rs100 etc. It is easier, but you should not give it, it is difficult then to make a difference – you cannot clap with only one hand." inferring that resettlement colony residents should not complain about corruption if they are making payments to obtain access to services.

Chet Ram of Saheli Samiti pointed out the difficulties of trying to make a complaint as a resident of Punarvaspur. "If you go to the [government] officer in Shahdara, then they will say 'I am not your servant – you must talk to your *pradhan*.'" Pointing out that while the elite levels of the bureaucracy may advocate mediation by NGOs, lower levels of the government are far more sensitive to political intervention – because they know as government officers, they may be transferred away from their job by the elected representative.

He concludes that holding a camp would be all very well, but "you'll be told you need your Ration Card, and that it must be the head of the household named on it, who must attend", the very person most likely to be working. On a daily wage, the loss of a whole day's income would be significant.

"But," he concludes, "if an educated person goes to these offices, they'll be treated better and the officer will behave better, 'Will you take tea? Will you take water?'"

"Then," replies the Jal Board officer, "To get work done you must go united."

In effect, this exchange seems to suggest that the middle classes are exempt from the demand to appear as a 'mass' in order to represent themselves legitimately in the idiom of 'political society'. Rather, she seems to admit that she is subject to the mediation of personal contacts, people of similar middle class status, friends of friends – mostly through her mobile phone. This contrasts with residents of Punarvaspur and elsewhere, who from the DJB woman's perspective, must expect to mediate their demands through political connections, presenting their protest appropriately, as a mass. In other words, it seems expected that people will protest in a style appropriate to their class. However, although located within the legitimacy of nationalist traditions of mass non-violent protest, the slur of being a 'mass' is directed at those as Chatterjee points out (2004, 40) who appear to the state as a demographic subjects of the welfare state; as 'slum dwellers' or as 'peasants'. As Dhareshwar and Srivatsan's (1996) essay on 'rowdy-sheeters' shows, mass forms of protest and the agency this form of

demonstration represents is also easily depicted as irrational, or controlled by some agency lying elsewhere. Consequently mass protests can be dismissed as a rabble and hence illegitimate. As the MCD officer later says: "You will find this problem, only when you unite as a mob."[191]

Yet these very misgivings about the legitimacy and usefulness of mass action by the middle class government officers, are also shared by Punarvaspur residents, questioning the value of mass action as well. On a number of occasions Punarvaspur residents simply compared NGOs to politicians, using the identical phrase for both. 'They roam around the neighbourhood like lions. They just want to see how many people they can call [to a meeting].' So while the power of a crowd as a visual demonstration of support, can add to the legitimacy of action, it is usually perceived to be acting on behalf of someone else, undermining the rationality of the action. Having had to rely on the mediation of others for so long, either through NGOs, or through people with political connections, residents have developed an acute sense of the effectiveness and validity of mediators in an unequal field of influence, when 'trying to get things done'.

"NGOs shouldn't do this kind of work"
In the last section of this chapter, I shift away from the workshop and return to Punarvaspur. In the sections above I looked at organisations that might be considered by their practices and assertions to be 'civil society' organisations, and explored how they act in relation to the state and the city's politics. In the section that follows, I relate the grumbles of a member of the Punarvaspur Resident's Welfare Association (RWA), in order observe the situation of what is effectively a politically based organisation, but which in the context of Delhi politics and the vogue for participatory governance, finds it useful to cast itself as a 'civil society' organisation, rather than a 'political society' institution. In short, I am concerned to point out the different rhetorical uses of practicing 'civil' and 'political society' and to note the movement between the two[192], but also to ask, why it might be desirable to present oneself as 'non-political'.

As discussed before RWAs are not clearly situated, but located somewhere between NGOs and politics. Officially they are non-political organisations, situating themselves

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[191] Dhareshwar and Srivatsan note "In the middle-class imagination, the 'rowdy' inhabits the dark zone of the city, trafficking in illegal and immoral activities, a zone invariably in need of law and order and always threatening to spread to the cleaner, safer habitat of the city". So associated with 'the lumpen' or mass (1996, 202), and expected to assert their interests in such terms, residents of places like Punarvaspur and other low income neighbourhoods, risk falling outside of being easily situated as a 'citizen'.

[192] i.e. contra Chatterjee's (2004) depiction.

as 'civil society' and presented in Delhi as a form of 'participatory government', albeit through the Chief Minister's Bhagidari ['partnership'/'participation'] scheme. This only serves to further blur the divide between 'civil' and 'political society', as they often seem to practice both. To be effective in a neighbourhood, requires strong links to the local elected representative, while depicting themselves as civil rather than political, they appear as less partisanly 'interested' and more legitimate entities. So, paradoxically, what was most useful for the RWA with its connections to the MLA and Congress politics, was the credibility that the normatively non-political nature of being a civil society type organisation offered.

Vikram, a man with political connections to the constituency's elected representative (MLA), complains about the intrusion of one NGO, the Delhi Right to Information group (DRTI) into his political work mediating between residents and the bureaucracy. Particularly irksome to him, is the organisation's work as a civil society organisation (and not an electorally mandated political organisation), using the language of rights to access public goods and welfare services. This he sees as deviating from their practices as a civil society organisation of supplementing state welfare services; DRTI have been getting people to demand adequate services from the state, which threatens to compete with his political mediation work.

> "NGOs should not do this kind of work." Vikram concludes in muted tones of exasperation. Sitting on the wobbly end of a plank and bricks bench, there hadn't been anyone else at the tea stand near the Valmiki Ashram when I paused in the late afternoon, for a caffeine-sugar fix of tea, and to dash down some notes. But by the time I'd looked up again to see Vikram coming round the street corner, the parallel bench the other side of the cupboard-like street-side tea stall had been occupied by several older men come to pass the time and watch the life of the street in the early evening. I'm surprised when, seeing me, Vikram, moves purposefully across the street, and declining tea sits down, his back to the other men, and the nudges and sideways glances this move provokes. Without preamble he proceeds to tell me why he had not been around in the neighbourhood of recent. It seems that the Punarvaspur Residents' Welfare Association (RWA) he is associated with, have been filing cases with the Delhi High Court trying to get the work of a particular organisation (*sanstha*) in the neighbourhood, stopped.
>
> Aware of my interest in organisations of all kinds in the neighbourhood, Vikram has occasionally taken it upon himself as 'Secretary' to inform me of the work of this RWA, of it's chairman, and especially of it's close links to the neighbourhood's MLA and city's Congress party. At the top of his agenda, after I've been reminded not to remain on the streets after dark, he is always particularly keen to impress upon me the neighbourhood's need for development work. Particularly, the need for 'upliftment' (appearing in his sentences, for emphasis, in English), of NGOs to provide classes, and the RWA's role in 'doing the work of the people'. He is concerned that people in the neighbourhood don't take this need for development seriously enough, and

is irritated at some of his fellow Valmikis who having done well he feels should be working 'for the neighbourhood to come up'. This, he feels, is the work of organisations in the neighbourhood. As a result, I'm surprised to hear of the last few day's activities, and particularly intrigued to hear that he thinks that there is work that NGOs should *not* be doing.

NGO's can cause problems, he explains. The Delhi Right to Information (DRTI) organisation, which the RWA had been filing papers in court against he explains, have been checking the quantity and quality of 'development works' (infrastructure work) carried out by the Public Works Department (PWD) in the area. "The problem is that they are stopping development works from happening in the area. They came [to Punarvaspur] and started working without coming first to the RWA, and they didn't go to the people also. You can't go to some place and do something the people don't want."

Vikram's statement sits at the confluence of a number of different powerful interests running through the situation he describes. The work of the DRTI group has upset the balance of power in neighbourhood by challenging the MLA to demonstrate through documentation, exactly how he has spent his resources of the MLA's public office (his 'Local Area Development Fund'). This demand by the DRTI for records of this work was just one of a number of challenges to the MLA and his coterie in the RWA, for the monopoly of representational politics in the neighbourhood. The 'Right to Information' more broadly threatens to challenge the MLA's monopoly on the power to mediate between residents and the government. RTI applications threaten to bypass this mediatory work, which is classically the bread and butter work of the MLA's day-to-day mediations, also threatens the basis of political patronage, in the face of the need for votes. In other words, the advent of the DRTI represents competition in the sphere of mediation, and challenges the local practical, and normative monopoly of representation by MLAs, Councillors, and RWAs.

The value of Vikram and the RWA's intervention was to be able to bring a case as an apparently disinterested 'civil society' actor. Yet even as Vijay positions himself as part of civil society, as an RWA member, he is also constrained to speak through the language of democratic representation, particularly as he refers to 'the people' and their wishes, as a source of legitimacy, power and almost 'sovereignty'[193] that confers. This he implies has been usurped by DRTI, as it has failed to ask the RWA for permission to act in the neighbourhood. In Vikram's framing of the work of NGOs, it is evident that for the legitimacy to act in the public space of the neighbourhood, they, and the rest of 'civil society' should be restrained, simply to service provision.

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[193] Hansen and Stepputat (2005,4) argue that sovereignty should be understood as practices dispersed throughout and across societies, based on performances and display of power and a 'will to rule'. This action by Vijay could be seen as part of a wider performance of this, and a positioning of the primacy of the RWA as mediators with the more powerful sovereign power, the state.

The politics of representation

While emphasising the blurring between 'civil' and 'political' type practices of these organisations, the normative aspect of both should not be missed. While in his language, Vijay employs the normative legitimacy of 'the people' of political society, in being part of the RWA bringing cases against the DRTI group, his challenge to it's actions are as a supposedly a-political organisation, based on residence, not, (supposedly), party politics. In this way, even if Vikram is not hugely convincing in his assertion of the problem of procedure against DRTI ('they should ask the people'), it shows the non-political appearance of 'civil society' has a value worth displaying in the wider discursive fields of the city.

Hence, in the wider city, actors in organisations can be seen operating with in fields shaped by the international development discourses in circulation of 'participatory governance', and rights, which serve to increase and decrease the value of particular modes of interaction. As Merry argues, these all, both 'global' discourses, as 'local' mores, work to shape the "repertoire of ideas and practices available to them." (2006, 40). These also shape, and are shaped by the norms that actors in these groups can deploy, and the struggles over representation – both as people are depicted by them, and in terms of speaking for others. Both are struggles to get things done.

Conclusion

In this chapter the end of project workshop represents a different kind of place; this time a temporary nexus of social relations, stretching across a range of scales, some in the case of international donor representatives, across the globe, producing a very different power-geometry (Massey 1994). This nexus is not physically located within Punarvaspur, so that Punarvaspur appears in almost virtual, abstract form, represented by some of the NGO fieldworker residents who have been invited to attend, and the 'results' of the work presented. Yet place remains key, continuing to situate participants, and informing exactly who gets to speak and the hearing they get. Consequently the style and practice of representation appears also to be a form of spatial practice, enabling or limiting agency.

I have sought to show the ways in which international development discourses have worked out in the specific context of both Delhi politics and NGO interactions, both internal and external. Borrowing Chatterjee's sketches of 'civil' and 'political society' as practices, rather than zones, I have shown how residents borrow and deploy norms and practices from both. More to the point, I have tried to show how in principle the

struggle still to access the goods of development and welfare from the state, NGOs and other organisations struggle to fit their work and themselves within its normative forms. Despite the rhetoric of 'civil society' in the literature, which is strongly driven by normative ideals about the work of organisations and rights in relation to the state, in practice, residents and organisations worry not only about letting the state off the hook, but more importantly, about the continuing need to be able to access the welfare goods of the state. In other words, it is a situation much closer to that described by Chatterjee's depiction of 'political society', but where 'civil society' can be tactically deployed as a means to access these public goods.

Additionally, what emerges is the struggle to represent others, and the complications in doing so – evident in the cleavages across particularly class boundaries and what may be accessed from different positions of economic and socio-political 'capital'. This was expressed in the sentiment of debates between and particularly within organisations, between fieldworker residents who demand that so much rhetoric is followed up by action. In comparison with the uncomfortably places activists, who find that their ideals of empowerment remain stuck through the employment of 'rights', which still stand only really to access a much less radical view of the state as welfare provider.

Yet, in examining the different actors at work in this chapter, they are not all located, nor relate to each other as one might expect they would; upper middle class NGO workers find convergences of interest with upper middle class bureaucrats, and the veneer of solidarity of NGO workers comes close to splitting faced with dissent and hierarchy. It is often hard to see in this setting where political interests end, and international development discourses start, as is evident in the hazy role of the RWA. RWAs are at once a vestige of an older system of politics (formalised systems of 'pradhans', see Jha et al.2007)), a form of 'participatory governance', which at the same time presents itself as 'non-political'. As Elyachar observes, "I[nternational] O[ganisations] and NGOS are defined in opposition to the state. The two can seem to be in stark opposition, but practices have evolved across their boundaries, as the state can absorb informality, and IOs can enter the state." (2005, 91). Additionally, the moves to RTI and Bhagidari, also seem to reflect a convergence between concepts circulating in certain international development discourses, which encourage the rise of non-political entities – as civil society is supposed to be, but particularly 'social capital' (Elyachar 2005; Harriss 2001; Fine 2002), with a parallel rise in a more subtle form of urban middle class politics, as Fernandes (2006) describe. Furthermore many of these authors on social capital go further to suggest that the meteoric rise of 'social capital' and associated concepts has much to do with a wider state disinvestment in

welfare propelled by neoliberal economic imperatives: "social scientists and development planners realised that important sectors of the population could be left to take care of themselves." (Elyachar 2005 9). While it is hard to assess from the ethnography discussed here, whether this is indeed going on in India, I follow Harriss in concluding that "civil society exists in a field of power – or that there are differences of power within civil society", even as he goes on to argue that "The discourse is in fact quite deliberately apolitical, in a way that is ultimately supportive of neo-liberal orthodoxy." 2001, 121).

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CONCLUSION

Tracing the settlement and history of Punarvaspur, an East Delhi resettlement colony, the main aim of this thesis has been to examine the spatial dimensions of the politics of development, through the lived experiences and spatial practices of its residents. This means understanding how relationships around development are inscribed in space. That is, how certain areas become places through the people associated with them, being understood as in need of development. In particular, this has meant sustained attention not just to spatial interactions – but specifically to place.

Following Wacquant's (2008) injunction for the re-politicisation of space, I have argued for attention to the production and process of place, not simply as a backdrop to social interactions, but with an awareness of the spatial practices and social relations that are structured by it, yet also constitute it. Attention to the lived experiences and spatial practices of residents open up the spatial dimensions of the politics of development. Not least the way in which powerful technologies such as the Master Plan, backed up by the power of the state, are subtly negotiated and modified.

Hence, the production of place continues to be important in this dynamic, highly globalised world, both to individuals as a source of meaning in their day-to-day lives, but more importantly for understanding how people negotiate discursive, political and social relations, as they are structured by their particular location. Without attention to these points, both space and place risk reversion to being considered simply containers for social action. The consequence downplaying of 'place' risks ignoring large sections of social relations. Drawing on the work of Henri Lefebvre (1991), I show how spatial representations emerging from technologies of planning, surveying and the production of knowledge about a place or people, are modified as they are played out. In this way the small quotidian spatial practices of, perhaps caste avoidance, mark the lived experience of residents' 'representational space' subtly shifting the dominant representation of space. Doreen Massey's work on 'place as a constellation of social relations' unpacks further how these trialectical relations might work out. This throws the relative positioning of 'place' into relief and emphasises its dynamic, processual nature, at a range of scales from across the city, to day to day in the neighbourhood. This highly contextual and lively account of space provides a way of engaging the

personal, specific and meaningful nature of space, with one that captures the shifting fabric of contemporary, urbanising India. As Cresswell observes "Place is what takes place ceaselessly, what contributes to history in a specific context through the creation and utilisation of a physical setting." (2004, 35)

This approach has allowed me to examine the ways in which Punarvaspur and its residents are located within the wider politics of development both physically and conceptually and at different scales; as 'slum-dwellers', residents in a South Asian megacity, perhaps Valmikis or as NGO fieldworkers? Set within a long historical trajectory of planning and policy tackling the 'problem' of the urban poor in the city, Punarvaspur's designation and location as a resettlement colony, has served to make it an archetypal site for 'development work' in the city, through the corresponding stigma of 'slum'. Wacquant argues of similarly stigmatised settings, "Whether or not these areas are in fact dilapidated and dangerous, and their population composed essentially of poor people, minorities and foreigners, matters little in the end: the prejudicial belief that they are suffices to set off socially noxious consequences." (2007, 68)

The effect has been the employment of technologies of surveys and mapping in the production of knowledge about 'the urban poor', that are key to the generation of policies about them. Despite the apparent fracture of Independence, and shift from colonial 'subjects' to postcolonial 'citizens', there has been little radical change in the primary concerns of policy or their epistemology over time. Rather, as Mitchell notes, these methodologies have worked to form a kind of 'distance' and 'impartial expertise', giving their findings and programmes a kind of inevitable logic (2002, 15). Classically, these policies have emerged from the state on technical matters, such as the optimal and maximal population densities (to avoid 'congestion' and hence disease), or latterly the calculated provision of so-many latrine seats in a locale. But the push towards this kind of expertise also increasingly addresses more than matters of technical service provision, to include issues of relationships, particularly models of how differently designated people (i.e. 'communities' of 'slum dwellers' or the 'urban poor') should be able to address the state, and what role NGOs should play in this.

Yet, as I show towards the end of Chapter 2 and in Chapter 3, even as particular forms of technology (such as in Mitchell's case the 'Great Map of Egypt' (2002, 92)) enable the production of new (and possibly cadastral) forms of knowledge, these have been the subject of negotiation in their production (e.g. the different emphases of different version of the DMP), making them necessarily contingent and particular. This disaggregates the idea of a 'singular development discourse', further undermined,

given the varied ways in which people have responded to the rounds of demolition and planning. These are disaggregated through the accounts of residents' own experiences of life in Delhi and the experience of resettlement. Residents' 'emplotment' of themselves within 'narratives of arrival' represent a form of 'spatial practice' through which they may seek to negotiate and modify the abstract social science and state 'representations of space' which underpinned the Master Plan, and seek to emplace themselves instead, into the space of the neighbourhood. Even under the extremes of the Emergency the resettlement opened up unexpected space in the city as and opened up tactical opportunities (see De Certeau 1988), even as it destroyed livelihoods. These underpin a fundamentally ambivalent relationship for many residents with the neighbourhood that persists today.

In Chapters 4 and 5, this thesis also contributes to understandings of the construction and management of identity and social relations in urban South Asia. By locating the standpoint of this study from within the neighbourhood, I extend Daniel's work (1984) on personhood and place in a Tamil village, into the very mixed, fluid urban setting of a resettlement colony, through the idiom of the *mahaul*. Rather than a concern with personhood and caste per se, I concur with Parry's argument (1989) that South Asian ideologies of biomoral personhood serve instead to direct and order relationships with others, especially in such dense and diverse settings as Punarvaspur. In contrast to the village, the wide range of castes, religious affiliations and regional identities in a resettlement colony make the question of controlling mixing, managing relationships and maintaining boundaries key. This is especially the case in intimate and everyday semi-domestic spaces such as the *gali*. Hence I examine the way residents deploy their relationships with other people, illustrating the way in which the lived, experienced, often 'symbolic' 'representational space' of a locale is modified by the contestation and negotiation of 'spatial practices' and competing 'representations of space'. As Cresswell notes "Places are constructed by people doing things and in this sense are never finished, but are constantly being performed." (2004, 37). This is evident in the day to day chatter and gossip, through which differences are asserted expressed in terms of morality and respectability, and the physical marking of space with small shines, etc.

The *mahaul* as particularly powerful medium for the expression and articulation of social relations in the neighbourhood, also makes for a potentially powerful resource around which people can act and organise. Hence, work on, or in the name of the *mahaul* offers an insight into the low-level emergence of politics and a political field. This nascent form of organising offers an insight into the role of space in the

production of politics and political authority (Hansen 2004), as social relations become proto-political relations in the space of the urban neighbourhood.

Chapter 6 finds Punarvaspur residents who work for NGOs are ambivalently located, apparently on both sides of the divide between 'NGO' and 'community', as both 'recipients' and 'practitioners'. I argue, as Massey does, that attention to power relations in place makes the 'power-geometry' within which actors are located, clear. I suggest that the divide is both structural in terms of physical space between 'head office' workers and 'field office' workers, particularly in terms of access to resources, but also discursive as fieldworker-residents negotiate between NGO demands and mores of respectability in Punarvaspur. 'Translating' (Merry 2006) between discourses, these roles offer an insight into the operation of the moral terrain of the neighbourhood, and the interaction of very different discursive pressures around gendered mobility and the ability to act in a public pace. This gives fieldworkers a critical perspective on internal power structures of NGOs and wider power-geometry of social relations within which they are located.

The NGO end of project workshop in Chapter 7 represents a different kind of place; this time a temporary nexus of social relations, stretching across a range of scales, some in the case of international donor representatives, across the globe, producing a very different power-geometry. This nexus is not physically located within Punarvaspur, so that Punarvaspur appears in almost virtual form, represented by some of the NGO fieldworker residents who have been invited to attend, and the 'results' of the work presented. For most present, Punarvaspur appears in relatively abstract form as a site of work. In this respect, this abstractification of Punarvaspur, as it appears in almost generic form simply as a 'fieldsite'. As such, it lifts Punarvaspur, as it appears here, out of the messy, quotidian spatial practices, and effectively removes the lived experienced dimension of representational space, to return the production of abstract spatial representations.

This effectively brings this the study of the production of space in the politics of development, full circle. Having tracked the multiple strands by which the dominant spatial representations of the Master Plan were formulated though the colonial and post-colonial history of Delhi, subsequent chapters illustrated the ways in which these have been adapted and modified through the spatial practices of residents of Punarvaspur as they have sought to emplace themselves and negotiate their relationships with others in the space of the neighbourhood. It has shown how the discourses of nationalist development woven through the Delhi Master Plan interact with competing mores and practices of gender, caste, class, religion and respectability,

as well as how residents and others have sought to deploy them to form boundaries and spatial practices of difference. In this way attention to the production of space, in particularly to the spatial practices and lived experienced spaces of representation open up an insight into the powerful (or disempowering) role of space and place and allow the tracking of assumptions, exclusions or the 'fixing' of people within particular structural relationships that underlie otherwise innocuous concepts and practices of development.

APPENDIX A

Organisations[194] working in Punarvaspur.

Organisation	Type	Head office	Field office(s)	Area of work	Method of fieldwork	Work in Punarvaspur since	Funding
Saheli Samiti	Delhi NGO	Central Delhi	Older resettlement colonies	Based on feminist principles, specialises in working with women. Provides health awareness, family dispute resolution services, stitching classes for teenage girls, women's groups, small enterprise start up money and savings groups.	Fieldworkers live in the areas in which they work; much of their work is conducted door to door, as well as running workshops and classes in the area.	Since early 1980s	Mixed; Indian government, Indian philanthropic, international governmental donor programmes.
Delhi Right to Information	Delhi NGO	Adjacent resettle-ment colony	Small outpost in Punarvaspur	Raises awareness of problems which can be tackled with the right to information, with a focus on access to public services. Encourages and	Emphasis on horizontal management structure. Paid fieldworkers come from Punarvaspur and Suraj Nagar (neighbouring	2002	Strictly by private individual donation only. Explicit refusal to accept corporate or government

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[194] Most organisation's names have been anonymised.

Organisation	Type	Head office	Field office(s)	Area of work	Method of fieldwork	Work in Punarvaspur since	Funding
				facilitates the submission of RTI applications.	resettlement colony); also volunteers from Delhi's universities.		funds.
Ekta Manch	Punarvaspur based NGO	Punarvaspur		Punarvaspur and surrounding *jhuggi* clusters	Door to door consciousness raising of women's rights. Also works to arrange vocational training for women.	2004	Indian philanthropic foundations.
Mobile Crèches	Delhi NGO	Central Delhi	Older resettlement colonies and major building sites	Provision of childcare and basic early years education	Crèche managers trained social workers. Auxiliary staff from surrounding neighbourhoods.	1976	Mixed Indian and international philanthropic
International Support Plan (ISP)	International NGO (USA)	South Delhi	Field offices across India.	Works on health, HIV/AIDS awareness, health education to children. Provides micro-enterprise training, savings groups.	Fieldworkers from outside the neighbourhood; remain with the organisation as it moves from one neighbourhood to another.	Fixed-term (3 years) AIDS awareness programme.	USA philanthropic foundations and private donations. Delhi field office serves as location where donors can visit ISP projects.

Organisation	Type	Head office	Field office(s)	Area of work	Method of fieldwork	Work in Punarvaspur since	Funding
Nav Jeevan	National NGO	West Delhi	Delhi based.	Non-formal education, vocational training	Fieldworkers mostly have social work or education degrees, from outside the community. Works in two wedding/ community halls (*barat ghar*) in Punarvaspur parks.	c. 1995 - present	Some Delhi Government Funding
India Tribals	NGO working with 'tribals' (ST) in NE India.	South Delhi	Punarvaspur	'Delhi Slum Children Project': non-formal education, vocational training: (electrical repair work, stitching, embroidery, beauty course)	Fieldworkers at least 12th Standard pass, and external to the neighbourhood. Organisation runs two small field offices in Punarvaspur, running similar courses in B and E blocks.	Since 2001	Funding from Netherlands, and other sources for other projects.
Children's Social Welfare Trust	Delhi NGO	North Delhi	Field sites across Delhi, orphanage, adoptions.	Non-formal education, tuitions	Fieldworkers work in several sites across Delhi. Some fieldworkers from within communities.	Early 1980s	Delhi Government (under Social Welfare Scheme)

Organisation	Type	Head office	Field office(s)	Area of work	Method of fieldwork	Work in Punarvaspur since	Funding
End Trafficking	National NGO -	South Delhi	Field offices in Bombay and Delhi	Works to prevent human trafficking (mostly for prostitution), and rehabilitate trafficked women. Field office serves as drop-in centre. Provides education and health services to children; health/AIDS/TB awareness. Women's and children's rights awareness.	Fieldworkers work in several sites across Delhi.	c. 1999	Indian philanthropic foundations, private donations. Some state funding.
Shikshan	National NGO	Bombay	Field offices across India.	Supports education – formal and non-formal education, learning support, libraries, supporting access to formal education.	Runs programmes from within field offices. Recruits fieldworkers with previous experiences as NGO fieldworkers from adjacent neighbourhoods.	2002	Funding from Indian corporate sector, particularly CSR programmes. Also private national and international fundraising and donations.
Prapt	Punarvaspur based NGO		'Computer training centre' set up by group of	Starting with computers that founder's office were getting rid of,	Room is open in daytimes for children to access. Some classes run in	2005	All time and equipment donated, along with what

Organisation	Type	Head office	Field office(s)	Area of work	Method of fieldwork	Work in Punarvaspur since	Funding
			neighbours from adjacent middle class Gulshan Extension	founder sought to provide access to computers for children in A block and DDA Flats areas.	the evenings by founder, charging a small fee to defray electricity bills and rent. No outreach work, children find their way to the centre by word of mouth.		electricity charges and rent for the room is not covered by charges for computer classes for older children. 'Permission'/blessing to set up the computers sought from RWA and MLA prior to opening.
Sambhav Education	Punarva spur based NGO			After school support and primary school	Has developed from running tutorials for children in support of poor government primary school in the area, to a small primary schools, run by former member of Mahila Milan	2002	From fees and community support (some labour provided to extend school space in adjacent plot.

A number of other organisations also work in Punarvaspur but do not have field offices in the colony. For instance, mobile service providers (mobile clinics and dispensaries), or organisations partnered with those listed above, such as SRG (see Chapter 7).

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